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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY OF SOUTHEAST EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES – DEDICATED TO 80 ANNIVERSARY OF PROF. RASHO RASHEV (1943-2008)

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2016

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Ed. Yanko Dimitrov

Introduction

This issue of Studia academica Šumenensia contains papers from the International Scientific Conference "History and Archeology of Southeast Europe in the Middle Ages – 80-year anniversary of Prof. Rasho Rashev (1943-2008)", held in November 2023 in the city of Shumen and organized by the Faculty of Humanities and the Department of History and Archeology of *Konstantin Preslavsky* University of Shumen. The number of accepted and approved articles necessitated their division into two parts.

In the First Part, three thematic subdivisions can be outlined.

The first includes studies that examine various aspects of Prof. Rasho Rashev's scientific contribution. The study of St. Stanilov and Y. Dimitrov presents the most widely represented thematic field in the research of R. Rashev - the archeology of pagan Bulgaria. The next article (by T. Chobanov and St. Stamov) concerns another important aspect of the scientific interests of the notable Bulgarian scientist - the origin of proto-Bulgarians. This subdivision ends with the article dedicated to the Christian symbolism in R. Rashev's research.

The collective study by Falko Daim, Roman Sauer, Katharina Richter presents part of the results of the international HistoGenes project "Integrating genetic, archaeological and historical perspectives on Eastern central Europe 400-900 AD", which appears to be an impressive transition to the second division in the first part of the present volume. It includes papers presented in the "Cities, Fortresses and Settlements in the Middle Ages" section of the conference. Initially, with the articles by P. Georgiev and A. Aladzhov, the readers' attention is drawn to problems from the history and archeology of the old Bulgarian capital Pliska. The old capital issue is continued with the article by Al. Stankov, which presents his new look at the so-called "Dark Ages" of the history of Constantinople. The last three articles of this subdivision are devoted to various characteristics of the settlement system along the lower reaches of the Danube. Bogdan Ciuperca et al. present new data from surveys conducted in recent years on the territory of Târgșoru Vechi (Prahova County, Romania). Unpublished data from the archaeological excavations in 2007-2012 enable Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi to shed additional light on the appearance and everyday life in the Hârșova fortress in the 11th - 12th centuries. Summary of the long-term studies of the Carașova

fortress and outline of its construction periods in the 14th - 16th centuries are presented in the article by Silviu Oța and Liana Oța.

The last subdivision of the first part includes papers presented in the "Political History" section of the conference. The article by St. Tsaneva highlights the place of the Bulgarians in the foreign policy of Byzantium during the reign of Emperor Zeno (474-491). Zhenya Dobreva's research is dedicated to the interesting, but at the same time debatable issues related to the crisis processes in Bulgaria in the 8th - 9th centuries. Anelia Markova draws on astronomy data in order to chronologically refine the rule of the Bulgarian Khan Telets. This subdivision ends with the interesting observations of I. Ivanov on the peace agreements, treaties and other manifestations of peace in the chronicles of four chroniclers related to the events of the late 12th to the early 13th century in the Balkans and in particular the Fourth Crusade and its consequences.

The articles included in the Second Part of this issue can be divided into two thematic subdivisions.

The first includes papers presented in the "Architecture, Art, Way of Life" section of the conference. G. Atanasov's study focuses readers' attention on the rock monastery near Murfatlar and its specifics in decoration and architecture, which have no complete analogue among the other rock monasteries of the 10th century in Northeastern Bulgaria and Dobrudja. In the article by G. Grozdanova and D. Rabovyanov, the pottery from the early medieval settlement near the village of Ivancha is analyzed in detail. Boyan Totev et al. present three nomadic tombs, secondary built in older mounds discovered on the territories of Bulgaria and Romania. Two articles by groups of authors, led by St. Doncheva, are dedicated to the production center for artistic metal near the village of Nadarevo. Constantin Șova presents a detailed comparative analysis of interesting artifacts (fragments of clothing and jewelry) found in the fortified settlement of Oltina-"Capul dealului". Filip Petrunov also draws the attention of readers to interesting artifacts from the 8th - 10th centuries, found in the Kaliakra fortress. Different signs on ceramic fragments are analyzed comparatively in the article by Emilia Corbu. New finds of clothing and jewelry from the 10th - 14th centuries discovered in the Tropaeum Traiani fortress are the subject of the article by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Gabriel Talmațchi. This thematic series concludes with Kalina Atanasova's article, which examines four different female head coverings worn in Bulgaria in the 15th century.

The second subdivision of Part Two of this issue includes papers presented in the "Sigilography and Numismatics" section. The series of articles begins with that of Zh. Zhekova, who presents a new look at the unique molibdobul of Caesar Tervel. A newly discovered Bulgarian ruler's seal from the second half of the 9th century gives T. Todorov reason to examine in a new light the information from three early medieval seals with the name John.

Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt and Konstantinos Kalantzis present a unique seal from the first half of the 10th century that sheds further light on the history of the Khurramite military contingent in the Byzantine army. D. Dragoev brings into scholarly circulation a lead seal of a Byzantine official from the 12th century. N. Mitev also presents unpublished Bulgarian and Moldavan copper and silver coins from the 13th - 14th centuries. The second part of the current issue of Studia academica Šumenensia ends with the complete publication by I. Velikov of the collective find of Ottoman silver coins (14th century) in the medieval town of Cherven.

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Konstantin Konstantinov
Svetlana Nedelcheva

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Rasho Rashev and the Archeology of Pagan Bulgaria

Stanislav Stanilov, Yanko Dimitrov

Abstract: November 12, 2023 marked the 80th anniversary of the birth of Professor Rasho Rashev, Doctor of Historical Sciences. His overall contribution to Bulgarian Humanities is too great for us to describe in detail, therefore in this article we have tried to present his most significant achievements in the study of the medieval culture of pagan Bulgaria.

Our comments cover a total of 116 scientific publications directly related to the topic (6 of which are monographs), written by Rasho Rashev during his nearly 40-year career as an internationally recognized medieval scholar.

The purpose of the present work is to give a proper assessment of Rasho Rashev's work, the essence of which is the monograph of fundamental importance for Bulgarian medieval studies entitled "Bulgarian pagan VII - IX century culture." This 600-page volume, containing nearly 100 photographs and 145 graphic maps, drawings and paintings, printed once in 2008 and a second time in 2011, has not been reviewed, either positively or negatively. Therefore, without pretending to be comprehensive, our study tries to outline his main contributions.

Key words: Rasho Rashev, Pagan Bulgaria, Pliska, Madara

Резюме: На 12 ноември 2023 г. се навършиха 80 години от рождението на професор, доктор на историческите науки Рашо Рашев. Неговият цялостен принос в хуманитарното знание на българите е твърде голям, за да можем да го опишем в детайли, затова в настоящата статия сме се опитали да изложим най-значимите му постижения в изследването на средновековната култура на езическа България.

Коментарът ни обхваща общо 116 пряко свързани с темата научни публикации (6 от които монографии), излезли изпод перото на Рашо Рашев през

близо 40-годишната му възходяща професионална кариера на международно признат учен-медиевист.

Целта на настоящата работа е да даде подобаваща оценка на творчеството на Рашо Рашев, есенцията на което е имащата фундаментално значение за българската медиевистика монография озаглавена „Българската езическа култура VII - IX век." Този изключително обемист том, съдържащ почти 600 страници текст, съчетан с близо 100 фотографии и 145 графични табла с карти, чертежи и рисунки, отпечатан веднъж през 2008 и втори път през 2011 г., досега не е получил нито една рецензия, било то в положителен или отрицателен смисъл. Затова в края на нашето изложение, без да претендираме за изчерпателност, се опитваме да очертаем с едри щрихи неговите основни приноси.

A wretched accident cut short the life of our colleague and friend Rasho Rashev 15 years ago. A few days before, we received the first edition of his book "Bulgarian Pagan VII - IX Century Culture" [1] from "Klasika i stil" publishing house (fig. 1). The book presents the results of Rasho Rashev's nearly 40-year research on the medieval culture of Bulgarian society during the first stage of its presence in the European civilization. In about a year, the book was sold out, which was an unforeseen event in the publishing of strictly professional texts, so it was necessary to print another edition...

A year before his death, a jubilee collection of research articles was published on the occasion of his sixtieth anniversary[2] (fig. 2). There, in our introductory article[3], we tried to trace his professional path, summarizing briefly his writings into eight topics: Fortification, borders, territory and roads of the First Bulgarian Kingdom; The settlement structure of early medieval Bulgaria and the problem of the city; Pliska as the capital and settlement center of the First Bulgarian Kingdom; Preslav before it became a capital (historical topography, fortification and settlement structure); Madara and the Madara Horseman, artifacts of pagan religion and culture; Individual monuments and their problems, general characteristics of the old Bulgarian culture; The Proto-Bulgarians in Eastern Europe and on the Lower Danube - origin, culture, history; The late nomads in the Pliska field.

[1] Rashev 2008a.
[2] Izsledvaniya po bulgarska srednovekovna arheologiya / Studies in Bulgarian medieval archaeology (2007).
[3] Stanilov & Dimitrov 2007, 9-21.

The present article, whose purpose is to outline Rasho Rashev's contributions to the archeology of pagan Bulgaria, his achievements and their evaluation is structured in a different way. We draw reader's attention to his research in its progress until we reach its characterization reflected in the abovementioned monograph.

The academia is well aware of the professional fate of archaeologists. Most often, the first field research determines the scope and topic of their future activities. In the autumn of 1966, Rasho Rashev, as a second-year student, came across excavations in Veliki Preslav, the "Golden Age" capital. The following seasons until the end of his studies, he spent his summer vacations as an assistant to Ivanka Akrabova-Zhandova, who explored part of the palace. At the same time, the main leader of the excavations in Veliki Preslav Stancho Stanchev-Vaklinov, Yordanka Changova and Totyu Totev worked on different sites. Then the autumn campaigns began, in which several students from the University of Veliko Tarnovo were active participants. They were trained with the methods of a qualitative change in Bulgarian medieval archaeology, carried out by Stancho Stanchev-Vaklinov after his first publications of the studies about Pliska and the results of the excavation of the necropolis near Novi Pazar.

In 1969, Rasho Rashev graduated from the University of Veliko Tarnovo and started work as a tour guide of the Archaeological museum collection of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Veliki Preslav. Three years later, he moved to the position of curator in the medieval department of the District History Museum in Silistra. This change of position was provoked by his choice of a main research topic - the archaeological culture of pagan Bulgaria. Along with that, he was already a part-time PhD student of Prof. Stancho Vaklinov and after some hesitation between "The Armament of the Bulgarian Army in the Early Middle Ages" and "Bulgarian Earthen Fortifications in VII-IX Century", he chose the latter. The position of curator at Silistra museum created excellent opportunities for fieldwork on artifacts directly related to the problems of his topic, namely the identification of a large group of shafts along the lower reaches of the Danube. The main difficulty of these studies was that the artifacts were scarcely investigated by fieldwork, i.e. through excavations. In two or three seasons, he studied through visiting, measuring and sectioning several dozen artifacts and used the source data to write his doctoral thesis,

successfully defended in 1977.[4] According to it, the large open fortifications belonged to the culture of the Bulgarian state during the pagan period. They also included the closed earthworks, which in some cases protected settlements, in others represented fortified shelters. Despite some attempts, this thesis has not been refuted with empirical evidence up to now.

Rasho Rashev's first publication - on the study of pottery kilns from the 10th century in the area of the medieval city, was related to his work at the Archaeological Base in Veliki Preslav.[5] The second was prompted by his desire to work on the armament of the Bulgarian army in the early Middle Ages, as a prospect for a dissertation thesis.[6]

His next publications, however, were not, as might be expected, dedicated to the results of his studies of the earthen fortifications, but to famous artifacts, the identification of which was not certain, a bit sketchy, and therefore wrong - the stone "grandmothers" of Endzhe,[7] the tile with an image of a man and a bird from Madara.[8] The two publications made an impression with their detail, thoroughness and well-considered interpretation, hitherto unknown in mediavistic archaeology. Even then, Rasho Rashev showed the skepticism of a conscientious researcher who approaches the matter with respect. Three years later, they were followed by a third similar article on the recently discovered stone model for a yurt in Devnya.[9] The use of the three artifacts in subsequent publications or exhibition catalogs has not changed what he wrote half a century ago, and there are no signs that it may happen soon. At that time, he wrote two more, as we then called them, "scientific reports" about research done during his Preslav period. They were on graffiti drawings in Veliki Preslav,[10] until then only Stancho Stanchev had discussed such artifacts in Pliska.[11] Years later, this experience helped Rasho Rashev assess the group of artifacs with a theoretically grounded hypothesis.[12]

[4] Rashev 1977a.
[5] Rashev 1970, 13-16.
[6] Rashev 1972a, 77-80.
[7] Rashev 1972b, 17-20.
[8] Rashev 1973a, 29-38.
[9] Rashev 1976c, 39-45.
[10] Rashev 1973b, 207-218; 1974, 67-69.
[11] Stanchev 1955, 183-227; 1960, 23-65.
[12] Rashev 1990a, 49-55.

At the same time, he began to publish studies of earthen fortifications as separate articles.[13] The contribution of Rasho Rashev in this regard is not measured only by the huge amount of new information unknown until then, but also by the perfect application of excavation methodology, the results of which no one could deny. In 1977 he defended his PhD thesis, and then summarized it in an article.[14] Still, he continued to publish his studies on this group of artifacts.[15] He reworked his PhD thesis into an impressive monograph published in 1982.[16] It was the first archaeological dissertation based mainly on fieldwork to be published in a separate book. It was distinguished by something unknown until then for a work of similar character, detail and imagery, namely illustrations - graphics and photos - related to the text. The high scientific value of the monograph has been proven over the years; it has not lost its relevance for nearly half a century. He continued to work on the topic even after the book was published.[17]

Part of Rasho Rashev's achievements happened in a changed professional environment. In 1974, by decision of the government, branches of the Archaeological Institute were founded in Shumen and Veliko Tarnovo. In the first one, whose head was Totyu Totev, he became a research assistant after an exam. The new workplace freed him from the commitments of regular museum work and created an opportunity for him to harness all his potential and ambition in research. The academic freedom created an opportunity to choose the spatial and chronological framework of his studies from now on. He focused first on the capital of pagan Bulgaria, Pliska, and then on all the artifacts connected with it. Regarding this, in 1979, his article "Pliska: excavations, problems, tasks" was published, which outlined the directions of his work, as a researcher of the unique archaeological agglomeration.[18]

Classifying Rasho Rashev's research work is complicated because of its versatility. His quick, curious mind rushed to any topic related to the pagan Bulgarian culture of the Lower Danube and often did not abandon it until the end of his career. His initial interest in the

[13] Rashev 1975a, 91-94; 1975b, 150-155; 1976a, 37-40; 1976b, 72-74.
[14] Rashev 1981, 99-103.
[15] Rashev 1979a, 116-124; 1979b, 11-20; 1980a,11-13; Rashev, Evstatiev 1980, 99-103; Rashev 1982a.
[16] Rashev 1982b.
[17] Rashev 1987a, 48-56.
[18] Rashev 1979c, 38-48.

interpretation of individual artifacts outside or in a stratigraphic context led to studies of a group of clay wine vessels,[19] belt decorations[20], a bronze buckle with images of the "torture"[21] scene, the "epsilon with two hastae"[22] sign, the deer as a symbol in medieval Bulgaria,[23] the ring of Varbyane,[24] lead seals with fleece-like signs,[25] a group of bronze figurines,[26] the ceramic vessels from the underground corridor of Krum's Palace,[27] the anthropo-zoomorphic images on ceramic vessels.[28] Some of these materials had a unique character, i.e. they became known to the archeology of South-Eastern Europe for the first time.

This applies mostly to the remains of a complex of about 50 luxurious ceramic vessels found in a secret passage of the palace burned down by Emperor Nicephorus Genicus, which were the first most significant evidences of the lifestyle of the aristocracy of pagan Bulgaria.[29] As usually happens, a discussion started, which Rasho Rashev used in the conclusion of his study to obtain the most likely identification of the complex. It was established through laboratory tests that the raw material was extracted from clay quarries in the immediate vicinity of the capital. Therefore, a small group[30] of potters with a high qualification made luxury vessels for the Pliska court, which replaced the gold vessels at the great royal tables. Judging by the morphological analysis, the masters of pottery originate from Central Asia. They did not necessarily accompany the proto-Bulgarians during the resettlement; it is possible that they appeared later in the Court. With his outstanding contribution to medieval studies, Rasho Rashev suggested the topic about the culture of the elite in the early Bulgarian medieval archeology.

Each of the above publications bears the mark of his extraordinary care for comprehensiveness and depth of commentary.

[19] Rashev 1979d, 206-209.
[20] Rashev 1992a, 243-248; 2001a, 91-93.
[21] Rashev 1990b, 46-50.
[22] Rashev 1992b, 96 -02; 2008b, 25-31.
[23] Rashev 1996a, 200-210; 2009, 121-127.
[24] Rashev 1997a, 180-185.
[25] Rashev 1998a, 98-104.
[26] Rashev 2003a, 54-58; 2004a, 78-81.
[27] Rashev 2004b, 61-100.
[28] Rashev 1998b, 172-175; 2005a, 15-19.
[29] Rashev 2004b
[30] or family - my note St. St.

Here it can be noted that epigones of this effort later appeared, but most without his sense of measure. In the articles which bore the marks of the same diligence, in most cases "overplaying" is evident, which is expressed in overexposing the matter. This tendency, however, in Rasho Rashev was controlled by his innate sense of measure, in places the control even restrained the imagination more than necessary...

The idea of re-examining already known artifacts also applies to those classified as monumental or immovable. First in chronological order are the artifacts from Madara: the cult buildings at Daul-tash,[31] the Madara horseman himself,[32] even the name Madara.[33] Rasho Rashev created his own hypothesis about the horseman, which differs from the conclusion of the academic commission that studied the relief in the mid-1950s.[34] He believes that the relief was sculpted during the time of Khan Krum, and the text in the inscription, which includes the name of Khan Tervel, is a commemoration of his deeds. The hypothesis is well thought out and substantiated, and, despite the authoritative opinion of previous researchers, seems very likely. In connection with the Madara horseman, he also wrote an interesting theoretical work, "The Horseman in Old Bulgarian Art", where, on the basis of the culture of various medieval inhabitants of the Eurasian steppe, he substantiated previously unnoticed traces of the mythology of the proto-Bulgarians of the Lower Danube. [35]

In his research on the medieval grave in a Late Bronze Age mound in the plain north of the Madara Rocks, he presents an interpretation of a long-excavated find, debated by various researchers,.[36] The speculation there is about the Avar affiliation of the grave, dated to the 7th century, which Rasho Rashev successfully disproved and thus once again raised the question of the graves of the aristocracy in the Pliska field. Perhaps he had a premonition that he would someday come across another such find somewhere nearby.

The Throne Palace in Pliska, together with its predecessor the Krum Palace, was subjected to a similar reassessment. Rasho Rashev examined it in detail from a constructional and functional point of

[31] Rashev 1992c, 109-126.
[32] Rashev 1978c, 24-29; 1998a, 192-200.
[33] Rashev 1996b, 303-305.
[34] Velkov, Mihaylov *et al.* 1956.
[35] Rashev 1984a, 60-70.
[36] Rashev 1993a, 52-59.

view.[37] This work, in our opinion, has successfully dispelled some claims about Central Asian features of modern architecture. Particularly important for the further interpretation of this historical find and its use in the socialization of Pliska is the graphic reconstruction by Rasho Rashev. Made in the Byzantine style of that time, his version inspires enough confidence and gains more and more legitimacy.

The 80s and 90s of the last century were a time of active field work for Rasho Rashev. As early as 1976, he was involved in the team of Prof. Stancho Vaklinov, and after the death of the leader, he took his place in the studies of Pliska Palace. The number of artifacts excavated and interpreted by him at that time is great. Building No. 32 in the Outer City of Pliska, which is located not far from the Eastern Gate of the stone fortress, occupies a special place in these studies, because it raised the question of wooden buildings that preceded the stone ones.[38] He discovered remains of wooden buildings during the studies of Krum's Palace, as well as the surrounding terrain. Today, the wooden construction in Pliska is a subject of special study, even a doctoral thesis.

Another very significant discovery is the cult find south of the village of Zlatna Niva in Pliska field: a circular site surrounded by a ditch with a layer of animal bones and household ceramics. According to Rasho Rashev, this is an open-air pagan sanctuary by the road from Pliska to Kabiyuk.[39] In connection with this find, years later, under his and Stanislav Stanilov's leadership, the Pliska-Zapad expedition was organized, which explored a rectangle surrounded by a wooden palisade on an area of nearly 100 decares in the terrain to the west of the round site.[40] The same expedition excavated and documented near the village of Varbyane a cenotaph grave in a 12 m deep vertical shaft dug into a Bronze Age mound. In the embankment there were remains of sacrificial animals – horses, dogs and a cat.[41] With this discovery, the archeology of Pliska took another step towards studying the funeral rites of the noble Bulgarians at that time. Much later, he discovered, excavated and very well documented a real grave of a Bulgarian aristocrat in a mound near the aula close by the mound called

[37] Rashev 2000a, 35-43.
[38] Rashev 1984b, 5-8; 2007a, 573-576.
[39] Rashev 1991a, 209-218.
[40] Rashev, Stanilov *et al.* 2002, 117; Rashev, Stanilov *et al.* 2014, 140-143.
[41] Rasev & Stanilov 1998, 67-72.

Kabiyuk.[42] His death deprived him of the opportunity to publish his discovery in full volume, but with the help of friends and collaborators it was issued in a monographic study, where his name stands first in the group of authors[43] (fig. 3).

In his field work, Rasho Rashev paid special attention to the Bulgarian megaliths, called devtashlari, truly unique testimonies of Bulgarian paganism. Researched by Karel Shkorpil, Geza Feher, Veselin Beshevliev and Stamen Mihailov, discussed in the context of general publications and separate articles, they were the subject of discussion regarding their origin and function. From 1977 to 1984, Rashev excavated 5 groups of devtashlari and published the description of all 49 groups, according to Karel Shkorpil's numbering.[44] He divided the groups into two - the first one is defined as commemorative monuments of most notable persons, placed at once, and the second is referred to as separate social formations that "commemorate" one or another of their members, that is why the groups were formed gradually. Rasho Rashev rightly attributed the tradition of devtashlari to an ethno-cultural formation, most likely a ruling family. His classification, interpretation and conclusions are valid to this day. After this publication, two more groups of devtashlari (Groups 26 and 32) were fully excavated along the road from Pliska to Kabiyuk. The results of these excavations added new information and confirmed the validity of his conclusions.[45]

Rasho Rashev's contribution to what could be called "spatial archaeology" is significant. These are the works that refer to the archaeological study of borders, roads, respectively topography, life in settlements.[46] These works often seem facile due to their speculative, theoretical and fragmentary data base. Because of this, much of what is written on this topic seems superficial, sometimes contrived and speculative. With Rasho Rashev, however, due to his careful thinking, the reasonings are firmly connected with the remains of the life of that time and therefore are completely valid. Today, due to the active study of the terrain, many new facts certainly appear, which brings changes and additions to the topic. What was developed by Rasho Rashev,

[42] Rashev, Атанасов *et al.* 2006, 374-375.
[43] Rashev, Stanilov *et al.* 2014.
[44] Rashev 1992d, 5-34.
[45] Rashev & Stanilov 2005, 264; Rashev, Stanilov *et al.* 2006, 371-372.
[46] Rashev 1978b, 48-54; 1988a, 117-130; 1990c, 69-73; 1993b, 49-54; 1995a, 89-95; 1997b, 108-113; 2002a, 62-72; Rashev 2004c, 277-282; 2005b, 52-58.

however, similarly to Karel Shkorpil, will remain the basis of the entire archaeological heritage related to the dynamics of medieval society on the territory it inhabited.

Directly related to the above topic is the topic of the Bulgarian medieval city. In the 1980s, he presented "On the genesis of the Bulgarian medieval city"[47] at an international congress. A few years later, he published an article on the oldest construction period of Pliska where the "bottom" of this genesis was revealed[48]. And very soon after that, he published successively his research about the Pliska aul[49] and the difference between the aul and the city in Bulgaria.[50] Finally, he published an article in French about the comparison between the Byzantine city of the previous period and the nascent Bulgarian medieval city, co-authored with Vencislav Dinchev and Boris Borisov.[51] This is how a coherent theory was put together, which is of fundamental importance for Bulgarian medieval studies, having in mind how much had been written in the studies. The most original part in it is the suggestion that the Bulgarian medieval city did not arise spontaneously, as a center of trade and crafts, but as a specific tax collection point organized by the state. Trade and crafts were adapted to it to produce the final 'product'. Here Rashev's contribution is undeniable, despite any attempts to downplay it or replace it with a different theory. No less important was his attempt to compare the Byzantine city of that time and the Bulgarian city of the pagan period of our country. The main contribution of this work lies in its perspective. Based on it, a few years later, a doctoral thesis was defended at the National Archaeological Institute with Museum entitled "The Byzantine City and the Bulgarians".[52]

At the beginning of the 1990s, Rasho Rashev published articles on the early history of the proto-Bulgarians based on archaeological artifacts. Three of his articles laid the foundations of this theme in Bulgarian medieval archaeology. Even before the reaction of other researchers, in 2000 his significant monograph "The Proto-Bulgarians in the V-VII century" was published[53] (fig. 4) and had three more

[47] Rashev 1987b, 30-36.
[48] Rashev 1993c, 252-62.
[49] Rashev 1995b, 10-22.
[50] Rashev 1994a, 170-177.
[51] Rashev & Dinčev *et al.* 2005, 351-362.
[52] Aladzhov 2010.
[53] Rashev 2000b.

editions in the first decade of the new century.[54] This popularity shows, among other things, that Rasho Rashev has won the trust not only of the "specialized" reading public, but also of other circles of professionals and amateurs in the wide spectrum of humanitarian knowledge. There is a characteristic feature of the text and the meaning of its content that cannot be overlooked. In the interpretation of archaeological material, he selects and uses very carefully facts and artifacts to prove his point. He treads cautiously on very thin ice where the hypothesis has a 50/50% chance to be proven, but he takes risks to create an orderly theory. His innate logical thoughts are very persuasive, and if there are weaknesses in the interpretation of the material, it is because the actual archaeological material is abroad and is not always available for immediate observation. In connection with this research, years later, he turned to the sources to find the reasons about the consequences of the collapse of Kubrat's Great Bulgaria.[55]

Alongside his archaeological endeavours, Rasho Rashev also tackled the theoretical side of Bulgarian medieval culture development, starting his research with a specific phenomenon which was somewhat outside the main sphere of his scientific interests and their chronological framework. He wrote his article “Rapid development of old Bulgarian culture” (for an international scientific forum in which he participated[56]) about our transition from paganism to Christianity and its consequences. In this particular article, Rasho Rashev presents his observations on the quite atypical lot of the Bulgarians after they became part of the Byzantine cultural cycle. Such acceleration of cultural evolution is possible at certain times but it depends on very complex circumstances. It is a fact, however, that after what happened in the 10th century, Bulgarians became the cultural leaders among other European people. During that period, Rasho Rashev was very interested in the medieval graffiti which had been subject of overexploitation at that time, but he considered them in the context of old Bulgarian culture development. The same goes for his other article “Timeline of the origin of the sign “epsilon with two hastae“.[57] One of his scientific notes, worth mentioning here was written as late as 2004: “A little more about Preslav civilization“[58]...

[54] Rashev 2004d; Rashev 2005c; Rashev 2007b.
[55] Рашев 2002b, 245-250.
[56] Rashev 1982c, 93-105.
[57] Rashev 1992b, 96-102.
[58] Rashev 2004e, 245-254.

After he wrote his article "Rapid development of old Bulgarian culture", Rasho Rashev went back to the chronology of the cultural development of Bulgarians. In 1994, he published his very impressive research entitled "Two groups of Proto Bulgarians – two Proto Bulgarian cultures"[59] , thus presenting a new research topic on old Bulgarian culture for his colleagues to work on. According to him, as stated in this work based on his archaeological finds, it is important to distinguish between the culture of the aristocracy and the culture of the masses and coming to this particular scientific conclusion is of significance from the point of view of Bulgarian medieval studies. We cannot deny the originality of this idea. He also made the first successful step towards the further exploration of his hypothesis. In fact, the process of defining the two separate branches of old Bulgarian culture - elitist culture and mass culture - pagan and Christian, during the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, started as soon as its identification. Rasho Rashev was the first one to properly and clearly formulate the problem and then elaborated on his thesis, bringing new facts and arguments to light.[60]

Back then, it looked like that Rasho Rashev had been working on other extraneous matters, which actually were closely related to the topic of the archaeology of the First Bulgarian Kingdom such as "Bulgarians and the sea". It is quite a complex topic, as indicated in old written records. Bulgarians lived on the Black sea coast and on the banks of Danube river for over a thousand years, but according to the said historical sources, they considered seafaring to be something quite exotic. The first article on the subject was published back in 1982, entitled "The First Bulgarian Kingdom and the sea".[61] The issue of Bulgarian shipping has been interpreted out of context, disregarding our natural desire to find historical evidence for any significant developments as far as this part of the medieval everyday life is concerned. Although existing empirical data is sparse, Rasho Rashev, while keeping a critical tone in his overview on the subject, gave his professional opinion, surmising that as long as the Bulgarians rule the coast, they rule the sea as well. The next article on the same subject was published twenty-five years later and was indirectly related to the first one. The second article was entitled: "Northwestern Black sea coast during the early Middle Ages".[62] Rasho Rashev tried to find the

[59] Rashev 1994b, 29-33.
[60] Stanilov 2014, 117-139.
[61] Rashev 1982d, 47-56.
[62] Rashev 1997c, 33-44.

connection between the historical objects, found along the coastline and the historical reality of the region at the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. Therein lies the major contribution, the author provided empirical evidence to substantiate the theory he has come up with twenty-five years before. The topic was briefly touched upon during a discussion about the beginning of Bulgarian statehood (Pavel Georgiev and Valentin Pletnyov).

Rasho Rashev's interest in exploring Veliki Preslav dates back to the nineteen eighties when he wrote his article about the rapid development of old Bulgarian culture. He was mainly interested in the theories on how the city started in pagan times, becoming the ruler's fortified settlement. At some point he had to explore Preslav's outer fortress as well, despite his initial lack of interest. He touched upon the topic of the development of Veliki Preslav in the pre-Christian period in the context of the general development of Medieval Bulgarian cities. In 2002, he introduced his overall approach to his research and proposed a problem-solving decision which is still relevant to this day. In his short paper, entitled "The city of Veliki Preslav in the period of Christianization" he summarized and critically reviewed his previous research and his findings about the founding and the development of the capital of the First Bulgarian Kingdom during the Golden age of Bulgaria.[63] It turned out that before it became the state capital, the city of Veliki Preslav has probably been the largest fortified khanate settlement, so that is why it has been chosen to become a capital city. Later on, Rasho Rashev was obviously very tempted to dive deep into the topic about the development of the capital city. He has written five articles[64] and monographs[65] (fig. 5) discussing Tsar Simeon I the Great's personality in the context of the fundamental Christian doctrine as far as the Christian rulers were concerned and comparing him to Bible's Kings. His book where he has presented this interesting conception was welcomed enthusiastically and a second edition was recommended by Academician Vasil Gyuzelev .[66]

As he proceeded studying the multiple aspects of the development of the early stages of old Bulgarian culture, as we have already mentioned, Rasho Rashev showed restraint, has been very careful and even quite skeptical. Many historians have been tempted to

[63] Rashev 2002c, 59-62.
[64] Rashev 1995c, 55-73; 1998d, 63-69; 1999, 32-37; 2004f, 366-376; 2006a, 381-387.
[65] Rashev 2007c.
[66] Rashev 2016.

make somewhat artistic, frivolous interpretations of historical items and findings concerning the subject matter and it clearly backfired. But at the time none of us protested too much. Rasho Rashev was the only one who wrote a critical note entitled "Historical items of dubious origin and unreliable discoveries about the old Proto-Bulgarian culture"[67], in the distant 2003, opening the eyes of the historical scientific community to the dubious origin of quite a few artifacts known to everyone... This critical note was an example of how to follow carefully the logic of comparative analysis, the author proving that any interpretation which is not based on solid evidence turns out to be inaccurate. He returns to this idea in another of his articles on the faulty interpretation of partial inscriptions, belonging to the group of scripts which supposedly were produced in the khan's chancellery.[68]

A good researcher's scientific contributions come not only in the form articles. The same level of expertise and no less effort is required for writing competent **reviews.** We found ten reviews written by Rasho Rashev listed in his bibliography. There was also another type of articles – responding to criticism articles, refuting the arguments of those who disputed his research results. We found mainly two types of reviews: publications' reviews and critical reviews. There are some nuances of course, but these names show their essence.

Rasho Rashev wrote his first publication review on "Preslav"[69], a collection of scientific articles. Back then the publication of this collection of articles was accompanied by a great number of difficulties. This particular review is essentially an assessment of the scientific contributions of the different articles' authors, who were representatives of several generations. It was made, bearing in mind the important role that such a collection of articles plays in the development of Humanities.

Rasho Rashev's critical reviews were "territorial". He reviewed a collection of history articles, summarizing the research results concerning Mayatskoye gradishte[70], three monographs on the culture of the Khazar empire[71], where Proto-Bulgarians undoubtedly had a strong presence and another one[72] on the archaeological exploration of

[67] Rashev 2003b, 158-174.
[68] Rashev 2005d, 159-162.
[69] Rashev 1977b, 73-75.
[70] Rashev 1984c, 60-61.
[71] Rashev 1992e, 82-84; 2000c, 101-103; 2002d, 73-75.
[72] Rashev 2006d, 105-107.

Pastirsko gradishte, concerning Saltovo-Mayaki early medieval culture. We should have in mind that for one archaeological season, Rasho Rashev was part of the team of archaeologists, who excavated Mayatskoye gradishte. In his review, he reported the negative research results as well as the positive ones, thus enriching his professional analysis and legitimizing Bulgarian archaeology as far as studying other Eastern European cultures related to Bulgarian culture is concerned.

Reading Rasho Rashev's reviews of articles about the archaeology of Eastern Europe, where the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians came from and then settled in the Lower Danube region, we realized that he was particularly interested in Volga Bulgaria.[73] He reviewed yet another collection of articles, summarizing the research findings of the Tatarstan archaeologists about the resettlement of Proto-Bulgarians down North after the break-up of Kubrat Khaganate.

Next, Rasho Rashev had some of his articles published in Tatarstan history journals by their Institute of archaeology.[74] These articles were about the development of the pre-Christian archaeological culture in the medieval Bulgarian state and presented the internationally recognized recent archaeological achievements of Bulgarian historians.

In a similar vein, he wrote about Tavidar Vida's research on the Avar Khaganate and more specifically, Pannonian Avars' ceramics.[75] We should mention that Rasho Rashev had a deep understanding on this matter and he elegantly tried to draw a parallel between some aspects of the early culture of Pannonian Avars and Bulgarians who settled in the Lower Danube region in the following centuries, which is another of his scientific achievements.

Rasho Rashev was interested in the Middle Danube medieval cultures and more specifically – the Hungarians. In 1998, Hristo Dimitrov's book about Bulgarian-Hungarian relations in the Middle Ages was published, where he has included important archaeological evidence.[76] In a special review, Rasho Rashev presents his own scientific views on the subject, using the same archaeological evidence.[77] He made valuable input in the historical debate on the topic because up to

[73] Rashev 1991b, 54-55.
[74] Rashev 1998e, 65-72; 2000d, 244-247; 2006c, 36-47; 2006e, 48-59.
[75] Rashev 2000e, 100-102.
[76] Dimitrov 1998.
[77] Rashev 2006b, 46-52.

that moment, nobody has paid special attention to the direct or indirect archaeological evidence about the resettlement of the Hungarians.

We should also draw attention to Rasho Rashev's reviews, published in Bulgarian scientific journals, besides the one that we have already mentioned – "Preslav" collection of scientific articles, volume 2. He wrote a review of eleven pages of Dimitar Il Dimitrov's major monograph on Proto-Bulgarians' resettlement in the Lower Danube region between the 7-th and 9-th centuries AD.[78] Dimitar Il Dimitrov's very ambitious mixed research (in the field of archaeology and written sources) got a positive review by Rasho Rashev, but this was not his only contribution to the topic. The hypothesis of the monograph and the interpretation of the archaeological evidence was quite biased and Rasho Rashev brought it to public attention. All the particular diversions of the author of this monograph, a longtime researcher of early medieval findings, were duly noted and certain misstatements have been carefully corrected. Rasho Rashev's corrections to Dimitar Il Dimitrov's book made it even more useful for his fellow researchers, especially those who have just started their careers. Rasho Rashev wrote another review with corrections, this time to the book by Dimcho Momchilov about conurbation and road infrastructure between the eastern side of the Balkan mountain range and Erkesia.[79]

Rasho Rashev wrote in memoriam for the first time for his colleague Dimitar Il Dimitrov along with a comprehensive bibliography.[80] He wrote the second in memoriam with a detailed bibliography[81] for his mentor prof. Stancho Vaklinov.[82] He created a third bibliography in 1984, which was published to commemorate the 10 year anniversary of the establishment of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum, branch Shumen.[83] It must be noted that the aforementioned third bibliography is perfectly assembled and still could be used as a point of reference for ongoing studies.

There are **four very important guidebooks**, authored, co-authored and compiled by Rasho Rashev that contributed to the socialization of archaeological knowledge. The first one is the guidebook to Silistra Archaeological Museum - 38 pages in total - an

[78] Rashev 1988b, 62-63.
[79] Rashev 2001b, 131-133.
[80] Rashev 1988c, 64-65; 1989, 191-196.
[81] Rashev 1978c, 52-56.
[82] Rashev 1984d, 246-249.
[83] Rashev 1984e, 9-28.

impressive number, as far as such type of publication is concerned.[84] Rasho Rashev complied by himself a guidebook to Pliska, published in 1985, 71 pages in total[85] (fig. 6). There is also another guidebook to Pliska published in 1993, cowritten with his colleague and fellow Pliska researcher Pavel Georgiev whom he worked with in the National Archaeological Institute with Museum, branch Shumen. It is a shorter guidebook, but it was highly regarded by the management body of the museum and second and third editions were published in 1996 and 1998 respectively.[86] Rasho Rashev together with Yanko Dimitrov,[87] his student and collaborator, compiled another guidebook (Rasho Rashev's fourth one) marking the 100 year anniversary of the start of Pliska excavation (fig. 7). This guidebook is over 100 pages and there is a short separate section on the history of Pliska excavation process. In fact, a more recent guidebook to Pliska is not available. The one compiled by Rasho Rashev and Yanko Dimitrov is the last one and it is still very relevant, but a new amended edition might be published based on new archaeological findings.

Rasho Rashev's scientific contribution to Bulgarian and European humanitarian knowledge is hard to measure. We can get to know about it reading his major monograph that we have mentioned at the beginning of this article. It is a bulky book, six hundred pages in total, about one hundred photographs and one hundred and forty five graphics boards, including maps, drawings and pictures, published in 2008 and a second edition in 2011 .[88] Strangely, against all academic rules, the monograph never got any reviews – either good or bad. So, we decided, without claiming to be exhaustive, to highlight its main contributions here in this article.

In a general sense, Rasho Rashev's major piece is a thematic sequel to our teacher Stancho Vaklinov Stanchev's monograph "Formation of old Bulgarian culture".[89], further developing its main ideas throughout his own work. The structure and content of Rasho Rashev's monograph are not focused exclusively on archaeology. Throughout the monograph the specific process of development of this complex and quite peculiar archaeological culture is traced. The main

[84] Silistra. A Guidebook (1976), by R. Rashev, c. 5-26, 39-56.
[85] Rashev 1985.
[86] Rashev & Georgiev 1993; 1996; 1998.
[87] Rashev & Rashev 1999, (authorship R. Rashev, c. 1 -50).
[88] Rashev 2008a; 2011.
[89] Vaklinov 1977.

body is constructed following an empirical formula and on the other hand it is of reconstructivist nature, i.e. culturological to the extent possible while tackling archaeological matters. Being as it is, Rasho Rashev's monograph is pertinent to studying historical sources, linguistics, history of art, cultural anthropology and education. The first topic discussed in the monograph is migration and the so-called Great Migration period in particular. After the literature review, the historical framework is defined, starting with the Proto-Bulgarians getting settled in the Lower Danube region to their transition from paganism to Christianity. In a six-part exposé, Rasho Rashev goes from the general to the particular, indicating the habitats and cultural area, the territory, habitable spaces, places of worship, earth fortifications (camps), unfortified settlements and Byzantine cities to the South of the Balkan range. By constructing the main body of his monograph in this unordinary style, using an innovative research approach, presenting a unique hypothesis and a large database, most of it generated by him personally, Rasho Rashev made a multidimensional contribution towards the development of archaeological science.

In Rasho Rashev's major monograph special attention is given to Pliska - the first capital of the First Bulgarian Kingdom (pp 45 - 105) which he considers a "phenomenon". He has written different articles and scientific notes on Pliska before, but in his monograph, he summarizes all the previous information about the development of this early medieval cultural agglomeration located on a vast area. Rasho Rashev is the first one to present a clearly defined hypothesis on the two construction phases in pagan Bulgaria – wooden construction and monumental construction, i.e. brick, stone and mortar. In the biphasic building process timeline, there is a particular year that stands out – Nikephoros I, Genikos invasion in 811. Traces of fire were uncovered in Pliska and we can find information about these events in the written historical sources. The construction phases, estimated from the remains of the wooden fortress wall of double palisade, correspond to the archaeological findings concerning the natural fires that spread all over the capital city. Rasho Rashev made important conclusions as far as determining the relative chronology of construction inside the historic complex brick walls, called Pliska Citadel in recent years. For many years, the aforementioned chronology has been the subject of heated discussions, based on partial archaeological investigations, leading to wrong conclusions and incorrect interpretations. Rasho Rashev has fully investigated the western part of the fortified territory,

he made the best possible interpretation, for the time being, about the emergence of the complex. Today, fifteen years after his tragic death, his students and collaborators have excavated and completed their investigations of the eastern part of the historic site. They discovered traces of a bustling life, despite the fact that they mainly found remains of wooden buildings and structures. So, taking into consideration the findings of some other archaeologists who have been investigating the remains of Pliska Citadel, it became possible for us to get a much clearer idea about the material side of the court life. Two big structures with a circular building plan from the earliest period of settlement formation was discovered, their appearance was explained and attempts for a reconstruction were made. Then the stone castle was built, along with some other wooden structures. Then came the fire and much later the stone city walls and the first stone buildings inside the Citadel and simultaneously or right after that, the Throne palace was built. Following the recent investigations, a logical set of conclusions has been put forward. For example, the assumption that the wooden fortress wall already existed by the time that the stone building called The Palace of Krum was built and that later on those two were connected by secret passageways... All these issues have been addressed briefly but exhaustively having in mind the literature used.

The habitable spaces included in greater detail fortified khanate settlements, places of worship, earth fortifications (camps), unfortified settlements (looms, villages, unfortified points) and finally Byzantine cities to the South of the Balkan range, where Bulgarians lived in the pre-Christian period (pp 105 - 154).

There are so many examples of Rasho Rashev's fundamental contributions as far as the in-depth examination of agglomerations is concerned and it is very difficult for us to enlist and classify all of them given the limited volume of this article. Providing a large amount of new information in his monograph, most of it obtained by himself is quite an achievement. Besides, he has skillfully used that information to adjust and improve the main hypothesis about Pliska that was initially constructed by the discoverers of the remains of the old capital city and was revised and additions were made for over a hundred years until Rasho Rashev finally defined it in his monograph.

Next, there is characterization and assessment of certain items, previously known as movable archeological finds or cultural objects, the most recent term being "cultural goods" (pp 155 - 190). He classified them according to the material they were made of like metal, bones,

wood, glass, clay. In this chapter, entitled "Handicraft production", he contemplates on and summarizes archeological research information, gathered and commented on by different researchers for about a century and a half. Of course, the topic that receives most attention is ceramics. Rasho Rashev came up with an original classification following the general rules and duly mentioning the achievements of those who have already worked on this topic. He dealt with the subject with his usual restraint refraining from any firm conclusions. He gave building ceramics a rather brief assessment and for some reason there is a big omission in it. Coming to the conclusion that bricks were the main building material in the pre-Christian period between the 6th to 7th centuries AD, he did not point out that roof tiles made by the Bulgarians were also used. Thus, when he defined the characteristics of building ceramics, he considered the brick, roof tiles and water pipes production to be time aligned. However, the preponderance of empirical data suggests otherwise. The production of roof tiles started first, right after the construction of monumental buildings began, then came the water pipes and bricks were the last ones to go into production.

At the end of this part there is a short "Relative chronology of material culture", which should be understood to mean in pre-Christian Bulgaria (pp 188 - 189). Rasho Rashev's came up with a solution to the problem in his article, written in 2003 .[90] His hypothesis is based on the research results about the archaeological findings from the Lower Danube region and the comparison with those from the former territories of the Avar Khaganate and the Khazar empire as well as from the early period after the Hungarians settled in the Middle Danube region. In the same article, Rasho Rashev focuses his attention on the last quarter of the 7th century where the archaeologists tried to find a parallel between the historical and material development of Bulgarian culture. He also found a plausible explanation for why there were not any material traces dating to the first two-three decades after Danube Bulgaria was founded that could be detected by means of archaeology. Clearly, he could make a difference between archaeological guesses and the real ethno-cultural processes, his relevant stipulations are also contributions.

Archeological evidence of mortuary cults is divided into two groups – necropolises and memorial facilities (pp 191 - 210), covering the

[90] Rashev 2003c, 129-148.

full range of ancient shrines. Some of those shrines still meet with very great interest on the part of the archaeologists and their discovery is considered a benchmark achievement, for example – the necropolis near the town of Novi Pazar. Rasho Rashev has led several teams of archaeologists who investigated other necropolises and some of the results of the investigations haven't been published yet, e.g. the necropolises near the villages of Karamanite, Nozharevo, Dibich, the burial mounds at Kabiyuk, "the fence" near Zlatna niva. The results of the investigations are summarized in accordance with the amount of newly discovered data. The contribution evaluation should be made in the context of his overview. Rasho Rashev made his scientific commentaries on memorial facilities, burial sites inventory and its location in the necropolis, using all of the archeological evidence and the previous interpretations made by other scientists. He came to the conclusion that no major differences were observed as far as the burial customs of the people who lived in the plains north and south of Danube River. Therefore, they belonged to the same culture and the local differences were of no consequence. A further contribution consisted in ending the unnecessary arguments about the identification of old Bulgarian culture beyond the Danube as Proto-Romanian.

There is a chapter in Rasho Rashev's monograph focused on arts in pagan culture (pp 211 - 230), classified as representational and applied art. He openly criticizes the archeologists who worked in the field in the first half of the 20-th century, as they had the tendency to drop into the realm of delusion. Rasho Rashev came up with several misconceptions himself, so a reassessment of archaeological evidence on the emergence of these art forms was necessary to be made. Otherwise, he considered the Madara Horsrman, the remains of stone lions, which he mentioned, one of the stone inscriptions found in the khan's chancellery and the stone model of a yurt discovered near the town of Devnya to be proper examples of pagan art and made his comments on them.

He scrutinized the art objects made of non-ferrous metals such as the cup of the province governor Sivin, belt accessories, seals, pendants, bells decorated with human images, different figurines and finally The Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós. There is a note, entitled "Fake artifacts ...", where Rasho Rashev incorporated parts of his previous articles, that we have already mentioned, concerning the misidentification of archaeological objects, based on insufficient data. He wrote short commentary notes on the exquisite set of golden vessels known as The Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós which was formerly

ascribed to the Bulgarians but recently to the Avars. His assessment however corresponds to the current research level, a tremendous effort was put recently in a more thorough examination of this complex set of archaeological artifacts.[91] The recent evidence proves that individual sets of vessels have been made in different goldsmiths' shops in post-Sasanian times, by Greek and/or Arab goldsmiths following or deviating from the Sasanian canon.

Rasho Rashev paid special attention once again to the topic of the graffiti drawings that he had worked on before (pp 226 - 229). Here he divided them into two groups: "from the pagan period" and "supposedly from the pagan period". Yet again he stayed true to himself, avoiding the recent tendencies towards frivolous, irrelevant interpretation and identification of archaeological evidence. Here he made a contribution to the research methodology, namely how the researcher is to find the right balance when dealing with archeological evidence and then making a proper assessment.

Striving for a thorough work, Rasho Rashev addressed the issue of the images of Bulgarians found in Byzantine miniatures. He first commented on them and then came up with an important conclusion which is somewhat dubious, having in mind the artifacts excavated near the village of Velino, the burial mounds at Kabiyuk and Divdyadovo: "We have gathered a multifarious and mismatched collection of archaeological findings which do not form a unified system as the art produced at the same time in our neighbouring countries (Byzantine Empire, Khazar empire, Avar Khaganate). Different artifacts belonging to one and the same group like belt accessories were made in different coexisting styles, which probably appeared following one another in time..." (p 230). We think that here, Rasho Rashev got it wrong. He was on the verge of changing his opinion, but his untimely death cut the discussion short and now we have to finish it without him.

Wishing to be exhaustive as far as the culture of Proto-Bulgarians is concerned, Rasho Rashev wrote three whole chapters about their spiritual culture in the broad sense of the term. One of these chapters (pp 231 - 250) is about the script and the language. He based his research on Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions in Greek and some others written in Proto-Bulgarian using the Greek alphabet. But the longest text he used for reference was "Nominalia of the Bulgarian khans" and its best known version was a translation into Proto-Bulgarian, written using the Cyrillic

[91] Garam 2002, 81-112; Balint 2004.

alphabet. Another multidimensional database was the ancient Bulgarian runes which were still in use after the Christianization of Bulgaria. Decoding and reading the runes is the subject of wild speculation and fact-based serious interpretations are very few. As far as the stone inscriptions are concerned, Rasho Rashev agreed with the classification proposed by Veselin Beshevliev and made competent comments on the research results which was quite surprising given that he lacked linguistic training. The critical approach is not about the literal reading and translating but rather the interpretation of the classification system according to which the different groups of inscriptions are structured. Rasho Rashev commented on a previously unheard-of inscription which was found near the town of Kaspichan. We will not discuss here every single one of Rasho Rashev's original ideas but we have to give him credit for applying quirky logic while interpreting the issue. Always skeptical, he even questioned the Turkic origin of the language of the Proto-Bulgarians on the basis of his personal observations on the inscriptions and the opinions of two renowned European Turkologists. He also discussed the theories about the Proto-Bulgarian runic inscriptions and Slavic Pre-Cyrillic writing. He has referred to the many commentaries about the ancient signs of Proto-Bulgarians in a similar vein and according to the only trustworthy empirical research,[92] they are symbols identifying different khans clans. Readers can be absolutely sure that this is not a script per se by modern terms as much as the advocates for loose interpretations would like it to be. Besides, in Rasho Rashev's major monograph, reference is made to polysemy theory – when a symbol means many different things. And probably this is the reason why some of them were still in use after the Christianization of Bulgaria.

The last part of Rasho Rashev's chapter on arts is about language, folklore and literature (pp 243 - 252). Using all the available source materials of every kind, he makes a short overview on the subject, offering true insights about the spiritual culture from the beginning of Bulgarian civilization, an overworked theme by many scientists. Painstakingly, he literally made lists of words, mainly terms, titles and names, pondering on the possibility of coming up with definitive conclusions as the current data is insufficient. He also commented on the different speculations about the preserved historical sources and their identity. Rasho Rashev's scientific contribution in this case is

[92] Makarova & Pletneva 1984, 212-223.

giving a clear and on point empirical (i.e. it could easily be verified) assessment about how things really were, as far as this particular side of Bulgarian life back then was concerned. In this chapter, Rasho Rashev presented unique hypothesis and came up with original, clearly expressed conclusions.

In the very beginning of a relatively short chapter, entitled "Population, society, economy" (pp 253 - 289), he makes a critical review of archaeological evidence concerning the pre-Christian Bulgaria ethnic makeup. Much attention was focused on the inhomogeneous characteristics of funeral rites performed in the pagan necropolises, classifying them into four groups. This classification, beyond all doubt, reflects the complex formation of Proto-Bulgarian ethnicity. Here, Rasho Rashev came up with another original hypothesis about the settlement of the Slavs south of the Danube: first came the Slavs belonging to the Korchak-Zhytomyr culture, settling on the lands east of Yantra river, later on, came the Slavs who settled west of the river. The Slavs in Thrace were their descendants, some of them crossed the mountain as early as the 7th century AD and others after the Proto-Bulgarians settled on the plain south of the Danube River. Rasho Rashev has also commented on the presence of different citizens of the Byzantine Empire, mostly Greeks and Armenians. He highlighted the fact that there were some groups of Avars who also came to settle as attested by the written historical sources, the archaeological evidence being only the (maybe) typical yellow ceramics and belt accessories from a later period (end of the 8th century – beginning of the 9th century AD). However, Avar graves have not been found yet. Rasho Rashev made a critical note on the assumption that some Bulgarians or even Khazars migrated out of the Khazar empire. There was a separate note on the race of the people buried in pagan necropolises whose remains were found.

He discussed at length the pre-Christian Bulgarian society, starting with the tribes, clans, families, then the institutions and the military and administrative system of the state. Unlike previous researches, in this case, there are enough sources making it possible to follow the development of the subject. Rasho Rashev's corrective observations resulted in changing our concepts about the timeline of social processes. Here, Rasho Rashev provided little input on the matter. There is a big interest in the topic and some of the problems have been already solved. Rasho Rashev's special touch could be seen in the special interpretations of the multiple diverse sources.

The chapter ends with him describing the characteristics of early medieval economy, summarizing all the available information about the traditional occupation of the Bulgarian population at the time, commenting on its level of development. His scientific approach matches with the methodology created by the historians belonging to a French historical school, led by Fernand Braudel who advocates for a deeply comprehensive research on human society evolution.

As we have mentioned before, Rasho Rashev was very much interested in the faith of the Bulgarians and he put a strong emphasis on it in his monograph. In a forty page chapter entitled "Religion, myth and magic" (pp. 287 - 332) he commented on all the available empirical data on paganism in Lower Danube Bulgaria. He presented his thesis of Slavs' religious beliefs using all the recent data and taking a critical look at his own concepts. Next, he brought to the reader's attention a detailed theory of Tengri and the Proto-Bulgarian pantheon, maintaining his critical tone. He presents the religious cults as parts of an entity and along with that pays particular attention to the worship of celestial bodies only vaguely mentioned in the scientific literature. There are separate commentaries on the Earth Goddess cult, worship of the ruler, cults of the dead and the deification of animals. He made a short note on the Slavic idols and their connection to the Proto-Bulgarian pagan shrines. Adhering to the scientific style of writing of the main body of his monograph, Rasho Rashev wrote the chapter "Impossible and outrageous gods and cults" about the deities of the underworld, Proto-Bulgarian Buddha, Christianity before the conversion of Bulgaria, Bogomilism and paganism, totemism, phallic worship and the sacralization of sexuality, the worship of fire. Rasho Rashev offered simple explanations of these manifestations of the human spirit and this has to be seen against the background of a recent tendency to sensationalize societal phenomena. He based his comments on the magical beliefs, customs and practices on fragmentary written sources which might be quite eloquent but they lack consistency. There is a note on the sacred objects and numerous symbols, oath marks and shamanic practices. He wrote short overviews on mythology, cosmogony and lastly on Bulgarian paganism in accordance with the abovementioned hypothesis about two separate branches of old Bulgarian culture - elitist culture and mass culture. In this context he again came up with an original hypothesis about the "religious policies, religious tolerance or religious indifference". Rasho Rashev set out his idea about the unequal competition between

paganism and Christianity before the conversion of Bulgaria. He might be right by saying that the persecutions against Christians by the Byzantines or the Bulgarians were not a regular thing and it was all down to the political circumstances. This was due to the fact that paganism was not considered to be the state religion and was not accompanied by a fully-developed dogmatic ideology.

The conclusion entitled "Bulgarian pagan culture: composition and special features" (pp 333 - 343) perfectly captures the essence of the monograph. In this conclusive chapter, Rasho Pashev presented a number of ideas that will remain forever in the annals of Bulgarian archaeology and Humanities. The first one is defining the scope of archeological science and practices as far as the identification of the early medieval communities is concerned. Next comes a related hypothesis about the formation of the culture of the migrated and sedentary nomadic tribes and the possible results that might be produced through a comparative analysis of archaeological evidence about their situation before and after the resettlement. In this final chapter Rasho Rashev expresses his views on homogeneity and the ethnonyms used in archaeological texts. He considers the phrase "old Bulgarian culture" to be a broad term that can cover a wide range of meanings, thus the culture of pagan Bulgaria is simply "*Bulgarian and not Proto-Bulgarian*".

According to Rasho Rashev, old Bulgarian pagan culture is a border culture, a blend of steppe culture and Mediterranean rural, urban and sea culture. It is not a civilization as defined by Oswald Spengler. Artifacts of old Bulgarian culture were not a cultural norm, they were not serially produced so that this culture to be eligible for designation as mature and sustainable. A typical cultural characteristics of Bulgarians in the centuries ahead is their religion being a mixture of paganism and Christianity and there is abundant evidence to prove that.

Rasho Rashev's scientific achievements are hard to measure. Anybody who knew the pace at which he worked on-site and in his office could easily understand that. His works form a finished whole and everything he did would endure forever. Thanks to him our knowledge of the pagan culture of Danube Bulgaria climbed to a new level. His logical, consistent, in-depth thesis instilled greater confidence in the archaeologists regarding the accuracy of information encoded in antique remains. Only such an honest uncompromising man of science like him have proved so trustworthy. Being a humble servant of science

and working tirelessly in his chosen field of archeology was his life's mission.

Bulgarian society today is aware of that and honored him by doing the right thing – a bas-relief was made and the museum at the national historical-archaeological reserve "Pliska" was named after him.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Cover of the first edition of the book "Bulgarian pagan VII - IX century culture " (Rashev 2008a.)

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Fig. 3. Cover of the book "Kabiyuk. Early medieval mound complex" (Rashev, Stanilov et al. 2014.)

Fig. 4. Cover of the first edition of the book "The Proto-Bulgarians in the V-VII Century" (Rashev 2000b.)

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Fig. 6. Cover of Pliska travel guide (Rashev 1985.)

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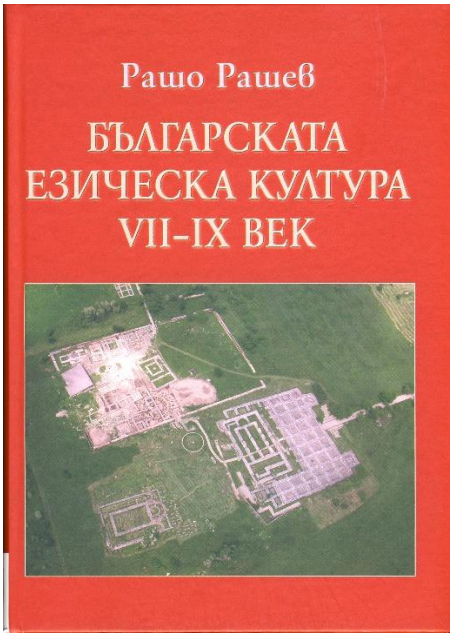


Fig. 1

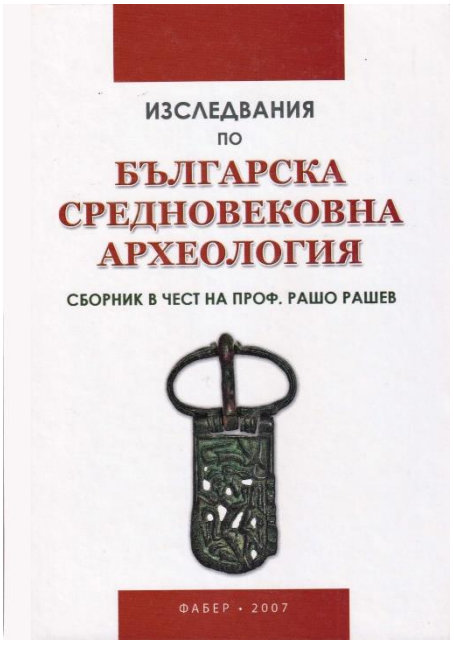


Fig. 2

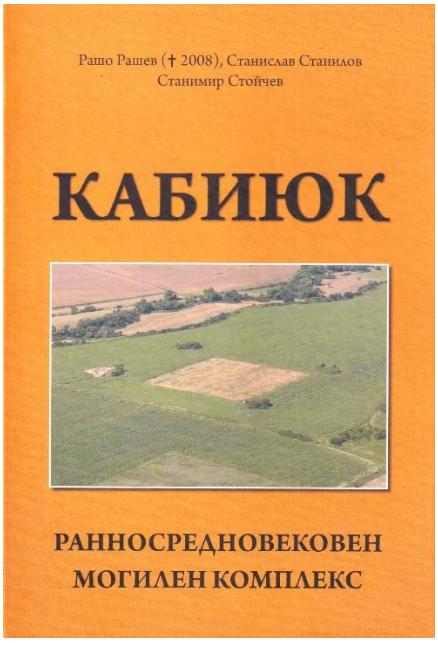


Fig. 3

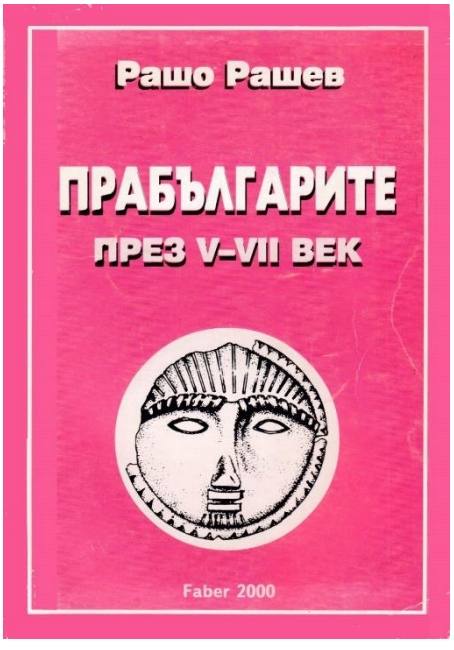


Fig. 4

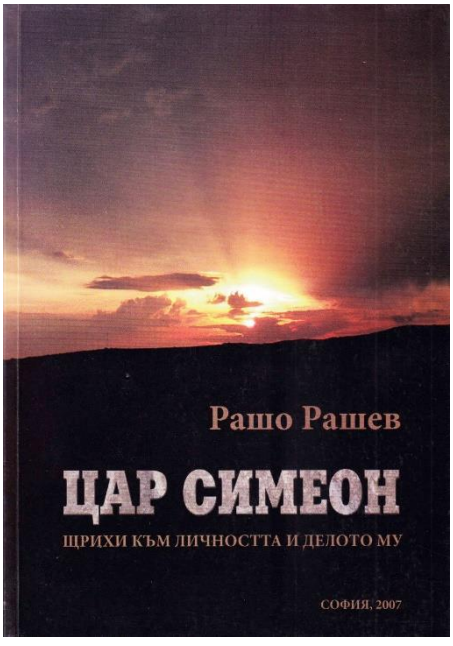


Fig. 5

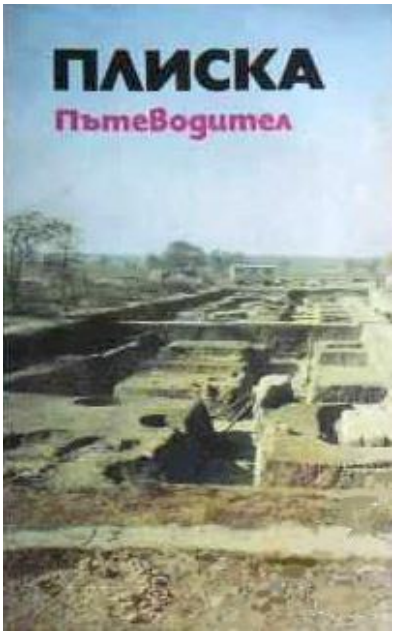


Fig. 6

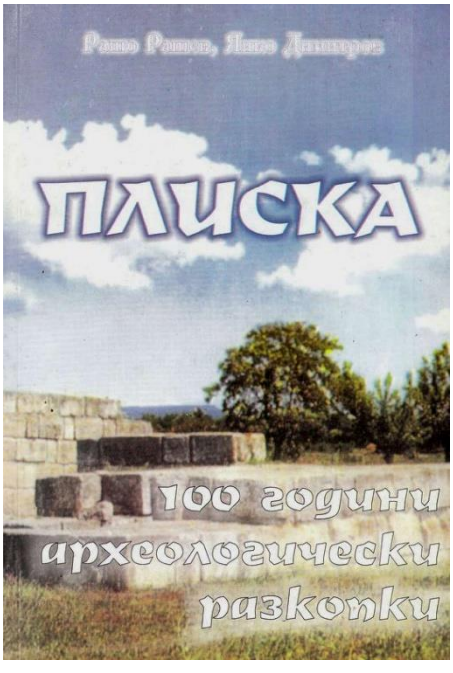


Fig. 7

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Rasho Rashev and the Sarmatian theory for the origin of Protobulgarians – new archaeological and genomic data in support of the theory

Todor Chobanov, Svetoslav Stamov

Abstract: The present study builds on the research of Prof. Rasho Rashev, connecting the Protobulgarians with the Sarmatian communities in Eastern Europe. In view of the growing importance of the numerous finds on the northeastern coast of the Caspian Sea, today Mangastau, Kazakhstan, we analyze the archaeological and genomic data on landmark sites such as the Aigirli-2 cult facility of the "Baitinian type", finds from the Kabakarak trading settlement (3rd-5th century), as well as finds from the Altankazgan cult center of the late Sarmatian and Hunnic eras. Significant parallels have been drawn between the Protobulgarian cult facilities on the Lower Danube and what was observed in the temples of the mentioned complexes, both in terms of the shape of some cult structures, but also the presence of stone altars with a rectangular shape (sacrificial altars). Finds from Altankazgan and Karakabak are associated with the Hunnic necropolis of Novogrigorievka, the North Caucasus and other areas related to Protobulgarian history and culture. The available genomic data from the considered area along the northeastern shores of the Caspian Sea confirm these observations, linking individuals from the studied sites in the area to the population of Danube Bulgaria and the Saltovo-Mayaki culture.

Keywords: Protobulgarians, Bulgars, Great migration

Резюме: Настоящото изследване стъпва на разработките на проф. Рашо Рашев, свързващи прабългарите със сарматските общности в Източна Европа. С оглед на нарастващата значимост на многобройните находки на североизточното крайбрежие на Каспийско Море, дн. обл. Мангастау, Казахстан, са анализирани археологическите и геномни данни относно знакови обекти като култовото съоръжение Айгирли–2 от „байтински тип“, находките от търговското селище Кабакарак (3-5 век), както и находки от култовото средище Алтънказган от късносарматската и хунската епоха. Очертани са значими паралели между прабългарските култови съоръжения на Долен Дунав и наблюдаваното в храмовете на посочените комплекси, както по отношение на

формата на някои култови структури, но така също и наличието на каменни олтари с правоъгълна форма (жертвеници). Находки от Алтънказган и Каракабак се асоциират с хунския некропол Новогригориевка, Северен Кавказ и други зони, свързани с прабългарската история и култура. Наличните геномни данни от разглежданата зона по североизточните брегове на Каспийско море потвърждават тези наблюдения, свързвайки индивиди от проучени обекти в зоната с населението на Дунавска България и Салтово-маяцката култура.

The Eurasian steppe is the world's largest intact grassland, spanning unbroken from Dobrudja to Eastern Mongolia. It was a barrier for humans until the Yamna Culture domesticated the horse[1] and used wagons to cross it. Then the steppe became a highway for people, cultures, ideas, languages and sometimes armies. The Yamna people first populated the Eurasian steppe from 2500-3000 BCE, spreading their genes and culture across Europe and Asia.[2] The Corded Ware Culture followed them, spreading the Indo-Iranian languages from Fatiaynovo to the Altai region.[3] Over time, in the contact zone between the Iranian and Siberian worlds, dozens of new cultural formations emerged. The Sarmatians were an Iranian-speaking formation of militarized mobile pastoralists that emerged in this zone, who, during the time of their maximum expansion (from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE), inhabited the lands from Central Mongolia to Lake Balaton.[4]

The notable Bulgarian archaeologist Rasho Rashev (1943-2008) invested a great deal of efforts in one of the key questions of Bulgarian medieval archaeology related to the studying of the Eurasian steppe – the origin of Protobulgarians (called Bulgars in English language scientific literature). He began his quest to address the debate, going on already for centuries, with several articles, published in the 90ties. The initial steps were taken in his work "About the origin of Protobulgarians". His overall objective was to question the dominating up to that moment Turkic-Altaic theory, which was considered "official" in Communist Bulgaria and is still present in the textbooks in the early 1990s. He declared his view that "…the Turkic language fragments and material culture represent the language and culture of the elite only…and we lack direct data about the regular people who (for

[1] Anthony 2007, 193–201.
[2] Anthony 2019, 1-20.
[3] Saag 2021, 1-17.
[4] Gnecchi-Ruscone 2021, 1-14.

example) are not reported in the sources as followers of Tengri".[5] He then underlined that, for example, the artificial cranial deformation (ACD), a very common feature of Protobulgarian grave sites, is not characteristic for early medieval Turks, but for the "...old population of East Europe's steppes – the Sarmatians". Rashev challenged the linguistic argumentation of the Turkic theory with the argument that there are only two supposedly Turkic words registered in the 9th-10th century Church Slavonic (Old Bulgarian) – "kumir" and "kapishte", and the total number with the introduction of contemporary Bulgarian material could not pass beyond 40 words, compared to over 300 "borrowed" old Turkic words in Hungarian.[6] Rashev argued that there was general neglect to that moment of the fact that around one third of all Pagan graves from 8th-9th century Danube Bulgaria must be associated with the "ordinary" Protobulgarians and this high number clearly does not correspond with the insignificant Turkic language remains in the Medieval Bulgarian language. The solution to this problem offered by Rashev is the same as the one proposed by his teacher St.Vaklinov after the excavation of the necropolis in Novi Pazar and by Simirnov, Artamonov and others in relation to Volga Bulgarians and the genesis of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture – that a tiny Turkic elite ruled over Sarmatians and Ugric peoples.[7] Rashev also challenged the concept that all groups using runic signs in the Steppes were Turkic and that there were at least two different types of runes used in Eastern Europe and more importantly, the fact that the mass evidence of rune-like scripts being used in Danube Bulgaria comes from the Christian era monasteries as Ravna and Murfatlar (which appeared not earlier than the late 9th century). The conclusion that non-Turkic peoples used runes or rune-like scripts and that alongside Kuban Runic inscriptions represent a non-Turkic language was confirmed by the leading authority on Turkic runes Kaizlasov.[8] Interestingly even today, about 30 years later and after many excavations, there is only one significant find from Pliska that could be described as a real "runic inscription", but the date and meaning of the text remains unclear. As preceding the 7th-9th century Protobulgarian culture on Lower Danube, he again points at the Sarmatian culture that appeared on the left bank of Danube from the beginning of the 3rd century and contain the abovementioned features

[5] Rashev 1993, 23-24.
[6] Rashev 1993, 24.
[7] Rashev 1993, 26.
[8] Kaizlasov 1991, 26.

that establish a clear link between the two. He also recalls the solid involvement of Sarmatian peoples into the shaping of the Chernyakhov culture that flourished in the area on the left bank of the Dnieper river up to the Lower Danube area and contained biritualism (multiritualism) with different cremation rituals. There were variations – North or West – for the inhumations where the Sarmatian inhumation graves in the southern areas of the culture are predominantly with northern alignment and richer grave assemblages, containing also the typical black or grey pottery decorated with shining band areas.[9] The next link in the chain between 3rd-4th century late Sarmatians and 7th c. Protobulgarians was pointed by Rashev to be the 6th -7th century Penkovsk culture that also inherited the traditions of the preceding 5th century Kiev culture from the middle Dnieper area. The latter have likely included Chernyakhov peoples and traditions as later did Penkovsk culture. It conveniently spread in the forest-steppe area around the left tributaries of Dnieper, west to river Seret where it contacted the Slavic Praga-Korchak culture. The Penkovsk culture peoples practiced cremations (in pits or urns). They "disappeared" in late 7th-early 8th century, in the eve of the Khazar era. Very importantly, in order to be able to outline the contact zones, to the south Penkovsk culture reached the areal of the nomadic burials of the so-called "Sivashovka group". The pottery of Penkovsk culture included different types – alongside hand-made biconical pots there were also wheel-produced round pots from gray clay decorated with indented shining band areas. This characteristic pottery was named after "Pastirsk(oe)" fortress, where many examples where discovered, as Pastirsk type.[10]

In the late 1970s Rahev's teacher Stancho Vaklinov supported Artamonov's concept about the association between Pastirsk culture and the Kutrigurs[11] but Rashev went even further. He built his developing theory on the works of the Slavic researcher Rusanova, who established that all Penkovsk pottery types, including the Pastirsk types, have direct Chernyakhov predecessors and that there was a dominating presence of non-Turkic (Iranian) peoples in Penkovsk culture. The Antes proper were in fact direct descendants of the old Sarmatian population of the region who in 6th-7th century mixed with the arriving

[9] Rashev 1993, 27.
[10] Rashev 1993,27-29.
[11] Vaklinov 1977, 31.

Slavic peoples. The typical biconical pots are not Slavic. They are missing in the Praga-Krchak culture and there is a group of hand-made pots related to Sarmatian, "Avar" and Saltovo types. The Slavic arrivals were gradually passing their languages to the Antes, who were Slavicized linguistically.[12] This theory enabled Rashev to conclude that in his westbound movement Asparuh, supposedly starting his trip from the inner territories of Great Bulgaria east of Azov Sea, caused the Penkovsk population to move with him to the emerging Danube Bulgaria, which is a very sound explanation about the multiple finds of Pastirsk type pottery there in the 7th-9th century period.

Rashev's first major monography in the field was titled "The Protobulgarians during the 5th -7th centuries", and was initially published in 2000 and then reprinted and extended several times, for the last time in 2007, shortly before his death. Rashev invested a significant part of his research to the debate about the origins of the Protobulgarians, ultimately linking them with the Sarmatians. Launching his examination with an overview of the written sources, underlining the lack of solid explanation about the ethnic name "Bulgars". Rashev extensively focuses on the archaeological evidence as the most important about the origin debate. He underlined that the supposed Hun movement to the West passed through the steppes south of the Urals, where various Sarmatian tribes used to live ("Asian Sarmatia" from the written sources). In this area features like ash or limestone layer on the bottom of graves and cranial deformation are very common, together with northward direction of grave-pits and gradual diminishing of previously strong tradition of placing animal parts and specifically horse skulls and legs in the pit. The latter feature, together with the northern alignment, supposedly represent eastern influences (Hunnic migration). Rashev, however, was careful to conclude that "in the territories through which the Hunnic migration passed while moving towards Europe, there is no homogenous ethno-cultural group to be pointed out as a direct predecessor of the 5th-7th century Bulgarians".[13]

Rashev developed his theories about the origin of Protobulgarians even further in his last monography – "The Bulgarian pagan culture in 7th-9th century".[14] He criticized such research about the

[12] Russanova 1976, 75-112.
[13] Rashev 2007,31.
[14] Rashev 2008.

origin of Protobulgarians that relied only on formal similarities and predefined but imaginary relations in the fields of material or spiritual culture. He expressed awareness about the phenomenon of "nationalization", from the perspective of present times, of well-studied ancient cultures that often existed in too distant lands of Asia. He put Vaklinov's theory about the Minusinsk valley in Siberia as a possible original homeland of the Protobulgarians under careful consideration and concluded that certain shared features of grey glossy pottery from this area and 1st century Hun finds in Mongolia represent only superficial similarities, where the "lack of connecting links" removes this option from the table.[15] The second possible homeland – areas of Western Siberia and Middle Asia – contains "Saka-Scythian" or "Sarmatian" features that are later well present in the Saltovo culture necropolises – gray pottery, placement of meat, horse parts, wooden vessels and wooden frames, surrounding of the grave pit with stones, etc. Rashev concludes that some of those features are not really defining for given ethnic identifications and could be found in various steppe cultures but also areas that neighbor the steppes.[16] Interestingly, Rashev is again certain that key features "of older Steppe heritage, from the Late Sarmatian period" are much stronger on the Lower Danube rather than on Don and Volga River areas – notably the artificial cranial deformation (ACD), meridian direction of bodies, ash/lime layers on the bottom of grave pits, meat offerings in the grave, post-mortem destruction of the skeletons and specific mesocranic cranial type with some minor Mongoloid admixture.[17] In his major 2008 book Rashev also published the rare cases of burial practices, including "shaft memorial structures". One was discovered just 250m. away from the west rampart of Pliska, dug into a bronze age mound (labeled mound XXII). A 11.80 m. deep, 240:180 cm. shaft was cut into its body, finishing at the bottom with a symbolical rectangular grave pit facing North. On different levels of the shaft two dogs, a cat and two horses were laid, seemingly during a long period. On the top of the shaft the mound was restored and a "trizna" ceremony was carried out.[18] The Eurasian steppes lack a concrete parallel of this structure from the Medieval period, but Rashev points a number of analogies from Scythian and Sarmatian context – from Crimea, from Melitopol area, the area of Royal Scythians, shaft-

[15] Rashev 2008,335.
[16] Rashev 2008, 335-336.
[17] Rashev 2008, 336.
[18] Rashev 2008, 207-208.

graves from Dagestan. Rashev concluded that this "archaic ritual" is just one of many examples that "recall the role of Schytians-Sarmatians in the ethnogenesis of the Protobulgarians".[19]

Rashev's legacy endured in the years after his untimely death. His observations were strengthened through new finds in the lands of Danube Bulgaria that confirmed again and again the theoretical frames he developed. One of the authors of this article recently wrote a monograph, that contained all known data supporting the Sarmatian theory and elaborating on Rashev's achievements.[20] The challenge remained though; Rashev was right that no singular group from the Great migration period contains all the archaeological features evident on the Lower Danube. It appeared then, that the major questions would remain without new developments and clear answers until new data is available that would point to a specific Sarmatian group(s) amongst the many known in the vast region of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, that could be convincingly connected with the Protobulgarians. However, in the last decades, major finds related to Sarmatian tribes before and during the Great migration period continued to be discovered on the eastern banks of the Caspian Sea that added new and new data to already very interesting archaeological complexity. Those amassing finds relate to the most conservative aspect of ancient Steppe cultures – their religious practices and burial rituals. Since the 80s of the 20th century, a large number of stone temples were discovered in the area (more than 20), known in scientific literature as "Baite" type sanctuaries, that are likely related with the population that left neighboring and synchronous grave-sites from the broad period 4th century – 2nd century BC.[21] Later, after the period when those temples were properly used as cult places, burials were carried out around and inside them by "Sarmatian-like nomads"[22] who also left as secondary(?) markings on the stones/stelae traditional Sarmatian signs. In the last years new sanctuaries of the "Baite type" continue to surface during archaeological expeditions, demonstrating the same observation – the long use of a given site with burials inside the temple during the later stages before the complete abandonment. One such case is the early Iron age Aigyrly 2 sanctuary (fig.1), located at Tupkaragan on the Mangyshlak peninsula (Caspian shores, South-western Kazakhstan), on

[19] Rashev 2008, 208.
[20] Chobanov 2021a.
[21] Olhovskiy 1997, 142, 149-150, 152; Onggaruly *et al*. 2017.
[22] Olhovskii 1997, 149-150.

a special cape visible from about 40 miles. The excavations uncovered stone walls of memorial monument which is cross-shaped in the internal space, and consists of a two-stage structure with a dome (app. 15 m in diameter). Seven smaller stone structures of various type and size were discovered around it. The site was used in 4th century BC up to 2nd century AD and at certain times several people were buried inside.[23] The "Baite type" temples could be compared broadly to the several circular Protobulgarian sanctuaries known from the Lower Danube area.[24] One of the features that repeats itself in both groups is the square altar or fire-pit in some cases, situated at the center of the structures. The cross-shaped interior of some structures of the "Baite type", including Aigyrly 2, could be broadly related to two Pagan-era cross-shaped structures from Danube Bulgaria (8th-9th century), probably used as temples and remaining without strong parallels up to now.[25] Another broad similarity is the presence of stone tables for offerings in both groups – the Baite-type sanctuaries and the pagan temples of the Protobulgarians on the Lower Danube. In Baite temples they are round but sometimes rectangular (fig.2-1,2-2), while on the Lower Danube they are typically rectangular. Nevertheless, the general type of object (stone offering table for liquids) seems to be worthy of mentioning despite the time and space challenges that such a comparison raises. Similarities in the rituals performed are also possible, considering the broad analogies in the Sarmatian burial traditions that were quite conservative and passed from the Volga-Caspian area to Eastern Europe alongside practices like the ACD.

The area of the eastern bank of the Caspian Sea apparently continued to be an important venue for steppe peoples in the Hun and post-Hun period of Europe (4th-6th century AD) when many of the Sarmatian tribes were already living under the leadership of the Hun elites. In recent years a series of intriguing finds appeared in the area of Tupkaragan (at the Mangyshlak peninsula), described in scientific reports as the unusually rich "Altÿnkazgan finds". Apparently related to the nearby artisan and trade fortified settlement Karakabak (containing finds of coins from 3rd – mid 5th century), the core of Altÿnkazgan finds represents a group of 9 rectangular sanctuaries ("enclosures") with central square altars that contain within a significant number of

[23] Onggaruly *et al*. 2016; Onggaruly *et al*. 2017, 102-135.
[24] Chobanov 2021b, 253-254.
[25] Chobanov 2021a, 249.

offerings of various nature – pottery articles, belt decorations, horse ammunition, etc. The case of one of the rectangular enclosures ("structure 15") is particularly intriguing. Following the North-South axis, it contains buried pottery articles and the remains of a massive Hun-period saddle (first half of 5th century), unusually clad with silver sheets with decorations containing figures of strong animals.[26] This type of saddle, finds parallels from the Pontic-Caspian area, most notably two pieces that were discovered in the rich Hunnic necropolis Novogrigorievka on the left bank of the Dnieper river.[27] It is also notable that the rectangular N-S stone "enclosures" of Altÿnkazgan may be compared with the multiple rectangular Pagan temples of Danube Protobulgarians and temples from the Saltovo-Mayaki culture with a similar plan.[28]

The observation about strong "western" links of the people who carried out the Altÿnkazgan rituals and likely the bearers of many objects deposited in the enclosures, is supported by the detailed analysis of the fibulae discovered during the excavations of Karakabak, who mostly demonstrate links with the Northern Caucasus and some - with the Urals area[29] (fig.4). The situation as it is represented by the archaeological and genome data (see below) links the area (Karakabak settlement and Altÿnkazgan sanctuaries) with the Hun political space in Eastern European steppes and the Caucasus, where the Late Sarmatians, bearing a conservative set of cultural traditions, were a major ethnic element that later came under the political dominance by Avars and Turks.

To add an additional layer to the above archaeological observations, we analyzed ancient DNA from 175 individuals (82 Sarmatians, 9 European Huns, 20 Central Asian Huns, 60 Scythians, and 4 early Bulgarians) who lived in the Eurasian Steppe during and after the Great Migration period, along with 2000 ancient genomes from across Eurasia. All samples were obtained from the genomic repository of Harvard University Medical School's Allan Resources Center, David Reich Lab.

Main findings of our ancient DNA analysis are as follows: Distal analysis of the ancestral components conducted with QPAdm

[26] Astafyev & Bogdanov 2015, passim; Astafyev & Bogdanov 2018, 69.
[27] Zaseckaya 1994, table 2, 4, 7, 10, 35, 41, 47; Astafyev & Bogdanov 2015, 80.
[28] Chobanov 2021, 248-253, 260.
[29] Gavritukhin 2019, 187.

demonstrates that Sarmatians originated in the region of Aktogay-Chelyabinsk, resulting from the admixture of a Proto-Iranic group from the Srubnaya culture with Paleo-Siberian, probably Uralic groups of hunter-gatherers (reported in fig. 5 and 6). The initial population existed in a relatively limited area in the forest-steppe area between Northwest Kazakhstan and Southern Siberia for nearly four centuries (10th-6th century BCE).

QPAdm results show that this initial population from Southern Urals underwent demographic and political expansion from the 6th century BCE onward, displacing the Scythian groups from their dominant position in Europe and Northern Kazakhstan, but not in Central Asia, where the Bronze and Iron Age Scythian-associated ancestral components remained dominant (reported in fig.7 and fig. 6).

The results in fig. 7 demonstrate that the Sarmatian population from the Iron Age in Kazakhstan, located along the North-Eastern Caspian Sea coast, served as the source of migrations for the Alans and late "Hungarian" Sarmatians. People carrying admixture from Aigirly culture appeared as early as the 2nd century in Hungary, possibly even earlier,[30] as shown in the results reported in fig. 5, fig. 7 and fig. 8. Another branch of the population, associated with Aigirly culture gave rise to the Caucasian Alans (fig. 8). The Far Eastern component in Hungarian Sarmatians and Caucasian Alans decreased over time to the level observed in European Scythians (fig. 5, fig.7, fig. 8).

The component analysis of 7 Hun era samples from the Hungarian Plain suggests that Hungarian Sarmatians closely cooperated with Attila's Huns, and by the 5th century, the peak of Hunnic expansion, they constituted the main body of Hunnic warriors (fig. 8, fig. 9, fig. 12). Besides the Sarmatian component, a distinct Germanic component was noticeable in the Hun period samples, suggesting the possibility that the Danube Sarmatians in Hungary mixed with Germans. Later, the gene signal of the other Sarmatian group (Trans-Tisza) reached the Balkans and formed the basis for several modern Balkan ethnicities, including Bulgarians (fig. 8, fig. 10). Two of the medieval Bulgarian samples – Bitola and Ryahovo[31] – showed remarkable similarity to the Sarmatian samples from Trans-Tisza in the 5th century (fig. 8, fig. 10). In contrast, the third Bulgarian sample,

[30] Gnecchi-Ruscone 2022, 1-44.

[31] Lazaridis 2022, 377.

Samovodene,[32] unlike the other two and unlike contemporary Bulgarians, was closer to the Sarmatians from IA Kazakhstan and the late Russian Sarmatians than to the Trans-Tisza Sarmatians (fig.11, fig. 12). Both findings lend credibility to the hypothesis of R. Rashev (see above) for the presence of a major Sarmatian component in the Protobulgarians.

Other findings of our DNA research are: The early Bulgarian samples from the 9th-12th centuries AD[33] showed a high degree of genetic continuity with the Sarmatian samples from the 5th century AD Pannonia, suggesting that the Protobulgarians might have been at least partially derived from the Sarmatian population that migrated to the Balkans (results reported in fig. 6). The early Bulgarian samples also showed a significant Slavic component, ranging from 20% to 40%, indicating that the Protobulgarians intermixed with the local Slavic population that inhabited the region (Results reported in fig. 7). F-3 statistics demonstrates that the early Bulgarian samples had a negligible Turkic component, less than 5% in the average, suggesting that the Turkic influence on the Protobulgarians might have been mainly cultural and linguistic, rather than genetic (as reported in fig. 8).

The Sarmatian samples from Kazakhstan and Russia showed a higher Steppe component than the Sarmatian samples from Hungary and the Balkans, indicating that the Sarmatians from the east retained more of their Indo-Iranian ancestry than the Sarmatians from the west (shown in fig 5 and fig 7). The Sarmatian samples from Kazakhstan and Russia also showed a higher Far Eastern component than the Sarmatian samples from Hungary and the Balkans, indicating that the Sarmatians from the east had more contact and admixture with the Far Eastern and Paleo-Siberian groups than the Sarmatians from the west (data reported in fig 5, fig 7, fig 12). However, their far-eastern component had been derived predominantly from Uralic[34] populations (as seen in fig. 12), which contrasts with the proto-Mongolic origin of the far-eastern component in most Scythian and early Turkic samples (results reported in fig. 12). The Sarmatian samples from Hungary showed a higher Caucasian component than the Sarmatian samples from Kazakhstan and Russia, indicating that the Sarmatians from the west had more

[32] Lazaridis 2022, 377.
[33] Lazaridis 2022, 377.
[34] Haak 2013, 1-17.

contact and admixture with the Caucasian groups than the Sarmatians from the east, as reported in fig. 5.

Methods used during our DNA research. We conducted ADNA analysis using three different methodologies: F-3 statistics,[35] PLINK2 PCA, and Admixtools 2 QPAdm analysis.[36] We only report the findings that were uniformly confirmed by all three methods, and we rejected the results that were inconsistent. We analyzed ancient DNA from 175 individuals, projecting them onto 2000 ancient genomes from across Eurasia. All samples were obtained from the genomic repository of Harvard University Medical School's Allan Resources Center, David Reich Lab, and are publicly available online. We used QPAdm, software tool that estimates the admixture proportions of a target population from a set of source populations using f-4 and f-2 statistics, to perform a component analysis on the dataset. We report the results we obtained in fig. 5, fig. 7 and fig. 9. We used PLINK2 to perform a Principal Component Analysis (PCA, statistical technique used to identify structural patterns in the populations and reduce the dimensionality of the data) on the dataset. We present the results in fig. 11. We used the Ward method for the clustering as we employed the coordinates of the samples that we obtained with PLINK2 while calculating PCA for the samples. We conducted the clustering in Admixtools 2 and results are the dendrograms, presented in fig. 8 and fig 10. We used Admixtools 2 to perform F-3 outgroup statistical analysis on the dataset. We present the results from f-3 statistics in fig. 12.

We ran the QPAdm function of Admixtools 2 using the same right populations in each run ("Mbuti.DG", "Russia_Ust_Ishim_HG.DG", "Russia_Kostenki12", "ONG.SG", "Switzerland_Bichon.SG", "Morocco_Iberomaurusian) with the following commands and parameters: admixtools f2 = f2_from_geno ("c:/R/aho", maxmiss = 1, pops = c(left, right, target)) qp = sapply(target, function(x) qpadm(f2, left, right, x)) qp2 = apply(qp, 2, function(x) { popdrop <- x$popdrop print(popdrop) feasible_populations <- filter(popdrop, feasible == TRUE & f4rank != 0 & p >= 0.02 & p <= 0.6) print(feasible_populations). We ran the PLINK2 PCA (Galinsky 2016, 456-472) using the following commands and parameters: plink2 --bfile C:/R/plink/54HO9 --nonfounders --allow-no-sex --recode --out q3file eigenvectors <-

[35] Patterson 2012, 1065–1093.
[36] Kristiansen 2022, 21-60.

read.table ("plinkeigvec", header = FALSE) eigenvalues < read.table ("plink.eigenval", header = FALSE) population_means <- eigenvectors %>% group_by(PopulationID) %>% summarise(PC1mean = mean(PC1), PC2mean = mean(PC2)). In order to perform hierarchical clustering using the Ward method on Admixtools 2, we extracted sample coordinates (PCC1 and 2) from "plinkeigvec". We calculated F-3 statistics on Admixtools 2, using the following commands and parameters: blocks = f2_from_geno("c:/R/1240M/1240M", maxmiss = 1, pops=c(p1, p2, p3)) f3=f3(blocks,p3,p2,p1) f3_result <- f3 f3_result <- f3_result %>% arrange(est) f3_result$est <- f3_result$est - min(f3_result$est) f3_result$est <- f3_result$est / max(f3_result$est).

DNA observations**,** Fig. 5-12: We present the results in figures 5-12. The bar charts display the numerical data from the analysis, as the percentages of the different components in each population are visualized in both numeric and color-coded format. The PCA plots shows the first two principal components of the dataset. The points on the plots are individual samples, color-coded according to their population labels.

DNA observations, Fig 5. Distal analysis of 62 Sarmatian individual samples combined in 10 populations. The Sarmatians were an Iranian-speaking formation of militarized mobile pastoralists who, during the time of their maximum expansion (from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE), spread their dominance from Central Mongolia to Lake Balaton. Earliest Sarmatian samples come from Southern Urals (Gnecchi-Ruscone) and most of them lack European Neolithic ancestry. An exception is the population from IA Kazakhstan (Aigirly) which contains a European Neolithic component. This component is presented in Hungarian Sarmatians suggesting a connection between the two groups. All 62 samples show the presence of steady East Asian (in orange) component, decreasing over time and dependent on the distance of the samples from the Southern Urals.

DNA observations, Fig. 6. A chronological grouping (column 1 represents the years) of all available Sarmatian samples suggests that Sarmatians originated in the region of Aktogay-Chelyabinsk (Narasimhan), resulting from the admixture of a Proto-Iranian group from the Srubnaya culture with Paleo-Siberians, probably Uralic groups of hunter-gatherers. The Sarmatian group of tribes seem to have emerged in the forest-steppe triangle between the northeastern shores of the Caspian Sea, Chelyabinsk, and Samara where the earliest samples from the table are concentrated. The oldest specimen identified as

Sarmatian, both archaeologically and genetically, dates to 13th century BCE and was found in a burial site near Samara, belonging to the Late Srubnaya Culture. This specimen, however, remained isolated for the next several centuries, indicating a slow take off by the Sarmatian community from the remnants of the proto-Iranian groups in Srubnaya. The subsequent burial sites, labeled "Sarmatian" in the literature, all reside in the triangle formed by northeastern shores of the Caspian Sea, Chelyabinsk, and Samara and have been dated to the period of 7th-5th centuries BCE, suggesting that this is the time, and this is the area where the future Sarmatian community, language, and culture probably originated. As shown by fig. 12, the Sarmatian population had a consistent 16% Uralic admixture from its very inception.

DNA observations, Fig. 7. Sarmatian population from Southern Urals underwent demographic expansion from the 6th century BCE onward, displacing the Scythian populations from their dominant position in Europe and Northern Kazakhstan, but not in Central Asia, where the Scythian component remained dominant (QPAdm shows continuity between LBA samples, IA samples and late antiquity samples in Central and Middle Asia, while in Europe, IA steppe samples are partially displaced and partially influenced by Sarmatian – looking samples, giving rise to LA and early medieval samples that look intermediary between Ukrainian Scythian samples from IA and Kazakhstan IA Sarmatian samples. The Late Sarmatian groups from 5th century Hungarian Plain demonstrate a mixture between IA Kazakhstan Sarmatians, local Central European elements and IA Ukraine Scythians with added 3-9% Siberian admixture in some of the individuals.)

DNA observations, Fig.8. **A** hierarchical clustering of the samples based on shared genetic pedigree demonstrates that Kazakhstan IA Sarmatians from Aigirly served as a population base for Hungarian Sarmatians[37], Russia Alans[38] and later to Hungarian Hun[39] population from 5th century.

DNA observations, Fig. 9. The results of QPAdm analysis show that the Huns of Attila had a close connection with the Sarmatians from Hungary, as they carried nearly an 80% Sarmatian component. They differed from the contemporary Hungarian Sarmatians in the same

[37] Gnecchi-Ruscone 2022.
[38] Damgaard 2018.
[39] Gnecchi-Ruscone 2022.

region and era by their 11% far-eastern component, which was probably derived from a population with Central Asian origins. The situation, however, was different in the two elite Hun burials, as in both elite graves, the far-eastern component exceeded 70%, suggesting much higher degree of admixture with the Central Asian Huns among the Hunnic elites than in the common Hunnic warriors. The analysis paints a picture of far-eastern clans sitting on the top of Hunnic social hierarchy, leading an army of mainly Sarmatian and other European peoples probably recruited among local Sarmatian and other populations from the Hungarian Plain and from Roman Empire.

DNA observations, Fig. 10. Neighbor Joining Tree. The Sarmatian groups of the Hungarian Plain form the basis for several modern Balkan ethnicities, including Bulgarians. The two early medieval Bulgarian samples – Bitola and Ryahovo[40] – cluster with Sarmatian samples from Danube/Trans-Tisza from the 5th century. In contrast, the third Bulgarian sample, Samovodene,[41] unlike the other two, clusters with the Sarmatians from IA Kazakhstan (Aigirly) and the late Russian Sarmatians.

DNA observations,FIG 11. PCA Plot. The early Bulgarian samples showed proximity to the Early Balkan Slavic Samples, demonstrating significant Slavic component, ranging from 20% to 40%, indicating that the Protobulgarians intermixed with the local Slavic population that inhabited the region. PCA suggest that the Hungarian Sarmatians cluster with samples from the Chernyakhov culture, suggesting that at least one late Sarmatian group (Danube Sarmatians) in the Hungarian Plain consisted of descendants from the Chernyakhov culture, which might have migrated to Pannonia seeking refuge from the Goths there. The PCA also support the hypothesis of Professor R. Rashev, who proposed a special relationship between Asparuh's Bulgars, ancient Sarmatians, and European Huns. Judging from PCA, it appears that the Hungarian Sarmatians played a role in the formation of modern Balkan Slavic-speaking ethnicities and, simultaneously, served as the basis for the large mass of Hungarian Huns during the time of Attila. The PCA also shows that the Sarmatians, the Scythians, and the Huns have differing patterns of admixture and ancestry, probably reflecting their geographical locations of origin. The results show that some (but not all) of the Sarmatian individuals from the Hungarian Plane and the

[40] Lazaridis 2022, 377

[41] Lazaridis 2022, 377

Bulgarians are closer to each other than to the other groups, suggesting a possible genetic relationship between them. The results again demonstrate the distinctive genetic profile of the Early Sarmatians, typified by the absence of a European Neolithic component and the prevalence of the Caucasian component over the European Neolithic component in the earliest samples.

DNA observations, Fig 12. F3 statistics (X, Mansi/Yakut, Mbuti) for determination of the far-eastern component in the samples. Uralic-derived or Mongolic-derived? The presence of the far-eastern component in the early medieval Bulgarian samples is negligible (the highest is 11%, the lowest - 1%). In all Sarmatian samples, far eastern component appears predominantly derived from Uralic groups (Mansy, Krasnoyarsk BA[42], Bolshoy Olejniy Ostrov), while most Scythian, Turkic, Xsiongnu and some of the Hunnic samples derive their far-eastern ancestry from the proto-Mongolic population (Mongolia Slab Grave).[43] Samovodene falls in the middle between the Proto-Mongolic and Uralic source for its far eastern component.

Our ancient DNA analysis of 175 individuals who lived during the times of great migrations in the Eurasian steppe, employing QPAdm, PLINK2, and Admixture 2, revealed several key findings: Sarmatians originated in Aktogay-Chelyabinsk region and resulted from Proto-Iranic and Paleo-Siberian/Uralic hunter-gatherer admixture (fig. 5 and 6). The Southern Ural Sarmatians displaced Scythians in Europe and Northern Kazakhstan but not in Central Asia (fig. 7 and 6). Kazakhstan (Aigiry) Sarmatians migrated to the west, influencing the populations of the Hungarian Plain and the Caucasus, leading to the rise of the Alans (fig. 7 and 8) and Hungarian Sarmatians. Far Eastern components in Hungarian Sarmatians and Caucasian Alans diminished over time (fig. 5, 7, and 8). Hungarian Sarmatians collaborated massively with Attila's Huns, later exhibiting a high Sarmatian and unique Germanic component (fig. 8, 9, and 12). Trans-Tisza Sarmatian genes reached the Balkans, impacting Bulgarians and other Slavic-speaking groups (fig. 8 and 10). Medieval Bulgarian samples mirrored Trans-Tisza Sarmatians; however, one sample was closer to Sarmatians from Aigirly culture in Kazakhstan and from the Russian plain (fig. 10, 11, and 12). Early Bulgarian samples displayed a substantial Sarmatian and notable Slavic component, with a minimal Turkic influence (fig. 6, 7, and 8). Eastern

[42] Narasimhan 2019, 365.
[43] Jeong et al. 2020, 890-904.

Sarmatians exhibited a higher Steppe component than their western counterparts (fig. 6).

The DNA analysis of various samples, including those related to "Baite" type sanctuaries and the population from Karakabak on the Caspian shores, conclusively supports the ideas of R. Rashev that Protobulgarians descended from Late Sarmatian groups who moved westwards and established themselves in the Caucasus – the Black sea area. The DNA links and similarities are stronger with the latest samples – from 2nd century afterwards, when strong Caucasian signal appears. Archaeological observations of the Karakabak settlement also support the theory that those people who lived on the Caspian shores mixed substantially with Caucasian populations and were under western cultural influences. The amassed arguments of archaeological and genetic nature discussed in the present article prove that the similarities between the Ural-Caspian Sarmatian shrines, including Altÿnkazgan sanctuaries, and Lower Danube temples of the Protobulgarians are not formal and circumstantial and probably reflect a cultural and population processes that occurred during the Hun and Post-Hun era of Europe.

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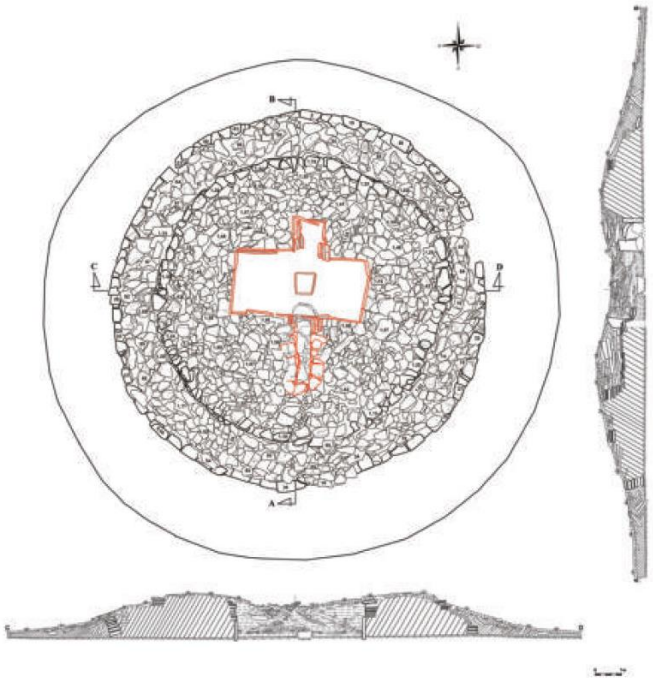


Fig. 1



Fig. 2.1



Fig. 2.2

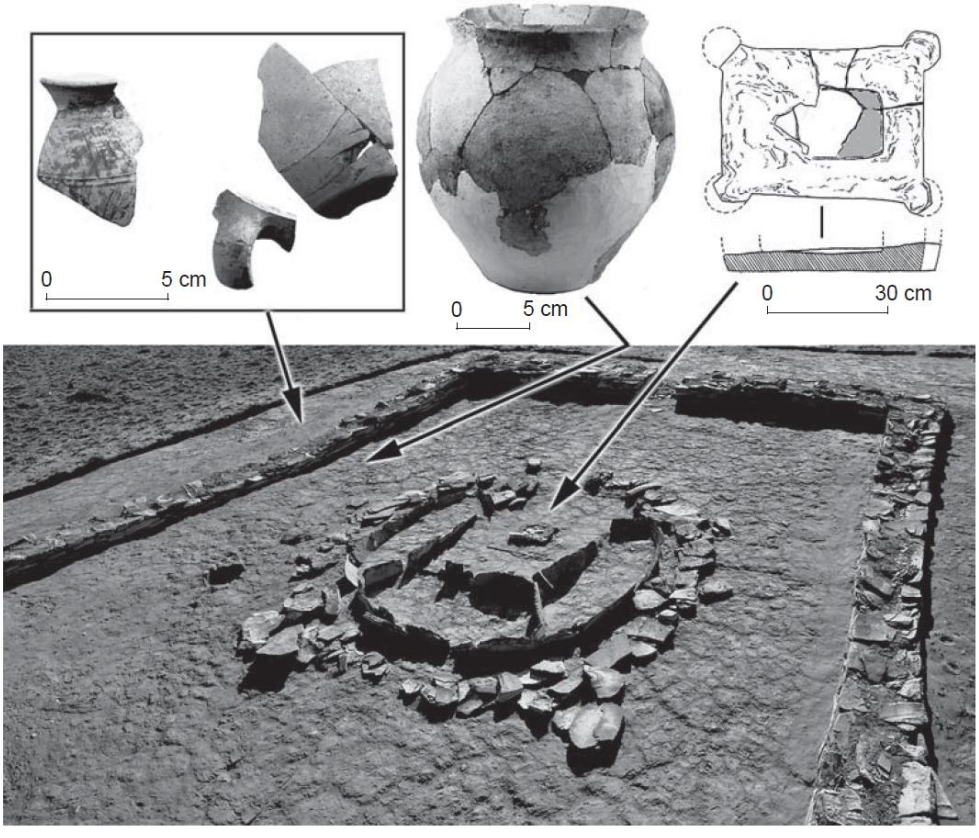


Fig. 3

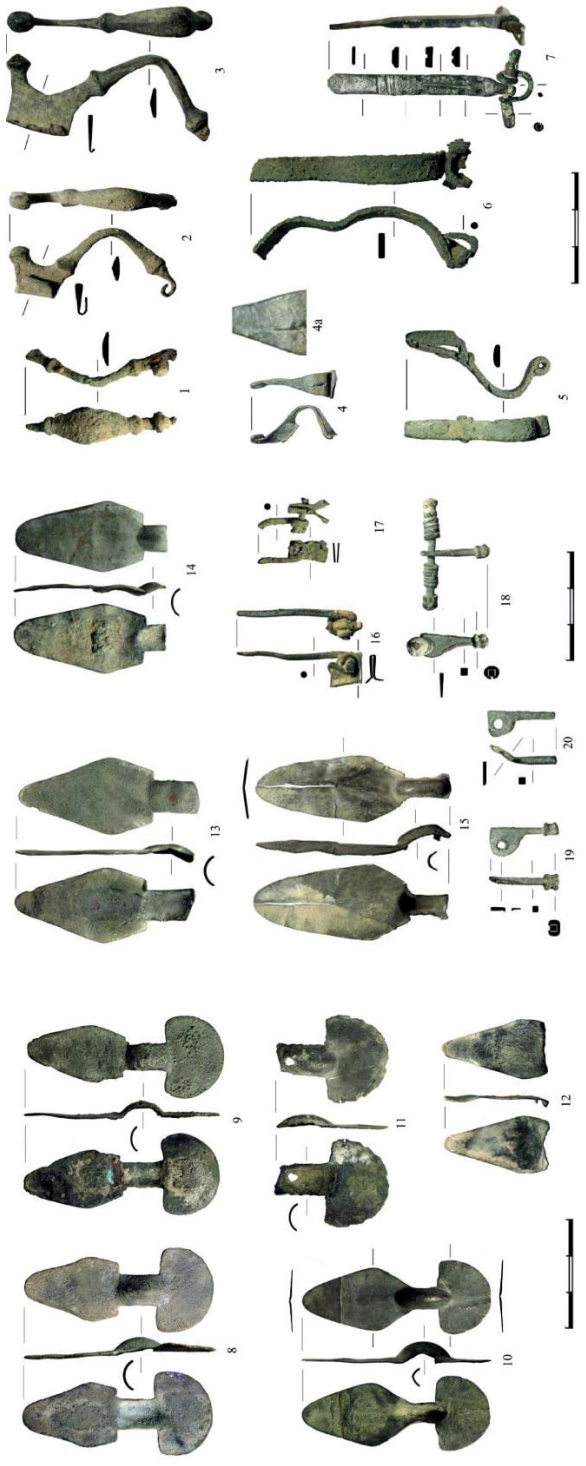


Fig. 4

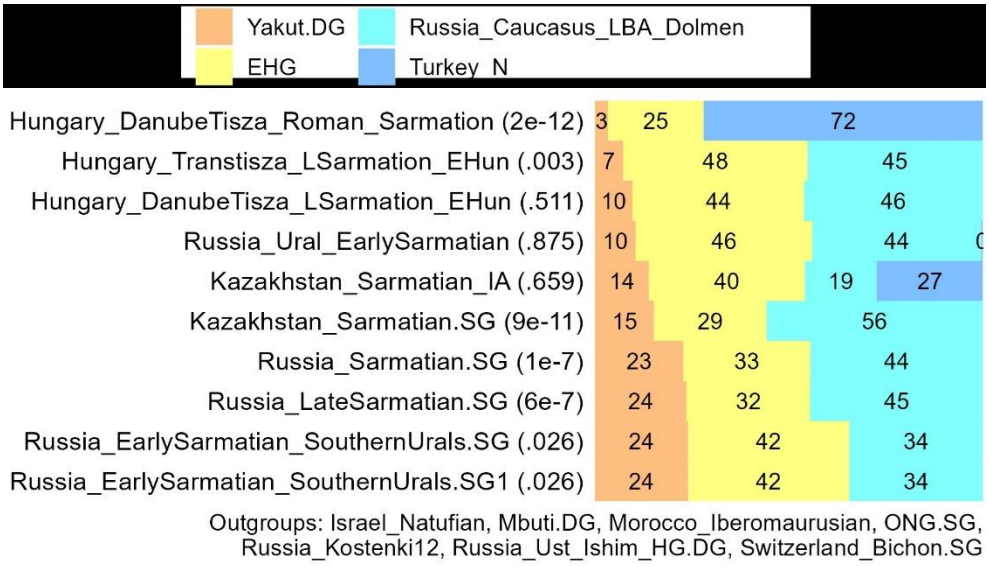

Yakut.DG
Russia_Caucasus_LBA_Dolmen
EHG
Turkey_N
Hungary_DanubeTisza_Roman_Sarmation (2e-12) 3 25 72
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun (.003) 7 48 45
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun (.511) 10 44 46
Russia_Ural_EarlySarmatian (.875) 10 46 44
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA (.659) 14 40 19 27
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG (9e-11) 15 29 56
Russia_Sarmatian.SG (1e-7) 23 33 44
Russia_LateSarmatian.SG (6e-7) 24 32 45
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG (.026) 24 42 34
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG1 (.026) 24 42 34
Outgroups: Israel_Natufian, Mbuti.DG, Morocco_Iberomaurusian, ONG.SG, Russia_Kostenki12, Russia_Ust_Ishim_HG.DG, Switzerland_Bichon.SG

Fig. 5

3475	188	1850-1200 BCE	Russia_Srubnaya_Scythian_Sarmatian_possible	Samara	Russia
2592	71	773-541 calBCE (2493/	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2554	99	752-417 calBCE (2455/	Kazakhstan_EarlySarmatian	Chancha	Kazakhs
2477	101	749-399 calBCE (2415/	Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG	Avlasovi	Russia
2476	125	769-236 calBCE (2384/	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG	Tengiz, (	Kazakhs
2436	80	727-396 calBCE (2395/	Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG	Perevol	Russia
2400	87	600-300 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Westerr	Kazakhs
2350	58	500-300 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Mangist	Kazakhs
2350	58	500-300 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Mangist	Kazakhs
2350	58	500-300 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Mangist	Kazakhs
2350	58	500-300 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2350	115	600-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA_o2	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2324	61	481-210 calBCE (2320/	Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG	Novo-M	Russia
2312	55	413-229 calBCE (2310/	Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG	Sibai-1,	Russia
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Westerr	Kazakhs
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Westerr	Kazakhs
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Westerr	Kazakhs
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA_o1	Aqmola	Kazakhs
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA_o3	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2300	87	500-200 BCE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA_sister.BSB001	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG	Tian Sha	Kazakhs
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Russia_Sarmatian.SG	Caspian	Russia
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Russia_Sarmatian.SG	Caspian	Russia
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Russia_Sarmatian.SG	Caspian	Russia
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Russia_Sarmatian.SG	Caspian	Russia
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Russia_Sarmatian.SG	Caspian	Russia
2300	260	800 BCE - 100 CE	Russia_Sarmatian.SG	Caspian	Russia
2250	58	400-200 BCE	Russia_Ural_EarlySarmatian	Pokrovk	Russia
2250	58	400-200 BCE	Russia_Ural_EarlySarmatian	Pokrovk	Russia
2234	54	386-203 calBCE (2236/	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Mangist	Kazakhs
2233	55	387-200 calBCE (2230/	Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG	Ivanovk	Russia
2226	49	375-201 calBCE (2220/	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA	Aktobe I	Kazakhs
2213	66	367-155 calBCE (2185/	Russia_MiddleSarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG	Chumar	Russia
2200	87	400-100 BCE	Russia_EarlySarmatian.SG	Orenbur	Russia
2200	87	400-100 BCE	Russia_EarlySarmatian.SG	Orenbur	Russia
1948	45	96 calBCE - 114 calCE (	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG	Central	Kazakhs
1829	47	27-210 calCE (1918Â±:	Russia_LateSarmatian.SG	Orenbur	Russia
1790	34	81-220 calCE (1889Â±:	Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA_o4	Mangist	Kazakhs
1786	39	81-236 calCE (1880Â±:	Russia_LateSarmatian.SG	Orenbur	Russia
1761	39	121-246 calCE (1850Â:	Russia_LateSarmatian.SG	Republic	Russia
1725	47	129-321 calCE (1825Â:	Russia_LateSarmatian.SG	Republic	Russia
1723	35	131-318 calCE (1825Â:	Kazakhstan_LateSarmatian	Georgie	Kazakhs
1700	29	200-300 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_Roman_Sarmation	Derecsk	Hungary
1698	49	131-336 calCE (1810Â:	Russia_LateSarmatian.SG	Republic	Russia
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun_oEast	Transtis	Hungary
1550	29	350-450 CE	Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun	Transtis	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun_oWe	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary
1500	29	400-500 CE	Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun	Danube	Hungary

Fig. 6

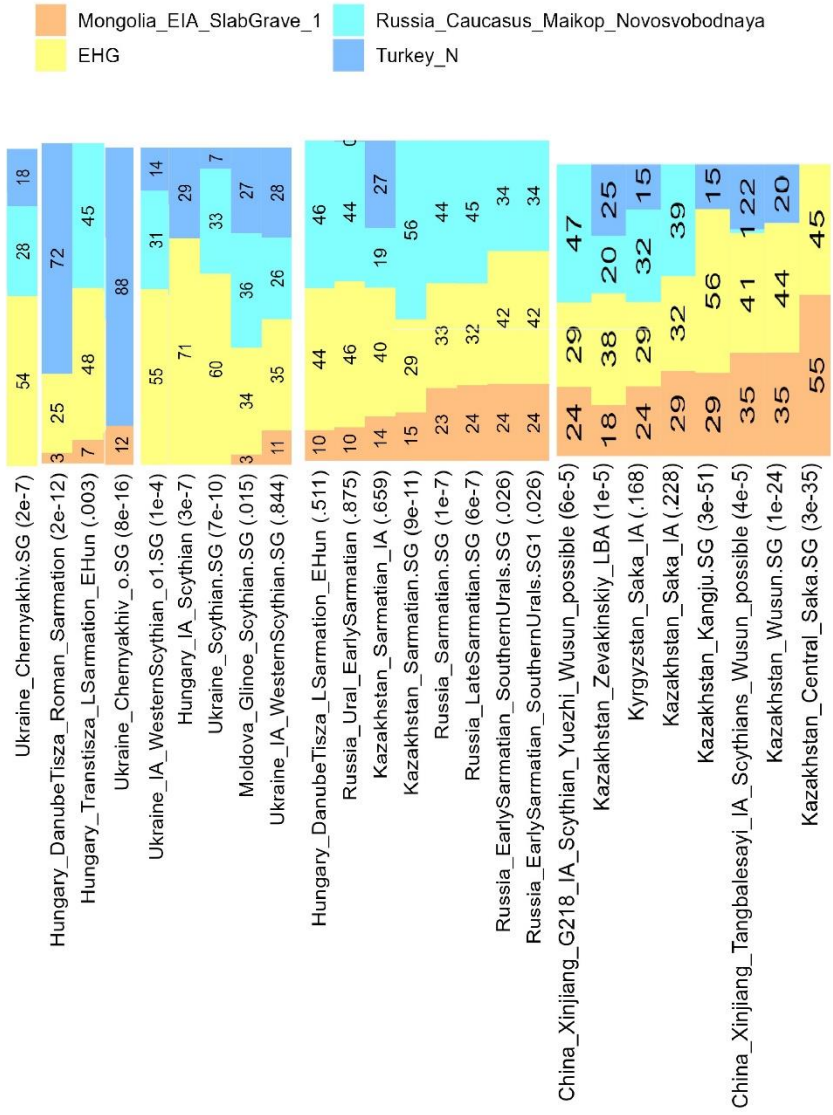

Mongolia_EIA_SlabGrave_1
Russia_Caucasus_Maikop_Novosvobodnaya
EHG
Turkey_N
Ukraine_Chernyakhiv.SG (2e-7)
Hungary_DanubeTisza_Roman_Sarmation (2e-12)
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun (.003)
Ukraine_Chernyakhiv_o.SG (8e-16)
Ukraine_IA_WesternScythian_o1.SG (1e-4)
Hungary_IA_Scythian (3e-7)
Ukraine_Scythian.SG (7e-10)
Moldova_Glinoe_Scythian.SG (.015)
Ukraine_IA_WesternScythian.SG (.844)
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun (.511)
Russia_Ural_EarlySarmatian (.875)
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA (.659)
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG (9e-11)
Russia_Sarmatian.SG (1e-7)
Russia_LateSarmatian.SG (6e-7)
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG (.026)
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG1 (.026)
China_Xinjiang_G218_IA_Scythian_Yuezhi_Wusun_possible (6e-5)
Kazakhstan_Zevakinskiy_LBA (1e-5)
Kyrgyzstan_Saka_IA (.168)
Kazakhstan_Saka_IA (.228)
Kazakhstan_Kangju.SG (3e-51)
China_Xinjiang_Tangbalesayi_IA_Scythians_Wusun_possible (4e-5)
Kazakhstan_Wusun.SG (1e-24)
Kazakhstan_Central_Saka.SG (3e-35)

Fig. 7

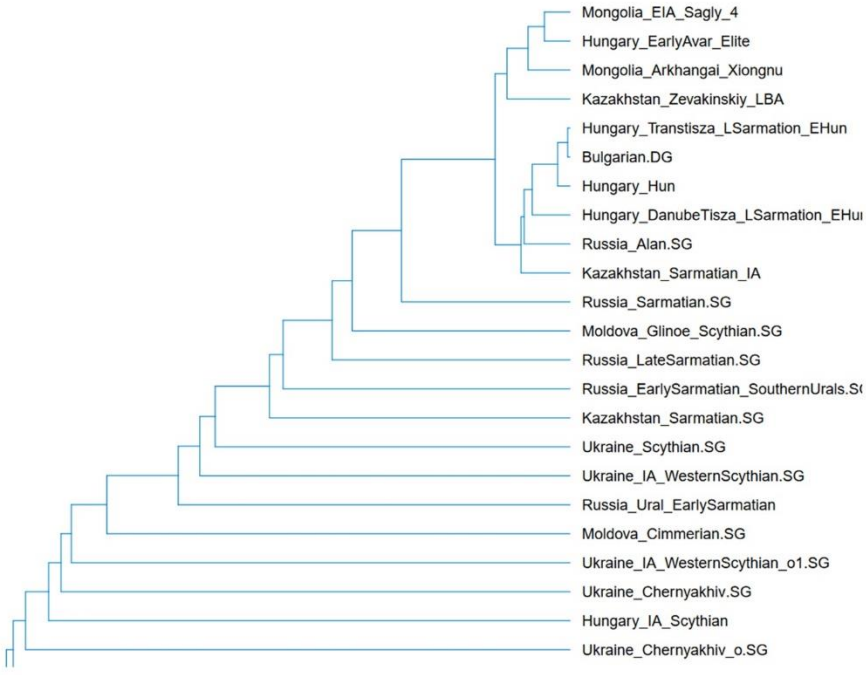

Mongolia_EIA_Sagly_4
Hungary_EarlyAvar_Elite
Mongolia_Arkhangai_Xiongnu
Kazakhstan_Zevakinskiy_LBA
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun
Bulgarian.DG
Hungary_Hun
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHu
Russia_Alan.SG
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
Russia_Sarmatian.SG
Moldova_Glinoe_Scythian.SG
Russia_LateSarmatian.SG
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.S
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG
Ukraine_Scythian.SG
Ukraine_IA_WesternScythian.SG
Russia_Ural_EarlySarmatian
Moldova_Cimmerian.SG
Ukraine_IA_WesternScythian_o1.SG
Ukraine_Chernyakhiv.SG
Hungary_IA_Scythian
Ukraine_Chernyakhiv_o.SG

Fig. 8

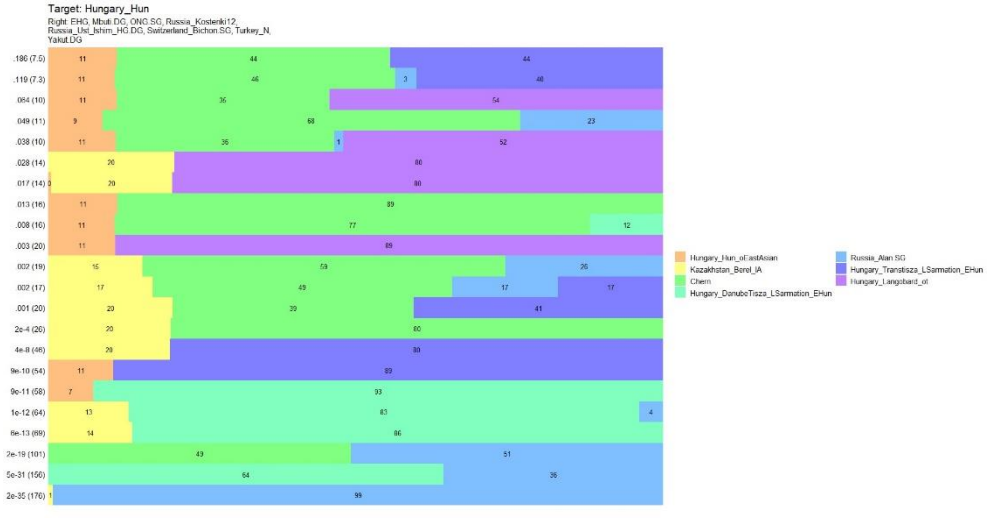

Target: Hungary_Hun
Right: EHG, Mbuti.DG, ONG.SG, Russia_Kostenki12, Russia_Ust_Ishim_HG.DG, Switzerland_Bichon.SG, Turkey_N, Yakut.DG
.186 (7.5)
.119 (7.3)
.084 (10)
.049 (11)
.038 (10)
.028 (14)
.017 (14)
.013 (16)
.008 (16)
.003 (20)
.002 (19)
.002 (17)
.001 (20)
2e-4 (26)
4e-8 (46)
9e-10 (54)
9e-11 (58)
1e-12 (64)
6e-13 (69)
2e-19 (101)
5e-31 (156)
2e-35 (176)
Hungary_Hun_oEastAsian
Kazakhstan_Berel_IA
Chem
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun
Russia_Alan.SG
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun
Hungary_Langobard_o1

Fig. 9

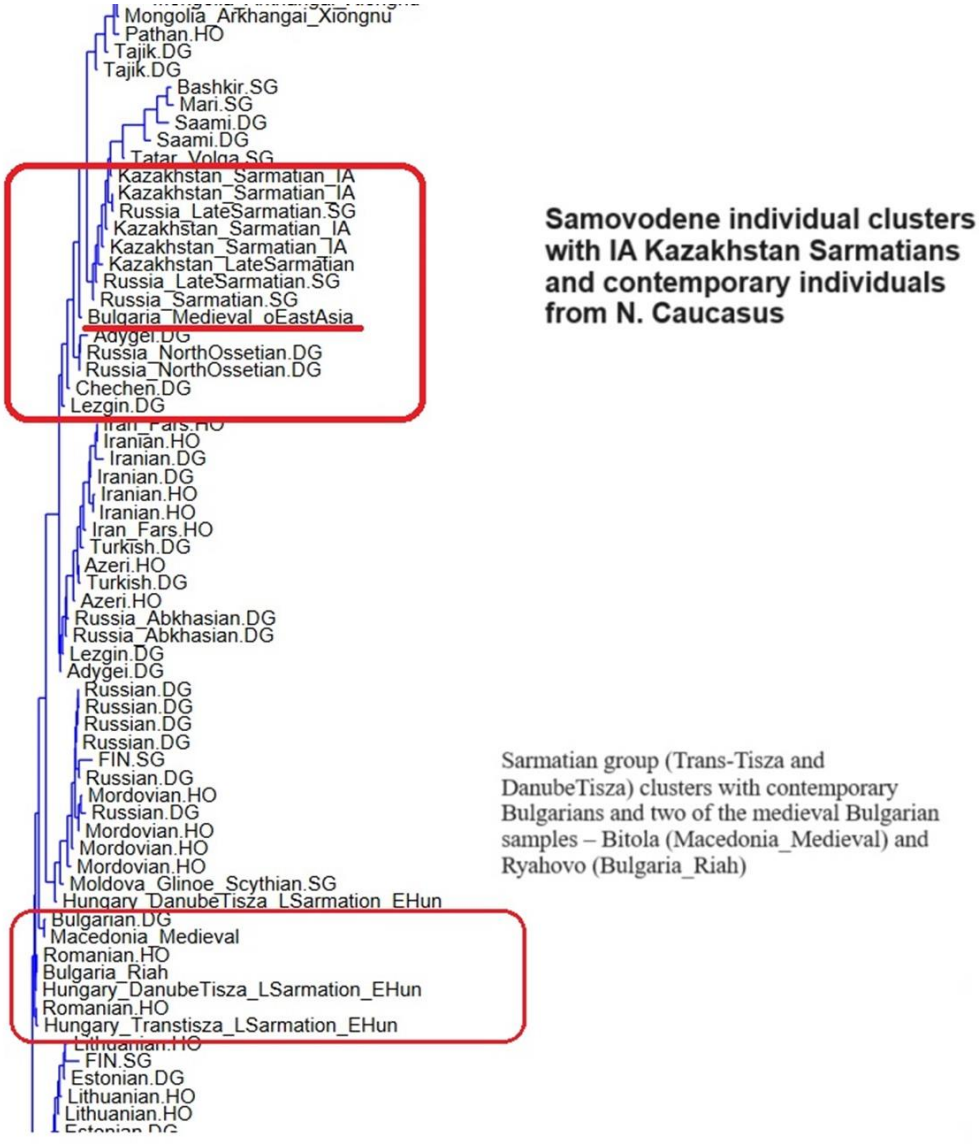

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Pathan.HO
Tajik.DG
Tajik.DG
Bashkir.SG
Mari.SG
Saami.DG
Saami.DG
Tatar_Volga.SG
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
Russia_LateSarmatian.SG
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
Kazakhstan_LateSarmatian
Russia_LateSarmatian.SG
Russia_Sarmatian.SG
Bulgaria_Medieval_oEastAsia
Adygei.DG
Russia_NorthOssetian.DG
Russia_NorthOssetian.DG
Chechen.DG
Lezgin.DG
Iranian.HO
Iranian.DG
Iranian.DG
Iranian.HO
Iranian.HO
Iran_Fars.HO
Turkish.DG
Azeri.HO
Turkish.DG
Azeri.HO
Russia_Abkhasian.DG
Russia_Abkhasian.DG
Lezgin.DG
Adygei.DG
Russian.DG
Russian.DG
Russian.DG
Russian.DG
FIN.SG
Russian.DG
Mordovian.HO
Russian.DG
Mordovian.HO
Mordovian.HO
Mordovian.HO
Moldova_Glinoe_Scythian.SG
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun
Bulgarian.DG
Macedonia_Medieval
Romanian.HO
Bulgaria_Riah
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun
Romanian.HO
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun
FIN.SG
Estonian.DG
Lithuanian.HO
Lithuanian.HO
Samovodene individual clusters with IA Kazakhstan Sarmatians and contemporary individuals from N. Caucasus
Sarmatian group (Trans-Tisza and DanubeTisza) clusters with contemporary Bulgarians and two of the medieval Bulgarian samples – Bitola (Macedonia_Medieval) and Ryahovo (Bulgaria_Riah)

Fig. 10

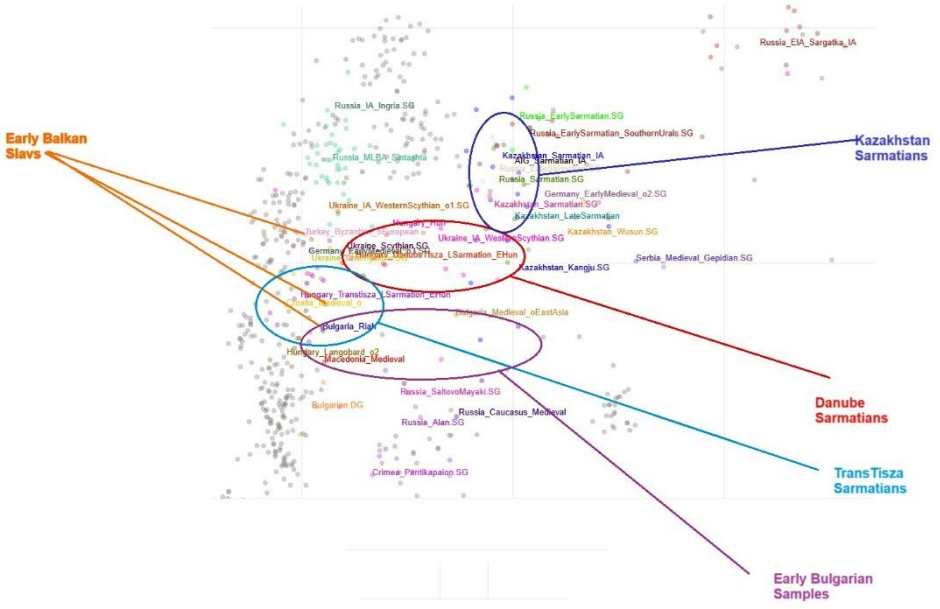

Early Balkan Slavs
Kazakhstan Sarmatians
Danube Sarmatians
TransTisza Sarmatians
Early Bulgarian Samples
Russia_EIA_Sargatka_IA
Russia_IA_Ingria.SG
Russia_EarlySarmatian.SG
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
Russia_Sarmatian.SG
Germany_EarlyMedieval_o2.SG
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG
Kazakhstan_LateSarmatian
Kazakhstan_Wusun.SG
Ukraine_IA_WesternScythian_o1.SG
Ukraine_IA_WesternScythian.SG
Hungary_Hun
Ukraine_Scythian.SG
Serbia_Medieval_Gepidian.SG
Kazakhstan_Kangju.SG
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun
Bulgaria_Medieval_oEastAsia
Bulgaria_RiaH
Hungary_Lombard_o2
Macedonia_Medieval
Russia_SaltovoMayaki.SG
Bulgarian.DG
Russia_Caucasus_Medieval
Russia_Alan.SG
Crimea_Pantikapaion.SG

Fig. 11

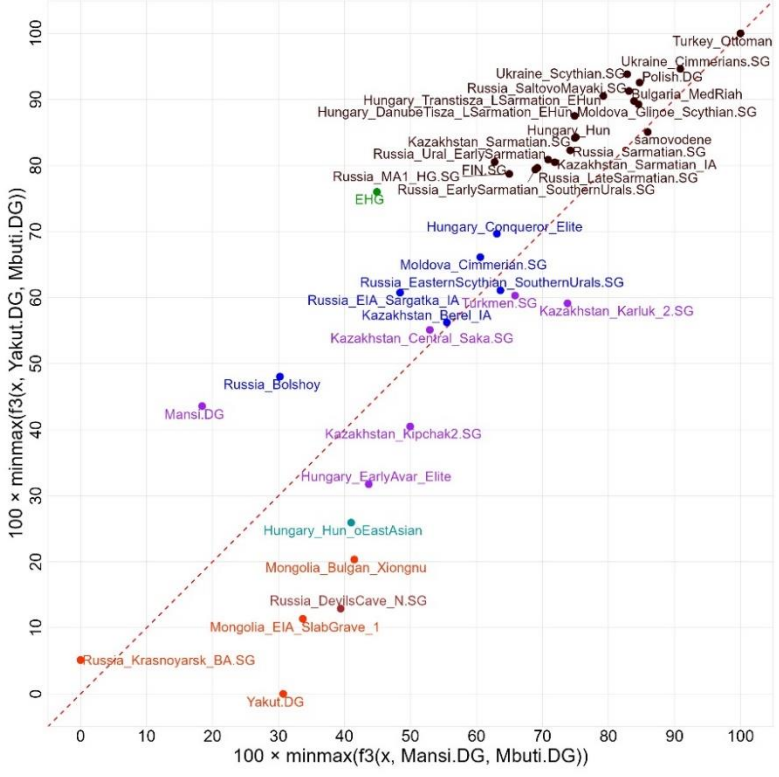

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100 × minmax(f3(x, Mansi.DG, Mbuti.DG))
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Turkey_Ottoman
Ukraine_Cimmerians.SG
Ukraine_Scythian.SG
Polish.DG
Russia_SaltovoMayaki.SG
Bulgaria_MedRiah
Hungary_Transtisza_LSarmation_EHun
Hungary_DanubeTisza_LSarmation_EHun_Moldova_Glinoe_Scythian.SG
Hungary_Hun
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian.SG
Samovodene
Russia_Ural_EarlySarmatian
Russia_Sarmatian.SG
Kazakhstan_Sarmatian_IA
FIN.SG
Russia_MA1_HG.SG
Russia_LateSarmatian.SG
Russia_EarlySarmatian_SouthernUrals.SG
EHG
Hungary_Conqueror_Elite
Moldova_Cimmerian.SG
Russia_EasternScythian_SouthernUrals.SG
Russia_EIA_Sargatka_IA
Turkmen.SG
Kazakhstan_Karluk_2.SG
Kazakhstan_Berel_IA
Kazakhstan_Central_Saka.SG
Russia_Bolshoy
Mansi.DG
Kazakhstan_Kipchak2.SG
Hungary_EarlyAvar_Elite
Hungary_Hun_oEastAsian
Mongolia_Bulgan_Xiongnu
Russia_DevilsCave_N.SG
Mongolia_EIA_SlabGrave_1
Russia_Krasnoyarsk_BA.SG
Yakut.DG

Fig. 12

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Christian symbolism in the studies of Rasho Rashev

Gergana Ilieva

Abstract: Christian symbolism is permanently present in Rasho Rashev's research. He examined signs, drawings, symbols and their place in early medieval Bulgarian culture. The researcher considered the specific archaeological environment from which the monuments originate. He has reached important conclusions about their dating, origin and semantic meaning. Based on his erudition, field and theoretical knowledge, Rasho Rashev successfully refuted a priori imposed theories regarding the so-called signs of "Proto-Bulgarian culture".

Key words: Christian symbolism, Rasho Rashev, early medieval Bulgarian culture, signs, drawings, symbols

Резюме: Християнската символика трайно присъства в изследванията на Рашо Рашев. В тях той разглежда знаци, рисунки, символи и тяхното място в ранносредновековната българска култура. Изследователят разглежда конкретната археологическа среда, от която произхождат паметниците. Той е стигнал до важни изводи за тяхната датировка, произход и семантично значение. Въз основа на своята ерудиция, теренни и теоретични познания, Рашо Рашев успешно опровергава априорно наложени теории относно т. нар. белези на "прабългарската култура".

The problems related to the interpretation of symbols, the determination of the religious origin and meaning are present in R. Rashev's extensive scientific activity. The researcher gave a new direction to the interpretation of graffiti drawings and the plots put into them, paying attention to the fact that a large part of the monuments with signs are in an archaeological context and their origin, dating, and

therefore meaning must be connected to this fact, without approaching a priori and looking for tendencious solutions.[1]

In this respect is his research on the chronology and origin of the "upsilon with two hastae" sign, which found its place in the first volume of the series "Contributions to Bulgarian archaeology". In his work, R. Rashev considered the chronology of upsilon with two hastae, confirmed old and reached new conclusions on controversial issues.[2]

The researcher made corrections to the relative dating of the sign, most widely distributed in Bulgaria during the Early Middle Ages, emphasizing the fact that in most cases it was incised on materials found in a specific archaeological environment (fig. 1).

R. Rashev examined the appearance of the sign from what are considered to be the earliest monuments with it – the stone from Byala and the column from Varna, found in the earthworks connected with the border defense of the Bulgarian state, dated at the latest to the middle of the 8th century, a dating set for both monuments with upsilon. He accepted this date with reservations, since the find from Byala was accidental, and the column from Varna was discovered during excavations on the rampart. On the other hand, the original position of the two monuments, in relation to the ramparts, is not known.[3]

In order to clarify the origin and relative dating of the upsilon with two hastae, Rashev examined consistently different groups of monuments on which the sign is present: the pottery from medieval pagan cemeteries; the monumental buildings of Pliska (traditionally attributed to the beginning and the first half of the 9th century); the one-handed and amphora-shaped pitchers found in different sectors of the capital city center; the rings from Prestovats and Mirovtsi, with the engraved decoration characteristic of this type of ring from the 8th – 9th centuries;[4] the large number incised on stone blocks, bricks, roof tiles from the construction of churches and monasteries in Pliska and especially in Preslav from the end of the 9th and the 10th century, as well as cemeteries with an indisputable Christian affiliation; medallions depicting an upsilon with two hastae on one side and a patriarchal cross on the other.[5] He draw the attention to the medallion from the village of Krasen (Ruse region), where on the one side instead of a cross a boat

[1] Rashev 1992, 96.
[2] Rashev 1992, 96.
[3] Rashev 1992, 96.
[4] Rashev 1992, 97.
[5] Rashev 1992, 98.

or a ship with an oar is represented and interpreted as one of the oldest symbols of the Christian Church.[6] R. Rashev admited the Christian meaning of upsilon, which appeared during the pagan period.[7]

Based on his extensive observations and analyses, R. Rashev made several very important conclusions that became fundamental for further elaborations on the meaning of upsilon with two hastae: 1. The earliest relatively well-dated monuments with the sign are the monumental buildings in Pliska and Madara and the ocher-yellow or red clay vessels from the early structures and layers in Pliska; 2. The sign was most widespread during the Christian period, when it was almost the only sign used to mark building ceramics; 3. The sign is not found on representative artifacts (ruling seals, inscriptions in the name of the ruler, etc.); 4. The exact meaning of the sign in both periods, Pagan and Christian, remains unclear for now. Attempts to determine its content have been made on the basis of emotional-logical rather than strictly scientific considerations.[8] R. Rashev examined the problem with the meaning of the sign upsilon with two hastae, giving his theory about its origin. He noted how relative any hypothesis can be, due to the coincidence in the design of a number of letters, magical signs and tamgas from different regions of the world. Therefore, he suggested we should look mostly for examples from neighboring geographical areas and from similar cultural-historical and ethnic backgrounds. He pointed out the connection between the signs found in medieval Bulgaria and those from the Northern Black Sea region.[9] R. Rashev considered the Northern Black Sea group of signs to be prospective in the study of the origin of the signs in general and the upsilon with two hastae in particular. He proposed to look for the origin of the three main sign zones – the Saltovo culture, Crimea and Danube Bulgaria in the Sarmatian signs attested in the same territory.

In 2008, a new study by R. Rashev is dedicated to the Christian meaning of some so-called "proto-Bulgarian" characters, in which the question about the meaning of ipsioln with two hastae is raised again. The article reflects a discovery from 2006 – a large limestone block, in the area of the southern half of the large early medieval earthen fortification, which falls on the territory of the Kabiyuk State Enterprise (fig. 2.). The monument, in the shape of a parallelepiped, has crosses,

[6] Rashev 1992, 98.
[7] Rashev 1992, 99.
[8] Rashev 1992, 99.
[9] Rashev 1992, 99.

Cyrillic letters and symbols inscribed on it.[10] Incised images are located on one of its sides. Almost in the middle of the field there is a cross, the outlines of which are repeated with a thinner line inside it. Its outer outline has not been finished, the end of the lower arm of the inner outline has been broken off.[11] A second cross is presented, to the right of it, which belongs to the so-called throne cross. Circles are incised at the corners of its four arms and at the corners of the triangular base. Next to this cross, separate characters are shallowly incised, above which a two-line Cyrillic inscription is also visible. To the left of the large cross, a Glagolitic letter is incised twice, and below it – the sign upsilon with two hastis. The same sign is also incised at the lower edge of the field. The described images have been incised so that they do not touch and cross each other, i.e. simultaneously or in a short period of time. Due to this finding, R. Rashev concluded that the crosses and the signs "upsilon with two hastae" existed as symbols at the same time and had a similar, if not the same, meaning, i.e. the upsilon was understood in Christian times like a cross. To the images from the monument at Kabiyuk, R. Rashev also connected two other signs with Christian symbolism. In support of this opinion, he gives examples of other monuments that were left out of his previous studies of 1992. It is a question of signs on a stone block from the Shudikov medieval monastery (monument from Montenegro), generally considered "Proto-Bulgarian", pagan in their sense – zodiac symbols, Tangra signs, etc. About them, Rashev notes that they are basically repetitions or variants of the signs on the stone from Byala. At the same time, he also commented on the fact that on one of the sides of the monument from the Shudikov monastery, the first two characters of the Belene stone are engraved.[12] Evidence that the images are non-canonical Christian symbols is the fact that the monument was discovered in the ruins of a medieval church, and R. Rashev considers unsubstantiated[13] the assumption that it originates from a pagan temple that previously existed in this place**.**

Regarding the connection between upsilon with two hastae and the Christian cross, the researcher also points to a lead seal, on the obverse side of which a bird with a branch is represented, on the reverse side – a cross located above the fork of the upsilon. According to R.

[10] Rashev 2008, 29- 1; 2.
[11] Rashev 2008, 26.
[12] Rashev 2008, 27.
[13] Rashev 2008, 27.

Rashev, their immediate proximity is indicative of the identity of the two symbols.[14]

In his research on the meaning of upsilon with two hastae, R. Rashev also examines monuments of a significantly later date. Such is the grave cross from Northern Dobrudja. According to the researcher, the inscription on the lower arms of the cross was mistakenly interpreted as Proto-Bulgarian and rather it was written in a mixed Bulgarian-Romanian language, and it is dated to the 19th century. On the side arms of the cross, in medallions, two signs upsilon with two hastae are presented, which R. Rashev adduced as a confirmation of the symbiosis of the cross and the upsilon, known even in the monuments of the 9th – 10th centuries. His explanation for the appearance of the upsilon on ritual bread from the Rhodopes, from the end of the 19th century, is similar, where the sign replaces the cross that usually appears on Bulgarian ritual bread.

In the final part of the study from 2008, the connection between the signs from Crimea and those from medieval Bulgaria is again emphasized. An example is given of the grave crosses, on which symbols of various outlines probably had the meaning of the Christian cross.

On the basis of his previous research, the cited parallels and the data from the newly discovered monument from Kabiyuk, R. Rashev convincingly proves the existence of a non-canonical Christian practice, spread in the periphery of Eastern Christianity, which allowed the replacement of the main religious symbol with signs that have entirely different graphics.[15]

R. Rashev's interest in graffiti drawings, signs, symbols, their meaning and origin probably arose in the early years of his scientific career and during his work related to the study of Veliki Preslav. The wealth of graffiti he documented from the Round Church is extremely helpful. In 1973, in the Bulletin of the Shumen Historical Museum, the researcher published the collected empirical material carved on the walls and columns of the church.[16] The drawings are divided into groups: images – human, animal; on ships; of churches, unclear images, plant ornaments and signs – crosses, swastikas, pentagrams, etc.

In 1995, in the first volume of the "Preslav Literary School" collection, R. Rashev published the analysis of some of the graffiti from

[14] Rashev 2008, 28.
[15] Rashev 2008, 28.
[16] Rashev 1973, 205.

the Round Church in Preslav.[17] These are drawings of ships that he associated with Christianity and its symbolism (fig. 3). R. Rashev associates their appearance on the walls of the church in Preslav with the scribes who worked in the adjacent monastery, noting that it is no coincidence that the concentration of drawings and inscriptions is greatest in the southern part of the Round Church, where the entrance is from the monastery to the temple. The monastic scribes were familiar both with the main Christian symbol – the cross, and with the more abstract one – the ship. R. Rashev connects the knowledge about the Christian nature of the images with the literary and translation activities in the monastery, finding relevant analogies in the work of John the Exarch "Six Days" and the Dialogues of Pseudocaesarius, translated into Bulgarian during the time of King Simeon (893 – 927). In the first work, R. Rashev discovered the symbol with a wider content – as a personification of the visible material world, governed by God, an idea that is intertwined with the idea of the church as a ship, since in the mind of the Christian, the created world and the people who inhabit it are united by the church.[18] In the Dialogues of Pseudocaesarius, he discovered another meaning of the symbol: comparing the lot of Christians striving for faith with that of travelers who found salvation from the sea storm in a bay. Here R. Rashev points out that this is an echo of the original meaning of the symbol - a ship, as a container of the soul traveling to God.[19]

At the conclusion of his research, R. Rashev pointed out that paintings with Christian content are an organic continuation of an older tradition. In the transitional period between Paganism and Christianity, at the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century, they were presented simultaneously and stood next to paintings of a pagan character, as in the Round Church, in the rock monastery at Murfatlar, in Northern Dobrudzha and on the walls of the church near the village of Ravna, Provadia district. According to the researcher, this coexistence reflects the confirmation of the new Christian worldview, which imposes its symbols.[20]

In two of his articles, R. Rashev examines the monuments on which the deer/doe is represented and gives new insights in the interpretation of these zoomorphic images as symbols. In 1995, his first

[17] Rashev 1995, 338–343.
[18] Rashev 1995, 339.
[19] Rashev 1995, 340.
[20] Rashev 1995, 340.

research on the subject was included in the second volume of "Bishop-Constantine's readings".[21] Years later, R. Rashev returned to the topic of the deer and its symbolic meaning, and in 2009, his second article was published postmortem: "More about the deer as a symbol in the first Bulgarian kingdom", on the pages of the collection in memories of Ivanka Akrabova-Zhandova. In both articles, the researcher re-examines the popular notion of the pagan Proto-Bulgarian meaning of this image, interpreted as evidence of the "cult of the deer", "trace of totemism", "magic for successful hunting", etc. R. Rashev divided the images into two chronological groups, according to the environment from which they originate – from pagan and Christian times (tabl. 4.1). He noted that significantly more come from Christian monuments. Based on this, R. Rashev assumes that probably the deer appeared on these monuments not as a trace of the pagan symbolism of the image, but as a Christian one. For the meaning of the symbol, he pointed out what is expressed in Psalm 42:1, which reads: *As the deer longs for the springs of water, so my soul longs for You, O God*, in the Hludo Psalter, the text is also illustrated by an image of a deer in front of a spring. Another source cited for the Christian meaning of the zoomorphic symbol is the vision of the Roman general Placidus. According to a legend, during a hunt, he saw the image of Christ between the horns of the hunted animal. Based on these data, already in his first article from 1995, R. Rashev proposed that the independent images of deer on Christian monuments should be considered as an illustration of Psalm 42:1, while the hunting scenes with deer should be connected with the legend of Placidus.

In the subsequent 2009 article, the main theses are further developed, supported by additional sources on the Christian meaning of the deer symbol. New archaeological monuments from medieval Bulgaria were also added. A composition including Christian crosses and deer was examined,[22] discovered during the survey of Church No. 2 of the architectural complex in the locality *Under the Monastery* area in Preslav. Another drawing from the capital center is also included in the work – a graffiti from the church with the grave of Mostich, incised on the stone base of one of the four columns supporting the dome of the church. The image of the deer, represented with its head turned back, is associated with the text of the psalm. A series of similar graffiti

[21] Rashev 1995a, 200–205.
[22] Rashev 2009, 124.

drawings originating from the Ohrid church *St. Sofia* were explained by its discoverer as hunting scenes. R. Rashev admited as more likely the Christian meaning of these images.[23]

The emphasis of the 2009 article is the analysis of the drawing on the ceramic cup from the village of Vokil (tabl. 5).[24] R. Rashev questioned the statement about the pagan meaning of the engraved composition and its connection with the religion and mythology of the proto-Bulgarians, as well as the hypothesis of the use of the object in shamanic rites.[25] Its main motive is the dating of the cup – the end of the 9th – 10th centuries, i.e. in the situation of Christianity already established in Bulgaria. In the composition of animals, including a deer, R. Rashev pointed out a sign resembling the Latin Letter **N** as the center. He suggested that this may be another non-canonical sign for a Christian cross, similar to the upsilon with two hastae. Thus, the composition on the cup from Vokil comes close to that on the stone block from the church in the locality *Under the Monastery* in Preslav. For the interpretation of the religious and symbolic meaning of the drawing, R. Rashev suggested that the deer which leads his herd should be seen as Christ who leads his flock to the source of pure word of God, and from this point of view, the drinker of water with this cup symbolically drinks the pure God's word as the deer drinks the pure spring water.

On the topic of the deer image, R. Rashev concludes that there are two different points of view towards the animal – Pagan and Christian. According to him, the exact pagan meaning is not possible to be determined and this zoomorphic symbol is used too much, like others, as proof of the totemism of the Proto-Bulgarians. R. Rashev pointed out that in the advanced phase of social and religious development of the Proto-Bulgarians from the 8th – 9th centuries, totemism was a form of spiritual culture that had long been overcome.[26]

In 2006, another article by R. Rashev appeared on the pages of the scientific journal *Archeology* dedicated to graffiti drawings and their meaning.[27] In it, he examined the labyrinth as a symbol during the early Middle Ages in Bulgaria and the neighboring countries (tabl. 6). The images that he included in his study were without exception graffiti,

[23] Rashev 2009, 125.
[24] Rashev 2009, 125.
[25] Rashev 2009, 126.
[26] Rashev 2009, 126.
[27] Rashev 2006, 65-77.

mostly carved on stones or bricks.[28] R. Rashev reviewed the sites and explicitly indicated the data on the archaeological environment and context in which they were found, due to the importance of these data for the dating, respectively for the interpretation of the images as Pagan or Christian symbols. The publication includes 98 monuments from Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Russia and Ukraine. R. Rashev presented the various opinions and interpretations about the meaning of the image *labyrinth*. He refuted the traditional conceptions of the symbol as *scheme for a game of checkers*, *proto-Bulgarian images of the model of the world – proto-Bulgarian cosmogram*. He emphasized the lack of criticality regarding the location of the drawings on a vertical, rounded or uneven surface, the small sizes of some of them, which makes it impossible to play with movable game elements on them.[29] R. Rashev was also critical about the association of the labyrinth with "Babylon" or "mill". According to him, all the statements are inaccurate and wrong and are based on the unproven connection of the symbol with the proto-Bulgarians, or on its traditional modern perception and use as a scheme for the game of *checkers* or *quran*.

According to the shape and arrangement of the labyrinth on the monuments from Bulgaria, R. Rashev defined two types. The "classic" one is represented by the monuments from Murfatlar and Preslav. In turn, they are defined by the number of concentric lines as full[30] and reduced,[31] and according to their shape – as rounded[32] and quadrangular, as are all the others, which are highly simplified and schematized copies of the first. Characteristic of them is the representation of the symbol as a system of three concentric quadrilaterals joined by perpendicular lines in the middle of the sides or, in rare cases, in the corners. The predominance of this type, R. Rashev explained with the way in which the labyrinth was integrated into the early Christian symbolism to establish itself as one of the deepest and most meaningful symbols of the church.[33] The scheme of a central quadrangle, which is touched on four sides by lines coming out of the frame, is defined as the second type of Bulgarian images.

[28] Rashev 2006, 65.
[29] Rashev 2006, 71.
[30] Rashev 2006, 66, 1-28; 68, 3-1.
[31] Rashev 2006, 66, 1 - 1-7, 9-27, 29-30; 68 - 2,3.
[32] Rashev 2006, 66, 1 - 8, 28; 68, 3-4.
[33] Rashev 2006, 72.

The connection to labyrinths with Christian symbolism, R. Rashev proved, on the one hand, the similarity between them and the scheme presented in the floor mosaic of the episcopal basilica in El Asnam, in which the earliest version is attested (324) and, on the other, the data of the location and dating of most images. They originate from Christian monuments, such as the labyrinths from the Great Basilica in Pliska, the churches of St. Sofia in Ohrid and St. Achilles in Prespa, the rock church and burial chapel in Murfatlar, the rock church at Alfatar, the grave stones of burials next to Mostich's church in Preslav, the image of a grave from the necropolis at the Eastern gate of Pliska, the building next to the chapel in Sveshtari. R. Rashev stated that, according to direct and indirect data on the archaeological environment, all the images from Pliska and Preslav are connected with the Christian period of the history of the First Bulgarian Kingdom.

Another graphic symbol from medieval complexes in Bulgaria has been defined as a form of the classical labyrinth. This is the so-called closed swastika, filled in a different manner and fullness of presentation (tabl. 7). A confirmation of their Christian symbolism is the dating of the archaeological environment from which they originate: in Preslav – drawings from the Round Church, the trading premises from the 10th century, at the Southern gate and the monastery in the locality *Under the Monastery*; in Pliska – drawings from a building near the Western fortress wall from the 10th century.[34] As a summary and result of his research on the image of *labyrinth*, R. Rashev wrote: *With this, one more symbol is dropped from the Proto-Bulgarian culture*.[35]

Encyclopedic knowledge and the ability to search for the semantic origin of symbols in a pre-Christian environment contribute to the convincing interpretations of R. Rashev's research. What unites all his publications on signs, drawings, symbols, is the desire to look not only for close and distant parallels and interpretations in religious literature, but first of all to present and analyze each monument in relation to the archaeological environment and context of finding, to associate the monuments with a specific date and not to draw a priori conclusions.

[34] Rashev 2006, 75.
[35] Rashev 2006, 74.

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Fig. 7. Images of swastika as labyrinth. According to R. Rashev: *Labirintat kato simvol prez rannoto srednovekovie v Balgaria i sasednite strani‘ – Arheologiya*

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(2008) ‘Oshte za hristiyanskiya smisal na nyakoi “prabalgarski” znatsi’, *Istorikii 3,* 25–31.

(2009) ‘Oshte za elena kato simvol v parvoto balgarsko tsarstvo’, in: (eds) *Ivanka Akrabova-Zhandova. In Memoriam, Sofia,* 121–127.

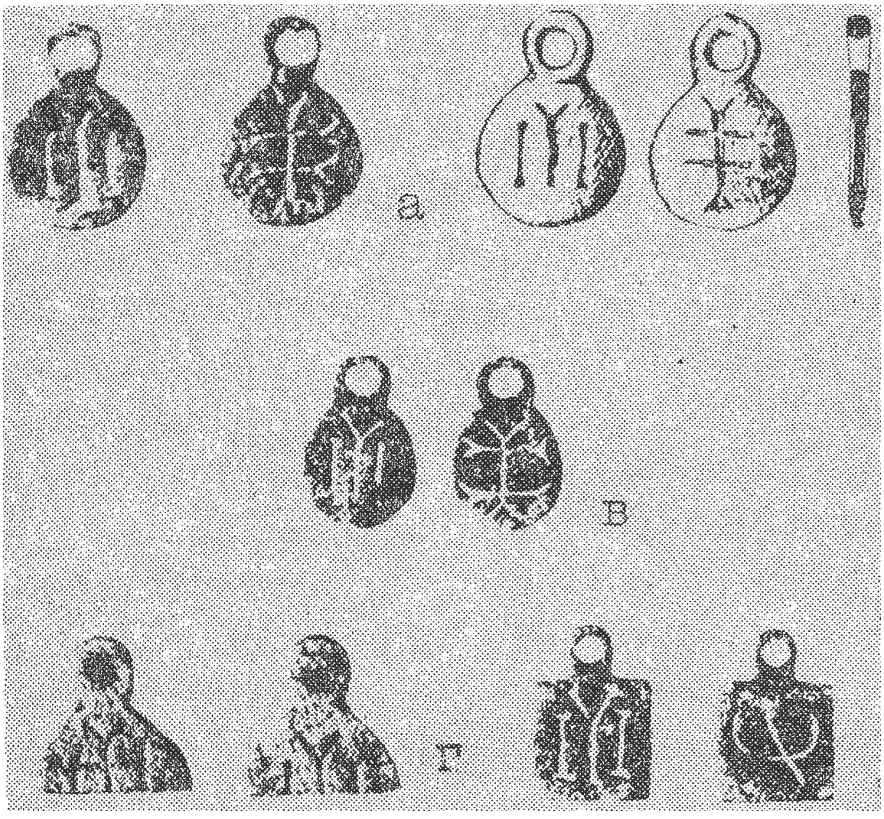


Fig. 1.1

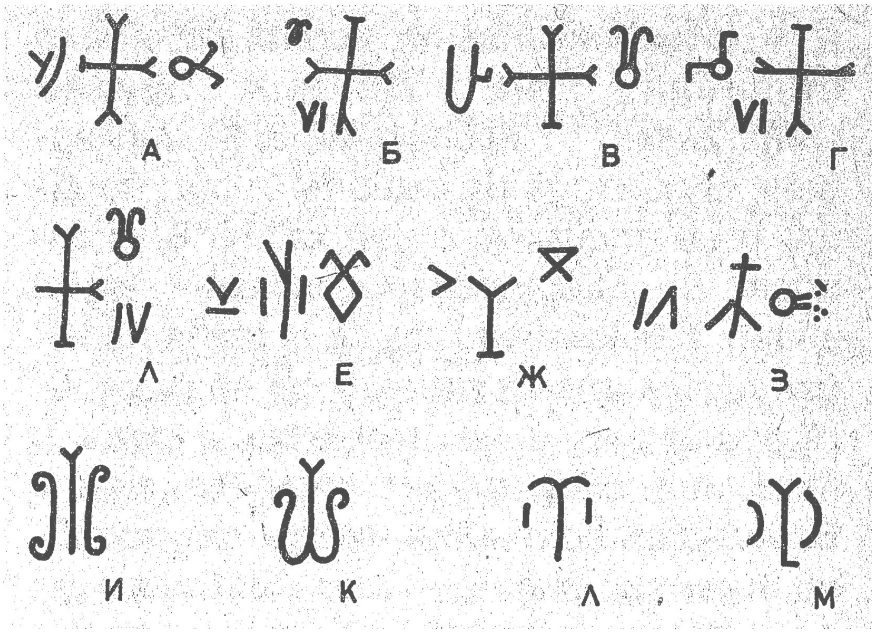


Fig. 1.2



Fig. 2

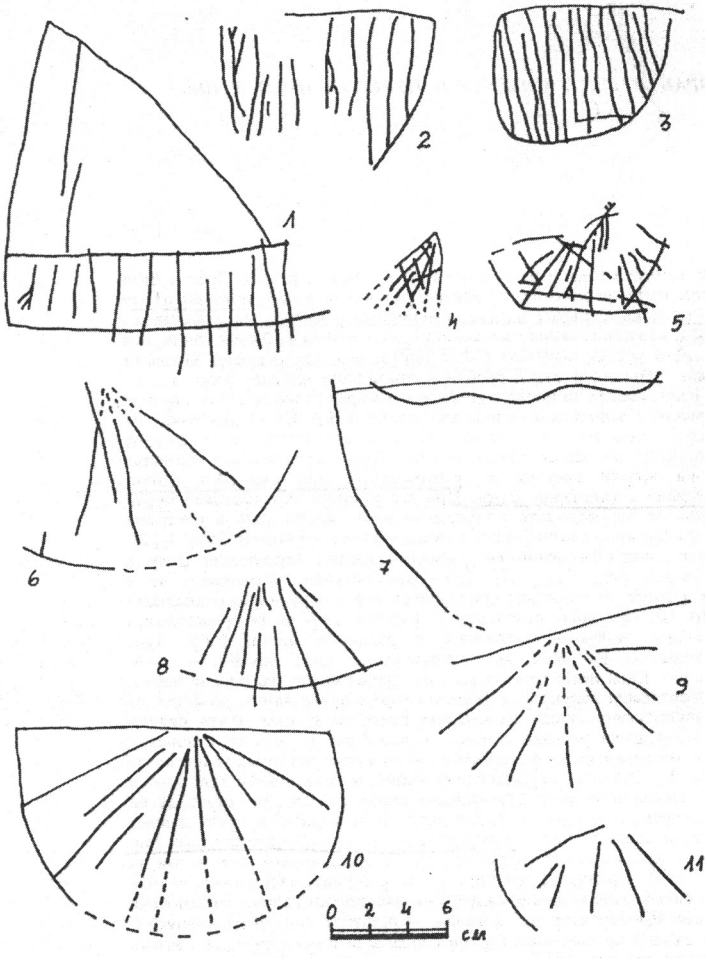


Fig. 3

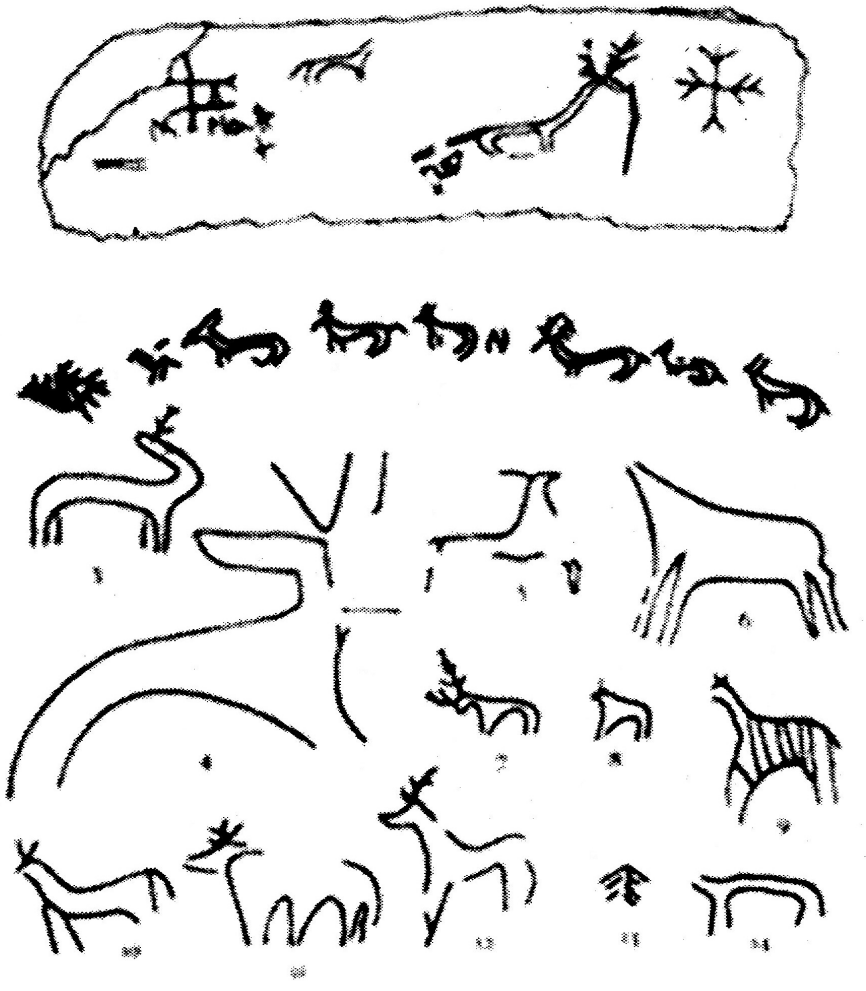


Fig. 4

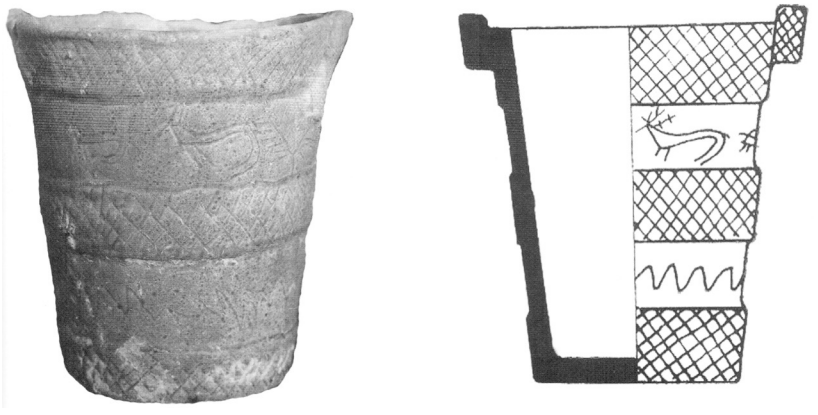


Fig. 5

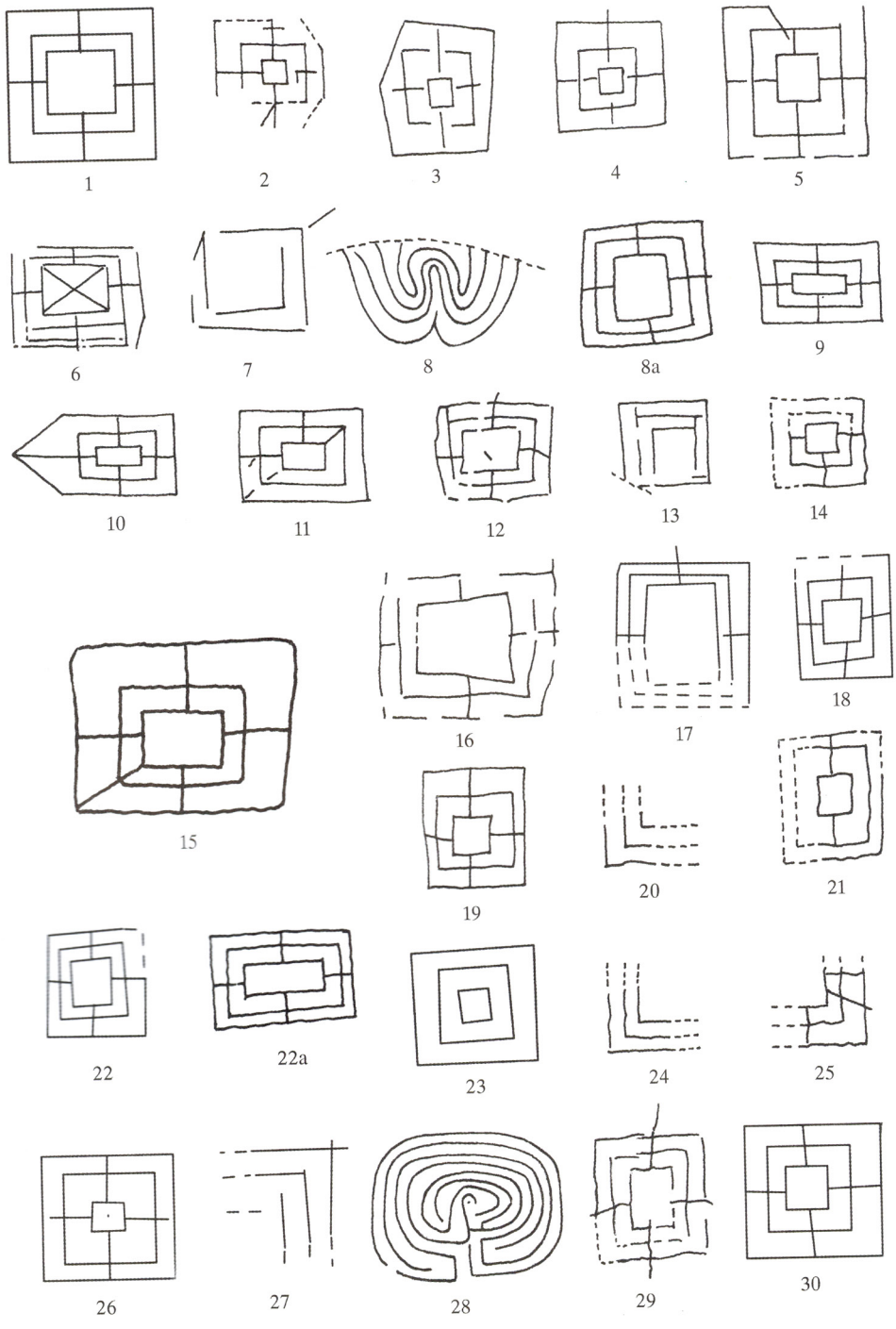

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Fig. 6

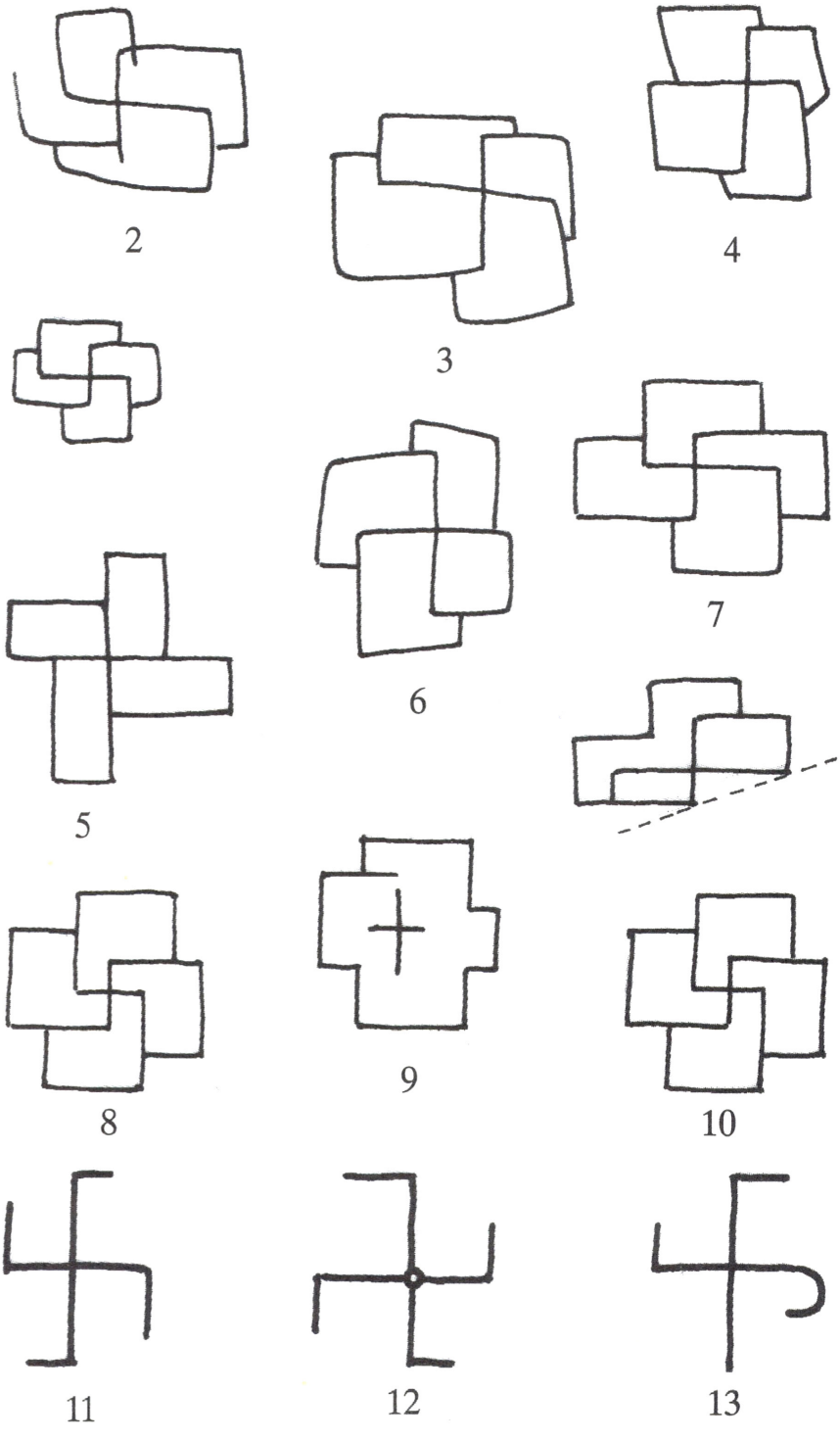


Fig. 7

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Hard facts and (exciting) assumptions: new approaches in archaeology

Falko Daim, Roman Sauer, Katharina Richter

In memory of Rasho Rashev, a friend and great scholar

Abstract: In eastern Central Europe, in the Carpathian Basin, the Avar Empire existed from AD 568 to ca. 800. Numerous written sources and a rich archaeological legacy provide an excellent basis for a new population history, which is being written as part of the major international project HistoGenes "Integrating genetic, archaeological and historical perspectives on Eastern central Europe 400-900 AD". The latest scientific methods are used, particularly archaeogenetics, which make it possible to determine relationships within and among the settlements. What were the living conditions like and what were the social rules? Can migrations and connections with neighbouring peoples be traced? A total of 6000 aDNA samples are analysed. Two cemeteries in Austria, Leobersdorf and Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege, underwent complete archaeogenetic analyses. This article compares the two cemeteries, reviews the hard facts of archaeological evidence and demonstrates how archaeogenetics can contribute to a better understanding of early medieval societies. It also shows that social groups of different ancestry can form a common culture in a unified dominion, especially evident in the forms of representation, i.e. the jewellery worn by men and women.

Key words: Early medieval archaeology, Carpathian Basin, Avar Empire, avars, HistoGenes, Leobersdorf, Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege, archaeogenetics

Резюме: В източната част на Централна Европа, в Карпатския басейн, Аварската империя съществува от 568 до около 800 г. сл. Хр. Многобройните писмени източници и богатото археологическо наследство осигуряват отлична основа за нова история на населението, която се пише като част от големия международен проект HistoGenes „Интегриране на генетични, археологически и исторически перспективи за Източна Централна Европа 400-900 г. сл. Хр.". Използват се и най-новите научни методи, особено археогенетиката, които позволяват да се определят взаимоотношенията вътре и между селищата. Какви са били условията на живот и какви са били социалните правила? Могат ли да се

проследят преселвания и връзки със съседни народи? Анализирани са общо 6ooo ДНК проби. Два некропола в Австрия, Leobersdorf и Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege, бяха подложени на пълни археогенетични анализи. Тази статия сравнява двата некропола, прави преглед на сигурните факти от археологическите доказателства и демонстрира как археогенетиката може да допринесе за по-доброто разбиране на ранните средновековни общества. Това също така показва, че различните социални групи могат да имат обща култура, особено ясно изразена в представителни предмети, например накитите, носени от мъже и жени.

Introduction

It is a truism that humans belong to both the cultural and biological spheres. We are social, spiritual beings who shape, interpret and organise our world. At the same time, however, we are part of nature. We cannot escape our bodies; biology sets us limits.[1]

Suppose we want to understand and describe the humans of long ago as comprehensively as possible. In that case, both spheres must be illuminated, and all available data from history, archaeology and the natural sciences have to be integrated. The most interesting topics and the most fascinating observations can be found at the interface between these two polarities.

Of course, the dual nature of humanity has always been an issue in archaeology; therefore, physical anthropology/human biology has always been the most essential neighbouring science. This discipline has played an important role from the beginning, especially in the archaeology of mortuary practice. Indeed, in the case of inhumation burials (there are narrower limits for cremation burials), it was possible to obtain a range of information about the deceased from the macroscopic examination of skeletons: body size, gender (in most cases), age, health status (teeth, various diseases or if they are evident on the bone, healed or fatal injuries, traces of medical interventions), and so on. Typologies of skulls were also created in an attempt to differentiate population groups. Attempts were made to identify familial relationships using epigenetic characteristics, such as peculiarities like cusps on teeth or particularly pronounced long toes. However, it was not possible to get much closer to individuals; skeletal analyses did not allow much more to be said about their character.

Archaeology's domain is naturally the evaluation of the burial situation (depth and shape of the grave, the orientation of the deceased, and the furnishings of each burial - above all the clothing, jewellery and

[1] For an earlier version of this paper see Daim *et al.* 2023.

other grave goods. Since the 18th century, increasingly sophisticated methods have been developed to extract as much information as possible from the complex evidence about the individual person and the culture they represent. Remarkable progress has been made in this respect. Through fine-grained typological analyses, chronological and chorological studies, and with the help of scientific applications (e.g., 14C analyses, dendrochronology, material sciences, etc.), it has been possible to explore the cultural development of the ancient world in ever finer resolution. While the surviving texts mainly define past contexts within the framework of a history of domination, archaeology, despite many blind spots, makes possible the reconstruction of everyday, full-blooded life (which, of course, includes death). Archaeology can also score points on a macro level. Rich find material bears witness to supra-regional cultural connections, trade and migrations. Nevertheless, apart from a few exceptions, this information is not at the individual level but instead describes patterns that emerge from numerous individual cases.

However, a new contender has appeared on the playing field of historical disciplines: archaeogenetics. Developed over the past twenty years, this approach opens new research possibilities through the analyses of ancient DNA. However, the challenge of utilising these data for history and archaeology is anything but trivial. Determining how these three disciplines can cooperate to rewrite history based on a genetic fact is the most important goal of a massive research programme of the European Commission.

HistoGenes

The international research project "HistoGenes: Integrating genetic, archaeological and historical perspectives on Eastern Central Europe 400-900 AD" has set itself the goal of deciphering the eventful history of the population in the Carpathian Basin.[2] On the one hand, written records, archaeological remains and over 6000 genetic analyses of skeletons from the fifth to ninth centuries should help us redraw the big picture of the connections between East Asia and the European subcontinent. On the other hand, these sources can shed light on the concrete lives of people, primarily in small settlements, their cultural

[2] The project was designed by Johannes Krause, Patrick Geary, Walter Pohl and Tivadar Vida and received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 856453. Pohl 2022; 2023.

traditions and rules. The Avar Empire (568-822) in the Carpathian Basin is ideally suited to test the new methods of archaeogenetics since we have both extensive written accounts of the empire's early period (558-626) and its downfall (Avar wars of Charlemagne 791-803, last mention of the Avars in 822), as well as an extremely rich collection of archaeological find material, predominantly from around 100,000 burials, mainly from Hungary, Austria, Moravia, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia and Croatia.[3]

The rapid development of methods for analysing ancient DNA and its bioinformatic evaluation surprised scientific community. It was a sensation for the still-young field of archaeogenetics when Svante Pääbo won the Nobel Prize in 2022 for his study of Neanderthals and anatomically modern humans. Even before that, in the 2010s, the colonisation history of Neolithic- and Bronze Age Europe and the mixing of the three groups involved were investigated archaeogenetically. Ideally, individual cemeteries should be fully investigated, but due to the sheer size of many burial grounds, especially in today's Hungary, this was only possible in a few cases. Two of the completely analysed burial sites are in present-day Lower Austria south of Vienna: the Avar-period cemeteries of Leobersdorf and Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege. In the following section, these two sites will demonstrate what archaeology can achieve and how archaeogenetic information can contribute to archaeological analysis.

Both cemeteries are located on the edge of the Vienna Basin, a plain suitable for animal husbandry but probably also of strategic significance: the most important long-distance route between the Carpathian Basin and Bavaria ran along the Danube through the "Vienna Gate". Warriors and their clans settled in the Vienna Basin and the "Little Hungarian Plain" soon after the establishment of Avar rule in the Carpathian Basin, probably to control this route. The Vienna Basin could be described as the westernmost extension of the Eurasian steppe, the seemingly endless stretch from Manchuria to the Vienna Woods.

Leobersdorf

The Avar-period cemetery at Leobersdorf was discovered in 1976 during soil removal at the edge of a clay pit at the Polsterer brickworks. The owner of the factory, Dipl.Ing Kurt Mehofer, had the work stopped. Over the following years, from 1977 to 1983, the burial site was fully

[3] For the history of the Avars see Pohl 2018.

investigated under the direction of the present author. A total of 153 graves were found.

After the programme of excavation was completed, the finds were restored. A multidisciplinary research project was launched, involving anthropological and archaeozoological analysis of the skeletal material (Silke Grefen-Peters), analysis of the textile fragments (Hans-Jürgen Hundt), the wooden remains (Otto Cichocky) and the non-ferrous metal objects (Peter Wobrauschek, Wolfgang Haider, Christina Streli). The results shed light not only on mortuary practices, but also on the reality of people's daily lives and this small population's social structure, crafts and cultural relationships. The present author published the research results in a monograph accepted as a postdoctoral thesis at the University of Vienna, which was published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences in 1987.[4]

Compared to the significant burial finds in present-day Hungary, particularly the gold-equipped "princely tombs", the Leobersdorf find materials seem very modest. There are only three burials with gilded late-Avar belt sets (21, 69, 71) (fig. 1, fig. 2), yet the chronological analysis of the site yielded some surprising results. The most significant graves of the Early Avar period, nos. 11 and 152 (both robbed in antiquity), had been placed around 50 metres apart. Apparently, there initially existed a vast burial area with widely scattered graves. It now became possible to assign a "single grave" found around 400 metres west of the cemetery in 1953 to these scattered graves. Although it had also been robbed, it nevertheless contained a cast silver mask fitting and a lead-backed tin rosette (fig. 3).[5]

The actual row-grave cemetery at Leobersdorf could have originated with grave 11 (fig. 4). A few Middle Avar burials were found here, but most of the burials at Leobersdorf were from the Late Avar period (roughly the eighth century AD). The cemetery was systematically filled from south to north (fig. 5). With help from a specially adapted typology, periodization of the inventories (Peter Stadler) and linkage to the cemetery plan, the chronology of the Late Avar find material could be slightly improved. The metal analyses of the Late Avar belt ornaments are also worthy of note. While in the first half of the eighth century, the belt tongues and fittings were cast in bronze, an alloy with a very high lead content was used in the Late Avar period

[4] Daim 1987.

[5] A similar burial ground: Tomka 2005.

III. Strangely enough, hardly any ceramic vessels (0.7%) were found in the Leobersdorf graves. The comparison of male burials equipped with belt sets and the volume of grave-pits provided clear results regarding social structure: significantly larger graves were dug for the belt wearers. In contrast, only one oversized grave pit was created for a woman from the Late Avar period III. The significance of this observation is still being debated, but the fact that belt-wearing men occupied a social rank unavailable to women can hardly be refuted.

Although the women's graves at Leobersdorf did not yield any spectacular finds, they played an essential role in reconstructing the cemetery's occupation process. The finds of black melon-seed beads and oval earrings helped to subdivide the Late Avar Period more precisely.

It goes without saying that the state of research in Avar archaeology has improved considerably since 1987, many substantial publications have appeared. For Leobersdorf e.g. significant find-parallels are seen in silver mask fittings from the North Caucasus.[6]

Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege

The Avar-period cemetery of Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege was excavated between 1967 and 1973 by Karl Matzner, Hermann and Lotte Schwammenhöfer.[7] No less than 497 avar burials could be recorded. While the cemetery at Leobersdorf lies in the lowlands of the Vienna Basin - no remains of older burials were discovered there - the cemetery at Mödling was located between prehistoric burial mounds on a terrace on a slope in the Vienna Woods. The burial site was most likely visible from an associated settlement in the valley whose precise location is yet to be determined.

The "An der Goldenen Stiege" cemetery is still unpublished; therefore, a selection of the most important grave inventories is presented here. The burial sequence begins much later than that in Leobersdorf, probably around the second quarter of the seventh century. One of the earliest graves, which can be attributed to Early Avar period II, is grave 79 (fig. 6). The man buried here had, among other things, a belt set made of sheet metal with a main strap-end that widens slightly towards the round end. It is thus related to the Leobersdorf set from grave 11, but probably somewhat later due to the combination with square metal fittings.

[6] Belinskij & Härke 2018.

[7] Exhibition catalogue Mödling 1977; Daim 1994.

The richest male grave of the Middle Avar period, no. 35, contained a multi-piece belt set made of sheet silver with chain decoration (fig. 7). At his temples lay two earrings with small sheet metal bobbles. In addition to a three-lobed arrowhead and the bone fittings of a quiver, the inventory also included a spindle whorl - usually an accessory in female burials.

The inventory of grave 93 belongs to the same period (fig. 8). The belt decorations (main strap-end, one-piece back fitting inlaid with blue stones and square belt fittings) are very finely crafted.

Notable are belt-sets with cast strap-ends and fittings with geometric decoration, sometimes associated with (typologically older) square sheet metal fittings. They date to the Middle Avar period II and form a bridge to the mostly completely-cast fittings of the Late Avar period. Parts from one of the sets can be found in two graves (100, 242). A closely related, smaller buckle was discovered in grave 353 (fig. 9-11).

While the castings from the three burials mentioned are of low quality, grave 135 yielded an excellently crafted set in which the fastening pins for the square fittings had been cast together with the backs (fig. 12). Also noteworthy are the elaborately decorated earrings and - above all - part of a necklace made of millet-grain beads strung with six sheet-bronze balls. A related belt set was published by Zlata Čilinská from Želovce (Slovakia) in 1973.[8]

With the iron, strip-plated belt set from grave 240, we have strong evidence of trade relations between Bavaria and the Avar lands in the third quarter of the seventh century (fig. 13), Such belts are also found in Sommerein am Leithagebirge (Lower Austria)[9] and other locations: one trader even seems to have travelled as far as Allatyán in present-day eastern Hungary (grave 520).[10]

The Late Avar belt sets provide no great surprises; they follow supra-regional fashion. In grave 478, the moulded main strap-end is combined with rectangular sheet metal fittings (fig. 14). The fittings bear prominent decorative rivets and attached rings - characteristic of the beginning of the Late Avar period.

A typical early griffon belt set was found in grave 326 (Late Avar period I) (fig. 15). The eagle-griffon, a combination of two mighty creatures, dominates the belt motifs in the first half of the eighth

[8] Čilinská 1973.

[9] Daim & Lippert 1984, Tab. 15, 16; Daim, Koch & Samu 2017.

[10] Kovrig 1963, tab. XXXIV.

century. Main strap-ends with animal combat scenes, such as "two griffons striking a doe" arranged in a pattern of leafy vines, like those from grave 256A, date somewhat later (Late Avar period II) (fig. 16).

The Late Avar period III brings many innovations and a new visual vocabulary. The griffon as a belt motif is now a thing of the past; leafy tendrils, scales and figurative depictions now dominate, e.g. the popular circus scene on the main strap-end from grave 440, where a lion stands on a gladiator (?) while biting him in the neck (fig. 17). Now, the strap-ends are usually made in two parts, probably to simplify the work, as this eliminates the problematic shaping of the ferrule for the leather strap. The sets with strap-ends are an exception: these are cast individually but have no ferrules; instead, extensions on the clamps fasten them to the leather strap. This type only occurs in Mödling in grave 140 (fig. 18).

Regarding the women's graves in Mödling, we see great variety of jewellery here, especially many different earrings. The Middle Avar types with large bobbles, some made of sheet metal and decorated with glaucous eyes, stand out. The bead necklaces of the Early and Middle Avar period can be very colourful. The Late Avar earrings are usually oval and have elongated glass pendants. A pair of silver earrings from the Late Avar period, which may have come from the Mediterranean region, is exceptional. Towards the end of the cemetery's period of use, head ornament rings with spiral ends seem to have become more common. Head ornament rings with loop ends were found in three graves, which already point to the Carolingian period (fig. 19).

Among the graves at Mödling, one female burial stands out in particular: the young woman from grave 144. She had a complete set of jewellery, composed of oval earrings made of gold and silver, a choker, a necklace made of black melon-seed beads, bracelets, spiral finger rings and the now-famous gilded cloak clasp with the depiction of kneeling archers (fig. 20). All these objects are characteristic of the Late Avar period III. On top of all that, the young woman had been given a small glass vial, presumably discovered in a Roman tile grave, which may have contained perfume (fig. 21).

Many Avar objects that we refer to as jewellery or simply as 'contents of a pouch' will surely have had symbolic or religious significance for the deceased and the mourners. However, this significance usually remains hidden from us. In some instances, though, something of the former spiritual meaning shines through. This is the case with four iron armour plates found in Mödling graves 345, 433 and 464. They were most likely intended to protect the deceased from harm,

just as they once protected their owners in battle. The same could also apply to several small, interconnected iron rings, most probably fragments of avar chain mails, as found in no less than ten graves in Mödling, all of them burials of women or children. The Late Avar woman buried in grave 345 was particularly well protected: she was given both an armour plate and a presumed fragment of chain mail as amulets.

Ceramics

Food offerings play a major role in the burial customs of the Avar period. The bones from meat offerings are often preserved; the vessels that held liquid or porridge-like food (usually clay pots), also survive. Here, too, there are major differences between Mödling and Leobersdorf. Only 15 vessels were found in the 152 graves in Leobersdorf, whereas there are over 300 pots from a total of 497 Avar-period graves in Mödling. Unfortunately, we are (still) unaware of what they once contained, but they are valuable as a source of information on Avar craftsmanship and symbolism. Even while Mödling was being excavated, the diversity of the pottery became apparent in terms of clay quality, preparation with all kinds of additives, shaping, decoration and firing became apparent. Because of this broad spectrum, it seemed worthwhile to subject a representative number of the pots from Mödling to thin-section analyses, carried out by the mineralogist and petrographer, Roman Sauer.[11] He distinguishes among four petrographic ceramic types (A-D).

The earliest vessels from Mödling are hand-moulded and made of fine, friable clay (ceramic type C, example grave 51) (fig. 22). A group of thin-walled vessels with a gentle S-profile are unusual, re-worked on the wheel, primarily red-fired, with white carbonates in the clay that create a mottled effect (ceramic type B, example grave 353 (fig. 23). This type of pottery dates to the Middle Avar period, but the carbonates in the clay are also found much earlier and also much later, even in the Late Avar period. The mineralogical-petrographic analysis also proved that the relatively uniform, re-worked, hard-fired grey-brown pots of the Late Avar period (ceramic type A, examples grave 311, and ceramic type D. example grave 418) were not made in Mödling, as they contain silicates not found locally (fig. 24, 25). Possibly, these ceramics came from a bit further east in the Leithagebirge region, where there was probably a pottery industry that supplied the surrounding area with this highly serviceable ware. For the burial of higher-ranking persons, however,

[11] Daim *et al*. 2023; Sauer *et al*. forthcoming; Richter forthcoming.

handmade, non-reworked vessels were used, as was the case for the richly equipped young woman in grave 144 (fig. 21, 26) and the male grave 140 with a belt set (fig. 27). Significantly, the clay for both vessels was mixed with crushed ceramic sherds (probably chamotte), which came from the silicate-rich, hard-fired, mass-produced ware. It seems that the handmade pots were valued higher that the "industrial" products. Could it be that the personal production of funerary ceramics has already been part of the funerary ritual?

Leobersdorf and Mödling in comparison

At first glance, the burial customs, clothing norms and fashions in Leobersdorf and Mödling appear very similar. This applies to the main types of belts worn by the men and the jewellery worn by the women. A closer look, however, reveals some subtle differences from which we can deduce different mentalities and cultural traditions.

- The differences begin with the topography. While the Leobersdorf cemetery is located in the plains, in Mödling, a terrace on the eastern slope of the Vienna Woods was used.

- In Leobersdorf, there was originally an extensive burial area. From this area, a row-grave cemetery was subsequently created. The Mödling cemetery used the site of a prehistoric settlement and burial ground.

- Only a few clay vessels were found in Leobersdorf, whereas in Mödling, they were found in almost every burial.

- The Leobersdorf burial from 1953 shows cultural connections as far as the North Caucasus of the late sixth century.

- In Mödling we find a great variety of earrings and necklaces, sometimes colourful. The people of Leobersdorf present a more reserved, ascetic impression.

- In Mödling many male burials also contain objects from the predominantly female sphere: complex earrings, short (incomplete) bead necklaces or spindle whorls. Leobersdorf burials distinguish sharply between women's and men's ensembles.

- The burials in Leobersdorf begin in the sixth century with scattered graves. In the final burials, finds from the Carolingian period are no longer present. The inhabitants of Leobersdorf apparently moved eastwards during the collapse of Avar rule.

- The necropolis of Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege was probably not established until the second quarter of the seventh century. However, unlike Leobersdorf, the inhabitants remained in place after the

end of the Avar Empire. The abandonment of the burial ground was possibly linked to the establishment of new ecclesiastical structures.

Archaeology and archaeogenetics

Physical anthropology /human biology, is the oldest partner discipline of archaeology, and some procedures such as age and sex determination and the examination of skeletons for injuries, pathologies and diseases visible in the bone material are still part of its toolbox. In recent years, however, this toolbox has been significantly expanded, particularly through archaeogenetics, which makes it possible to determine familial relationships within cemeteries, across the Avar empire and beyond. Leobersdorf and Mödling are two case studies that demonstrate this method's possibilities and limitations: precisely these limits are constantly being pushed. The first surprise was the determination that the population of Leobersdorf was of "East Asian" ancestry and had not mixed with the neighbouring clans in the 150 to 200 years when the cemetery was in use.[12] However, as there are no signs of inbreeding in Leobersdorf, the mothers must have come from other groups of East Asian origin, perhaps from Avar settlements east of the Danube or the Tisza, where people probably spoke the same language, sang the same songs and told the same stories. In contrast, the population of Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege is clearly Central European - a mixture composed of the most diverse local generations who lived there. Perhaps it will be possible to characterise them more precisely in the future.

The next surprise came at the end of 2021 when HistoGenes had already been running for two years. The project succeeded for the first time in identifying complete family trees in the cemeteries.[13] Uncannily, this clearly revealed patterns of relationships among the deceased. Grandfathers and grandmothers, brothers, sisters, children, uncles and aunts: they all become visible to us in the individual structure of each of the cemeteries. No burial ground is exactly like another.

The archaeogenetic investigations provided deep insight into the Avar social structure, showing that society was organised along patrilineal lines. As a rule, men stayed put, while future mothers came from elsewhere - in the case of Leobersdorf from clans of East Asian origin, as already mentioned. Some men had children by two or more

[12] Gnecchi-Ruscone *et al*. 2022; Wang *et al*. forthcoming.
[13] Gnecchi-Ruscone *et al*. forthcoming.

women; some women had children by several men. Several times, a woman entered a union with her deceased "husband's" brother. This practice was probably socially desirable (and is also known in other societies).

Statistically speaking, the fully sampled burial sites represent the population behind them, but not all the discovered dead could be assigned to the family trees. For example, women who died before they could give birth are shown as "not related" because, as immigrants, they do not (yet) have any blood relatives in the "village". However, other burials that are also "not related" may actually be secondary burials of people or immigrants who had no biological connections with the residents.

One surprising observation concerns the structure of cemeteries. Clearly, the position of an individual in a family tree is determined exclusively by their genome, which does not change from conception to death. However, the placement of a deceased person in a cemetery is decided by surviving family members or depends on rules a community has created for itself. Often, a cemetery is filled in several directions starting from a central "founder's grave", but grave groupings may also be formed - composed, for example, of close relatives or burials grouped by gender.

In the case of Leobersdorf, the cemetery was progressively filled from south to north, which is particularly evident in the Late Avar phases I to III (eighth century).[14] The archaeogenetic differentiation of three pedigrees of closely related individuals reveals a sudden change of strategy in mortuary practice.

Three men were buried with gilded belt sets around the mid-eighth century (Phase II) (fig 1, 2); in grave 21 a man was buried with his wife and their child (!); graves 69 and 71 held only one man each. The archaeogenetic analysis showed that all three men were brothers, albeit from two different mothers. What would have gone unnoticed without genetic research is the apparently prominent position that the members of pedigree 1 occupied in Leobersdorf society in the last third of the eighth century. They took the central section of the latest, northern part of the cemetery, while the other two pedigrees were buried on the periphery. Therefore, it looks as though one kinship had risen to become the "leading clan" in the middle of the eighth century, and the other Leobersdorfers had accepted or at least acquiesced to this.

[14] See fig. 5.

In Mödling, we see not just three pedigrees as in Leobersdorf but instead several smaller ones. Another difference is that these closely related people (first- and second-degree relatives) seem to have formed groups in that cemetery from the very beginning. Could it be that the change in the social structure in Leobersdorf corresponds to a supra-regional trend? Do we see a further differentiation of Avar society here?

The gilded belt sets from Leobersdorf also relate to a supra-regional context since they date to roughly the same time as the extraordinary graves from Komárno - Shipyard[15] or the sensational equestrian grave from Szeged - Pitváros.[16] Grave 144 of the "Princess" of Mödling - An der Goldenen Stiege can also be counted among these richly furnished Late Avar burials. What triggered this change in mortuary practice is still unclear, but in any case, there appears to have been a sudden need for more elaborate representation in the middle and second half of the eighth century. On the one hand, we again find links to the Black Sea region in the find material. However, on the other hand, there is no evidence of breaks in the occupation of the Late Avar cemeteries or internal military conflicts. The cultural change must have been peaceful.

Thanks to HistoGenes, we now know more about the young woman from Mödling 144 (fig. 20, 21). She is not related by blood to anyone else in the cemetery, so - as seems to have been usual for women - she came to Mödling from a different "village" and a different clan and probably died before she could have children. Why was she buried with such splendid furnishings? Could it be that she wore a kind of wedding garment? Or did she come from a wealthy and influential clan, where greater expense was expected for the ceremonies? For example, if she came from Komárno on the Danube, where outstanding finds from the Late Avar period III are known, we may discover this fact during the ongoing work in HistoGenes.

The aim of archaeological research is not adventure or the acquisition of valuable objects; instead, archaeology aims to understand how past societies might have lived, thought and organised themselves. Ideally, the analysis of cemeteries reveals concrete patterns of behaviour that allow us to infer traditions, social rules and - in rare cases - cosmological and religious concepts. These patterns of behaviour become particularly evident when comparing two burial sites.

[15] Trugly 1987; 1993.
[16] Bende 1998.

It seems that from the middle of the seventh century onwards, a standardised culture of representation was established throughout the Avar Empire's vast communication sphere. The language of belt sets, earrings, necklaces and cloak-clasps was understood everywhere. At a regional and local level, however, we also see an effort to differentiate oneself from the neighbours in small but important details - in clothing and various practices, such as patterns of mortuary activity. The drawing of such boundaries could have been part of everyday dialogue. Ultimately, this differentiation also yields clues as to how collective identities were expressed and how much room for manoeuvre individuals enjoyed in their community.

Depending on source availability, historical research and archaeology can use their methodological apparatus to trace and depict cultural developments, connections and differences. In doing so, scholars can rely on hard evidence, such as written records and archaeological finds. However, many phenomena that we recognise cannot be explained. Archaeogenetics provides the historical sciences with a completely new tool - and one that is undergoing rapid development. By using aDNA analyses to determine familial relationships, the rules of reproduction usual at the time, the presence of diseases such as plague, tuberculosis and hepatitis,[17] and - on a large scale - migration movements, the picture we form of the distant past is becoming ever more detailed and at the same time more personal. The individual Avar comes into focus. In archaeology, most historical statements are based on behavioural patterns. Thanks to archaeogenetics, people who lived in the past are now becoming increasingly tangible. Nevertheless, in the future, the most detailed possible evaluation of the archaeological legacy and the study of written sources will be at the forefront of every project. Without archaeology, archaeogenetics is impossible and also largely pointless.

One of the most important findings of the HistoGenes research to date concerns the duality of humans, which was mentioned at the very beginning of the paper. Yes, humans are biological. But how they behave as social beings, how they communicate with one another, see themselves and want to be seen, has nothing to do with biology. The people who were buried by their surviving kin in Leobersdorf and Mödling were inhabitants of the Avar Empire. As such, they dressed and adorned themselves according to the prevailing rules and fashion.

[17] Daim *et al*. 2023, 328-329.

However, their ancestry was East Asian in Leobersdorf and locally diverse in Mödling. On the next level, in the social structure of a clan, the closer relationships could play yet another role.

We are only at the beginning of HistoGenes, so we will surely be in for a few more surprises. But at every stage of this vast project, using the hard facts of archaeology as a foundation, it is fascinating to construct new intellectual edifices incorporating medieval- and Byzantine studies, anthropology and genetics. We have already seen a massive change in our image of the early medieval population in the Carpathian Basin. Not only do we recognise processes and structures, but ever more clearly, we also see the people.

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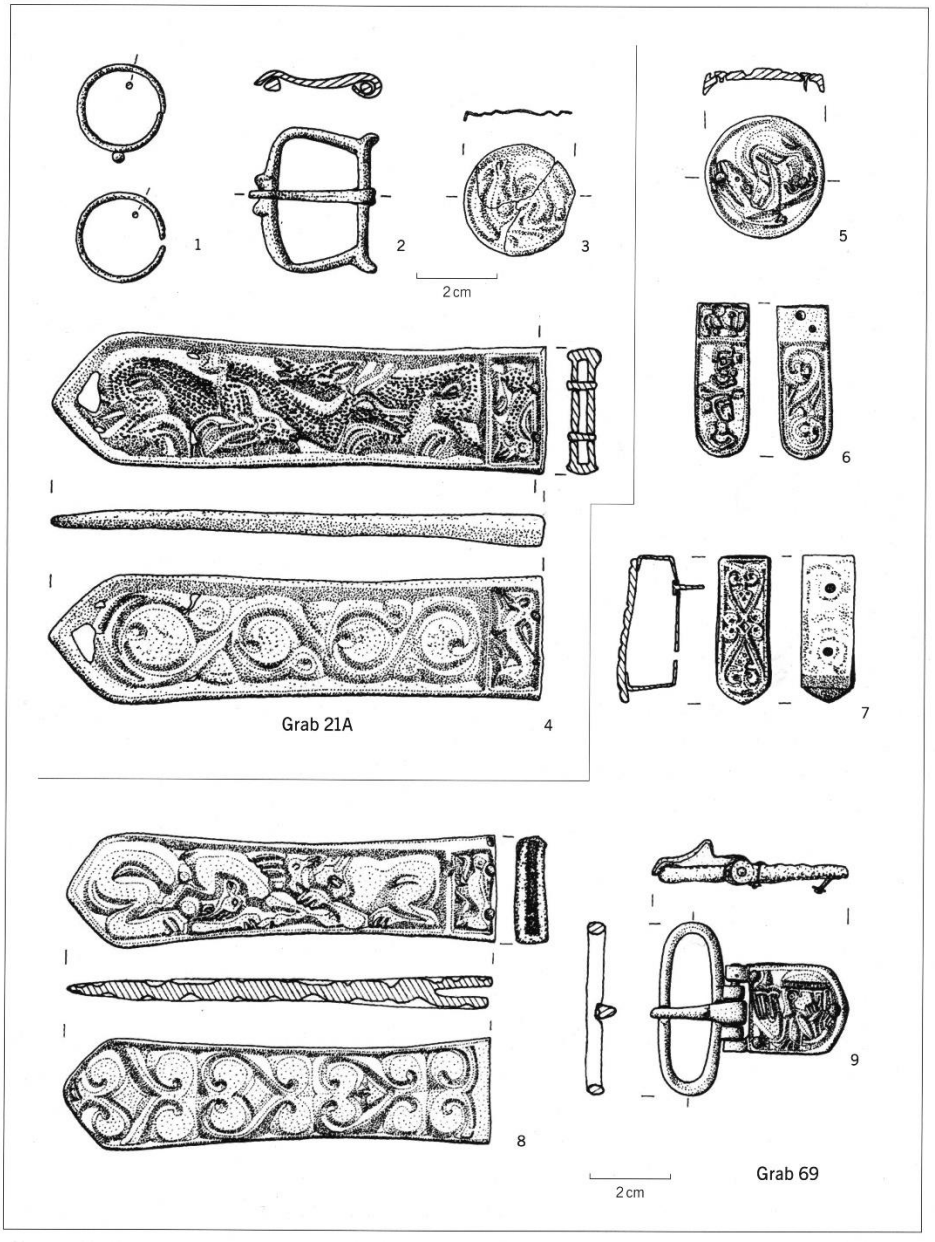


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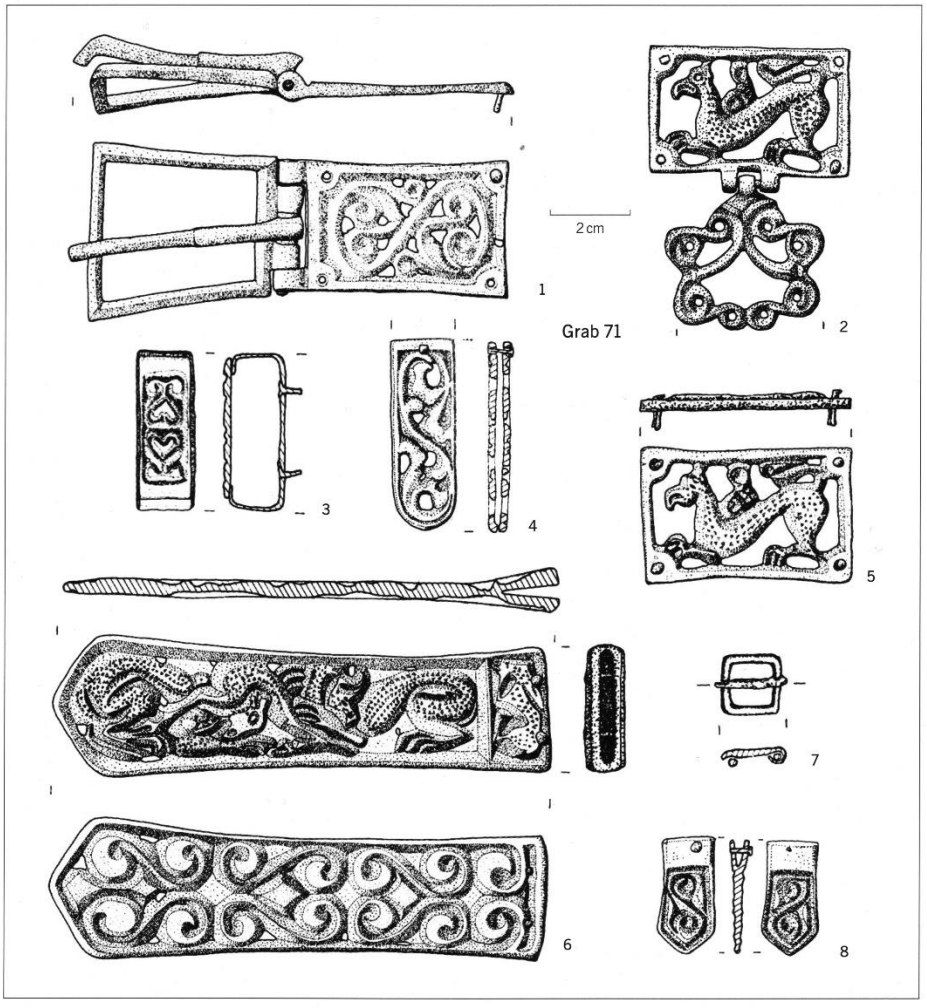


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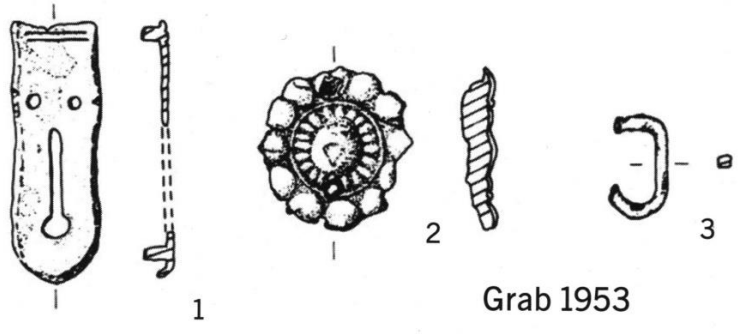


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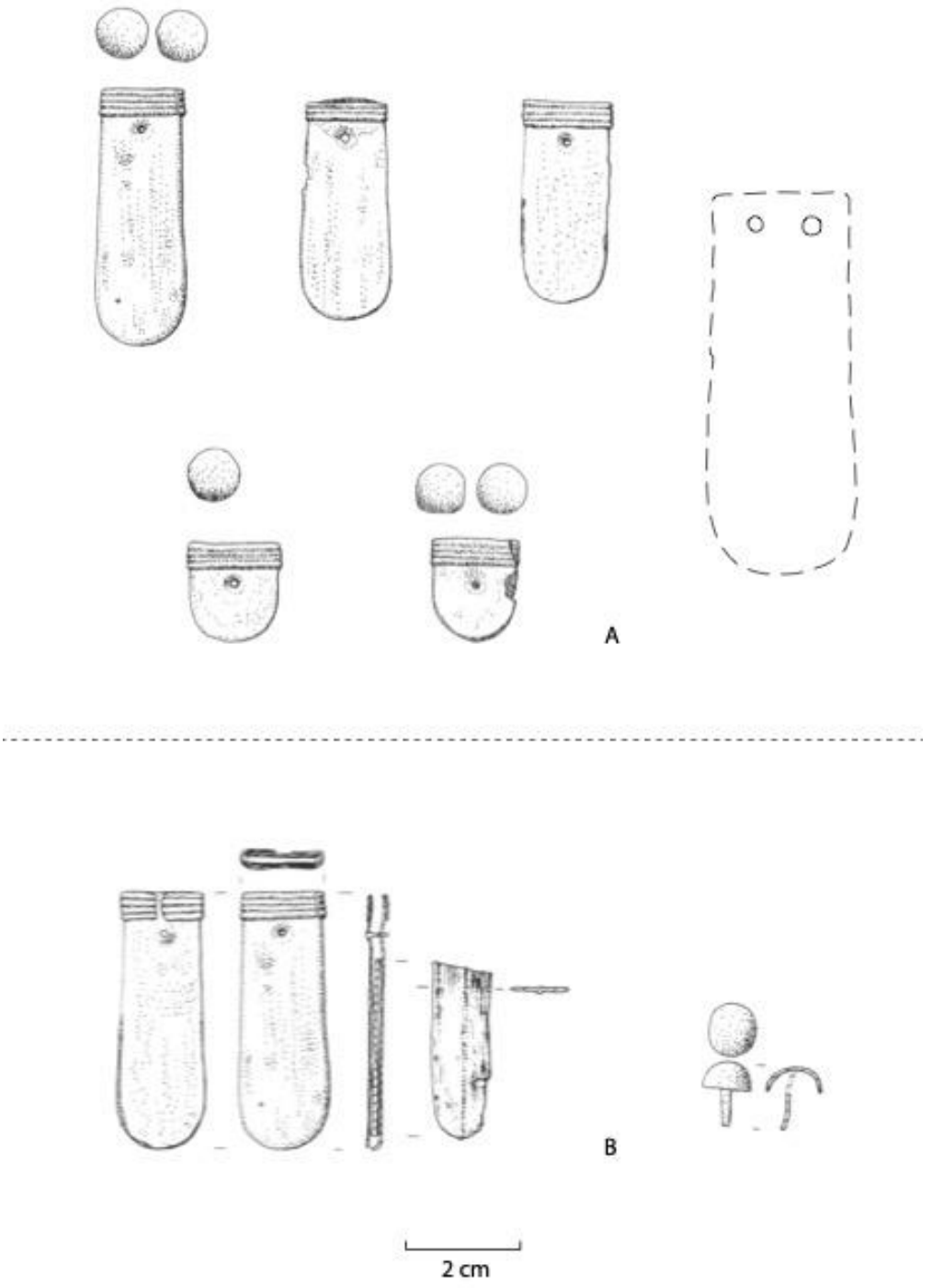


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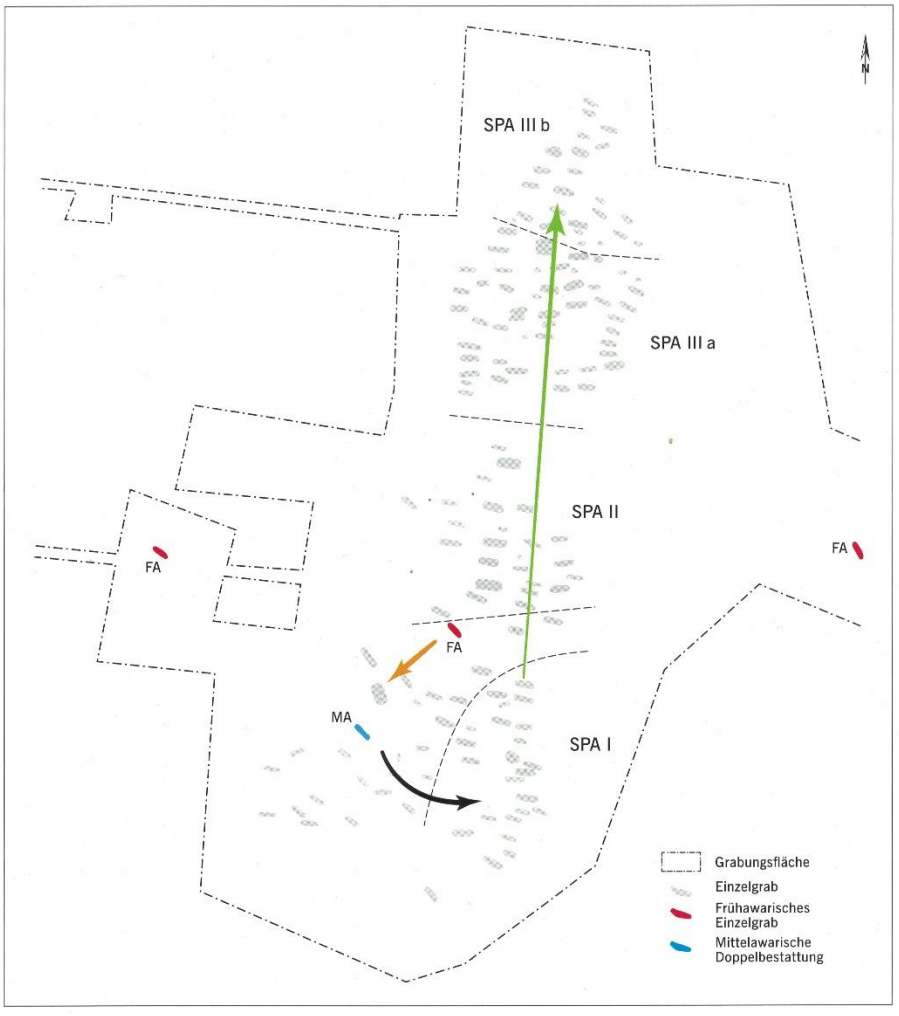

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Einzelgrab
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Mittelawarische Doppelbestattung

Fig. 5

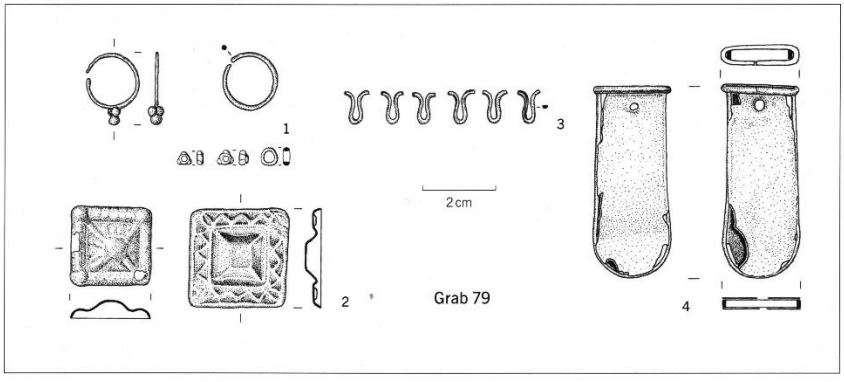

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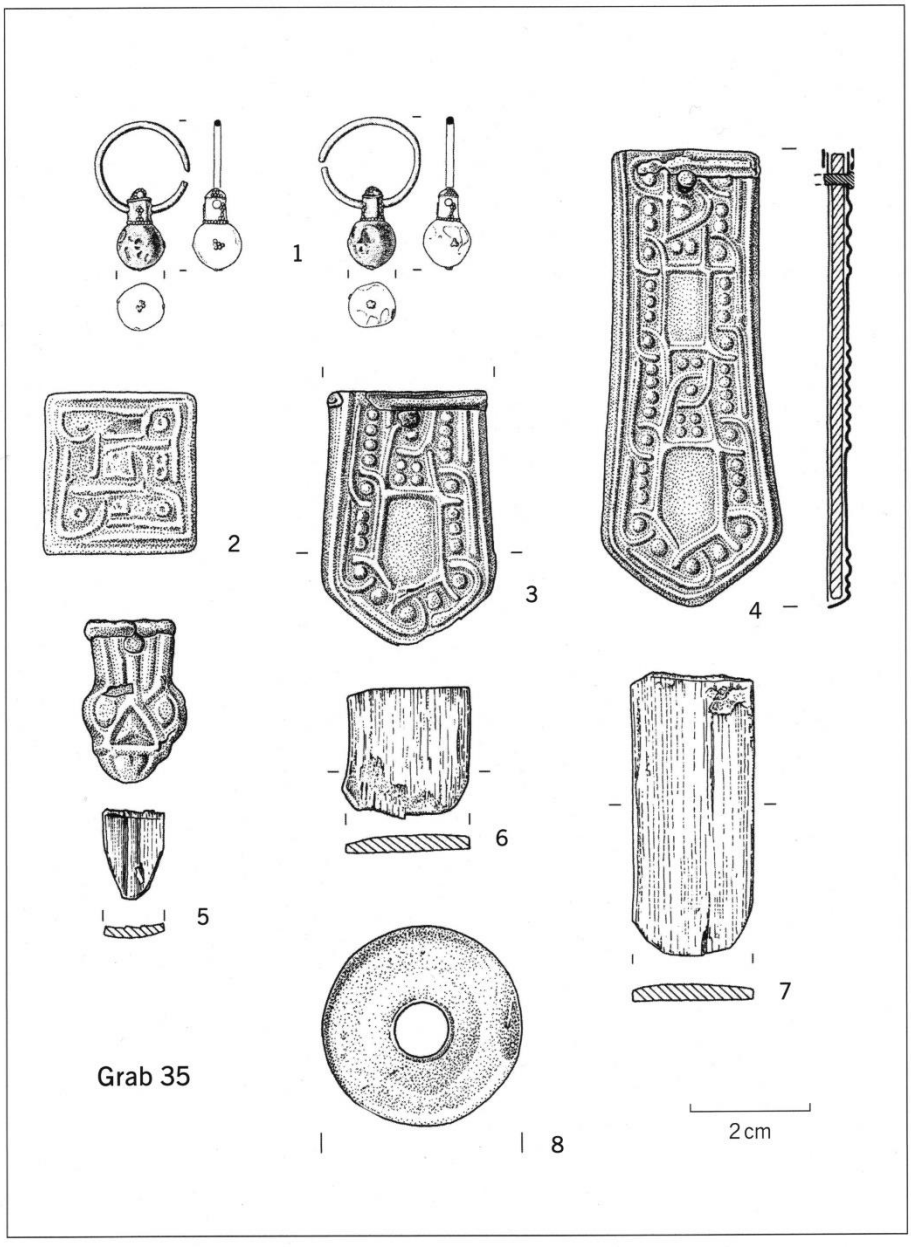


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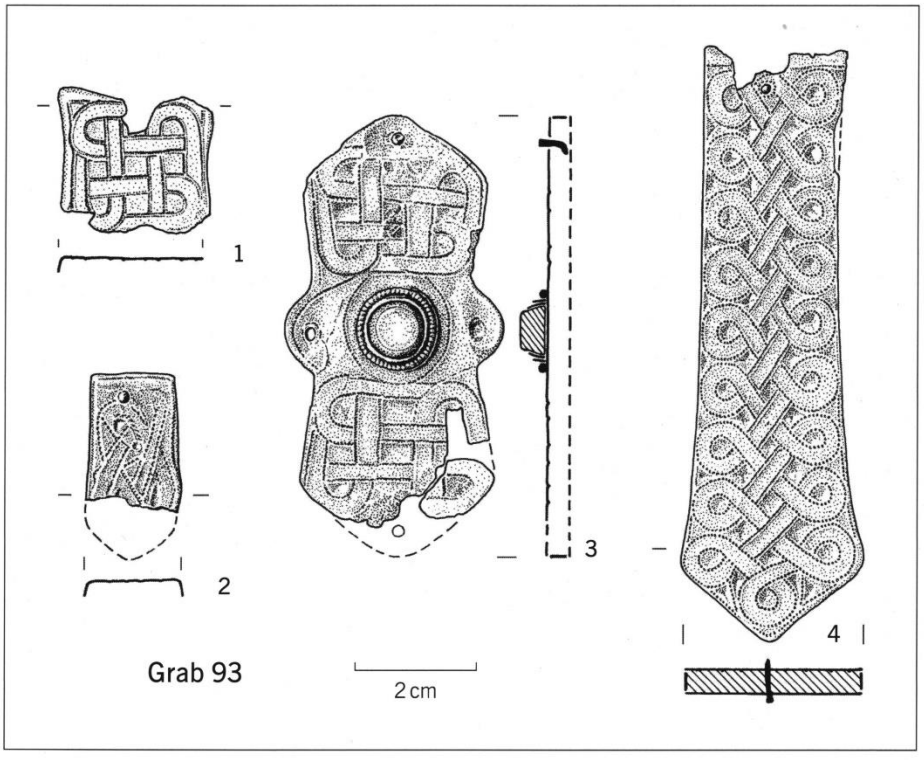


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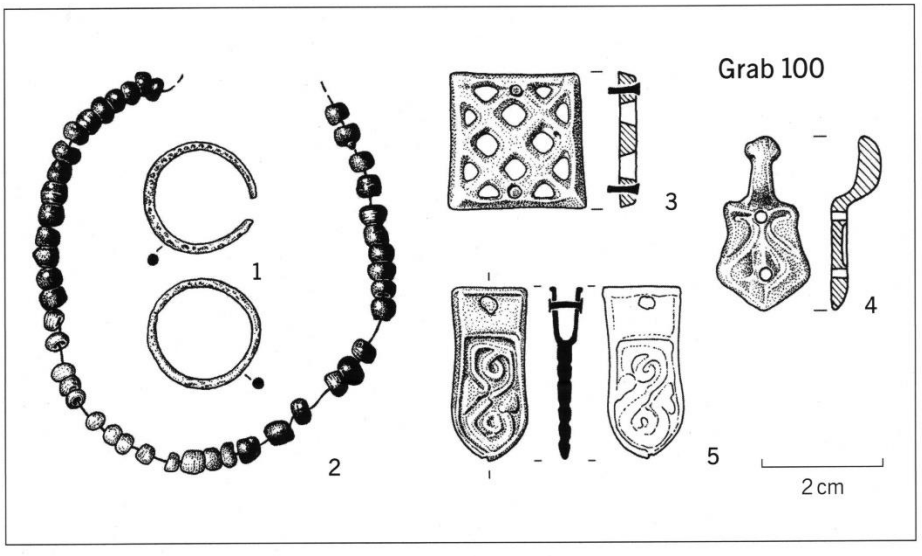


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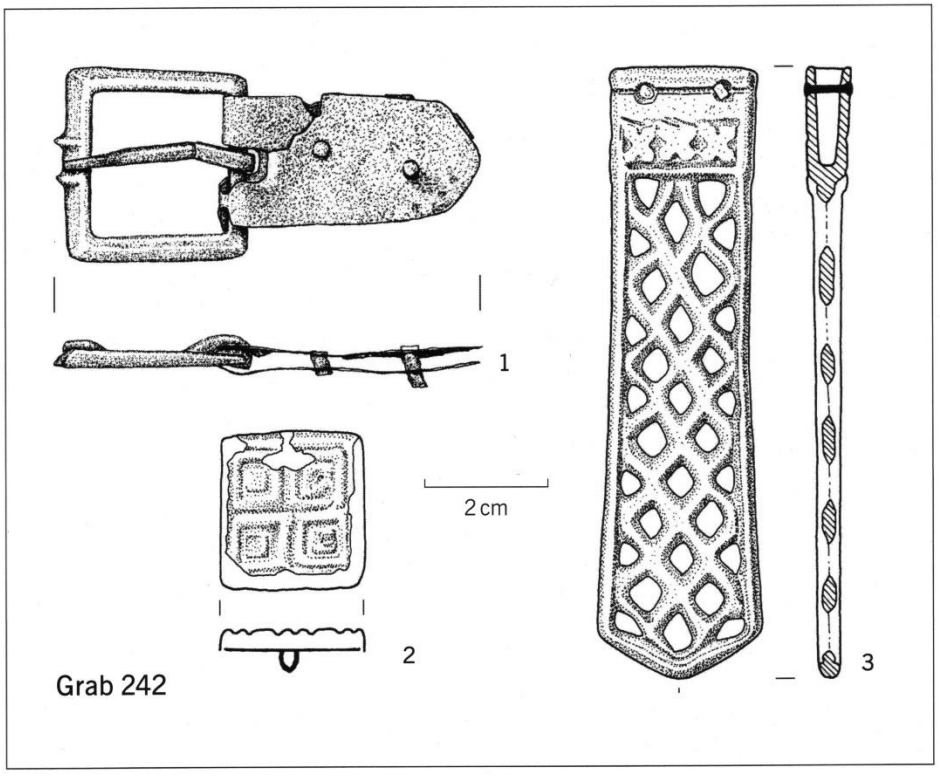


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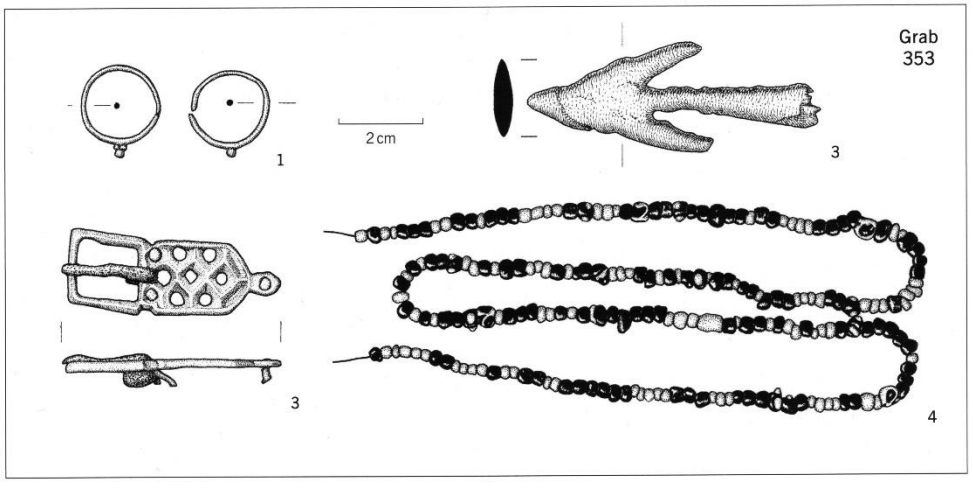


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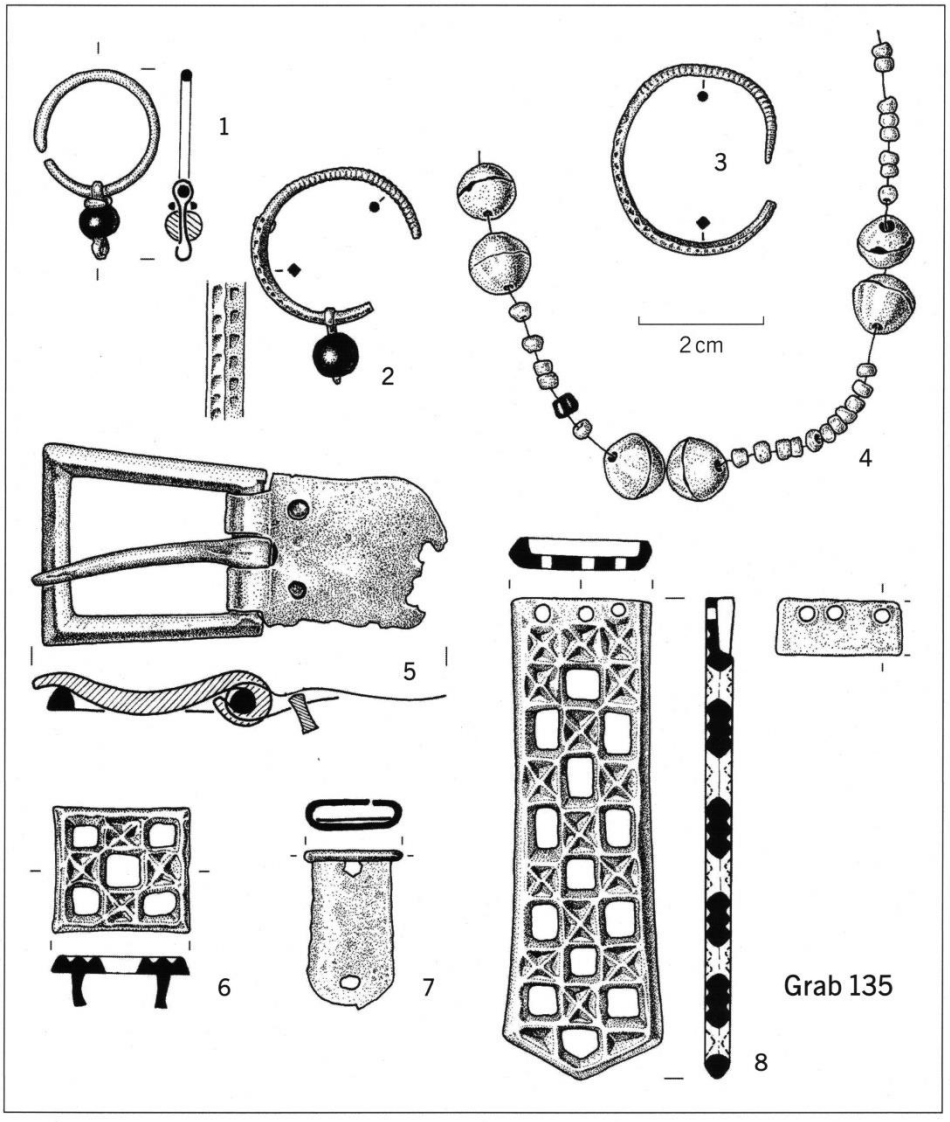


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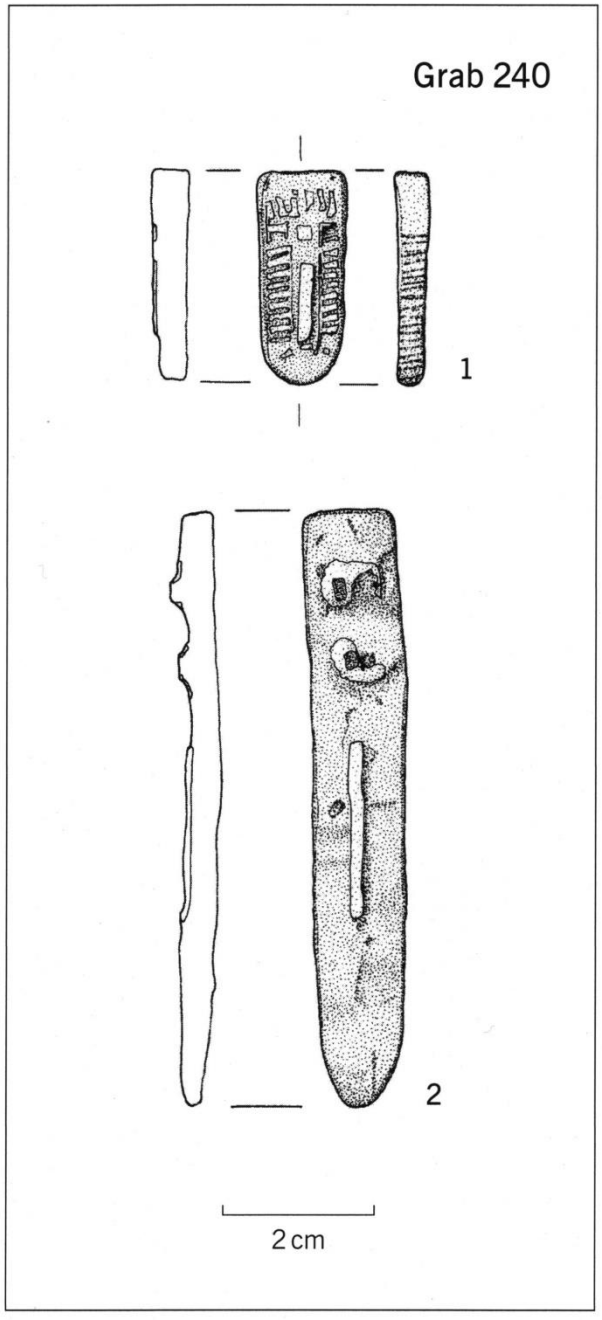


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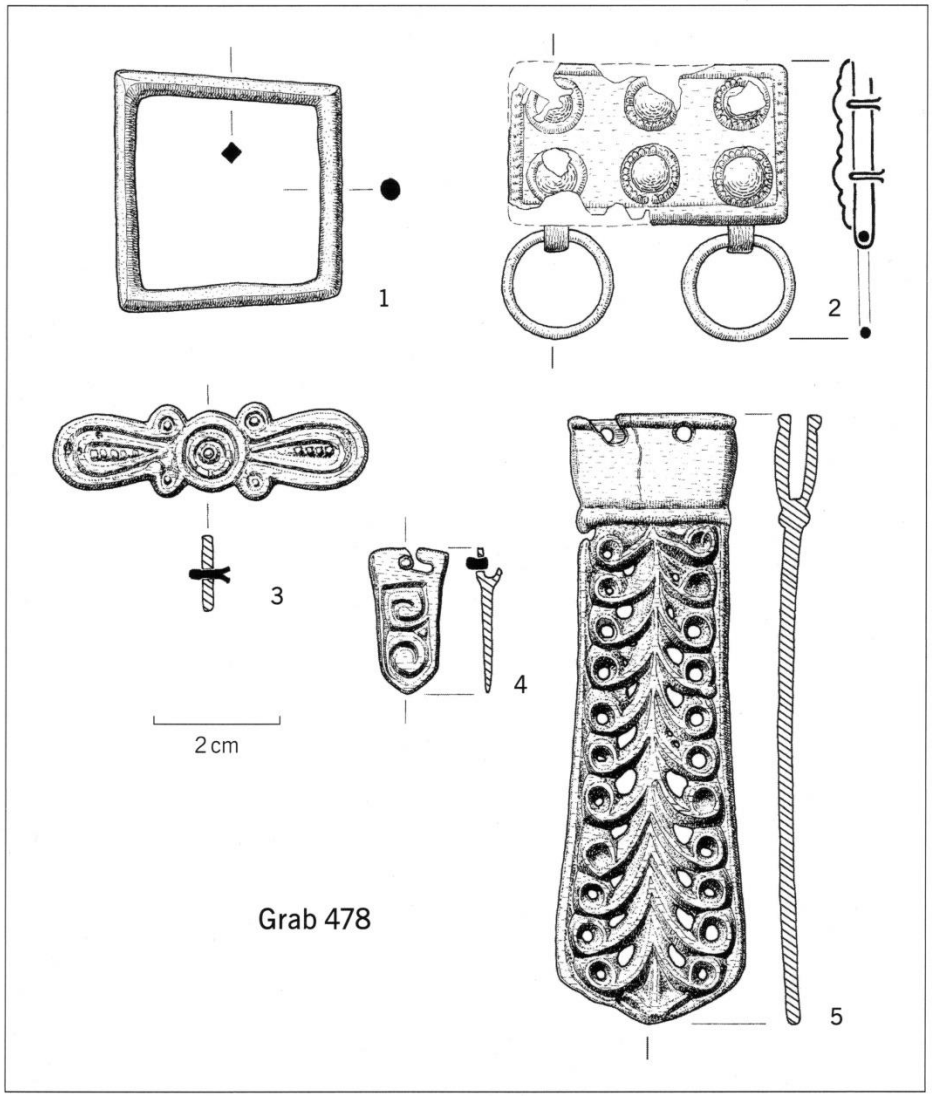


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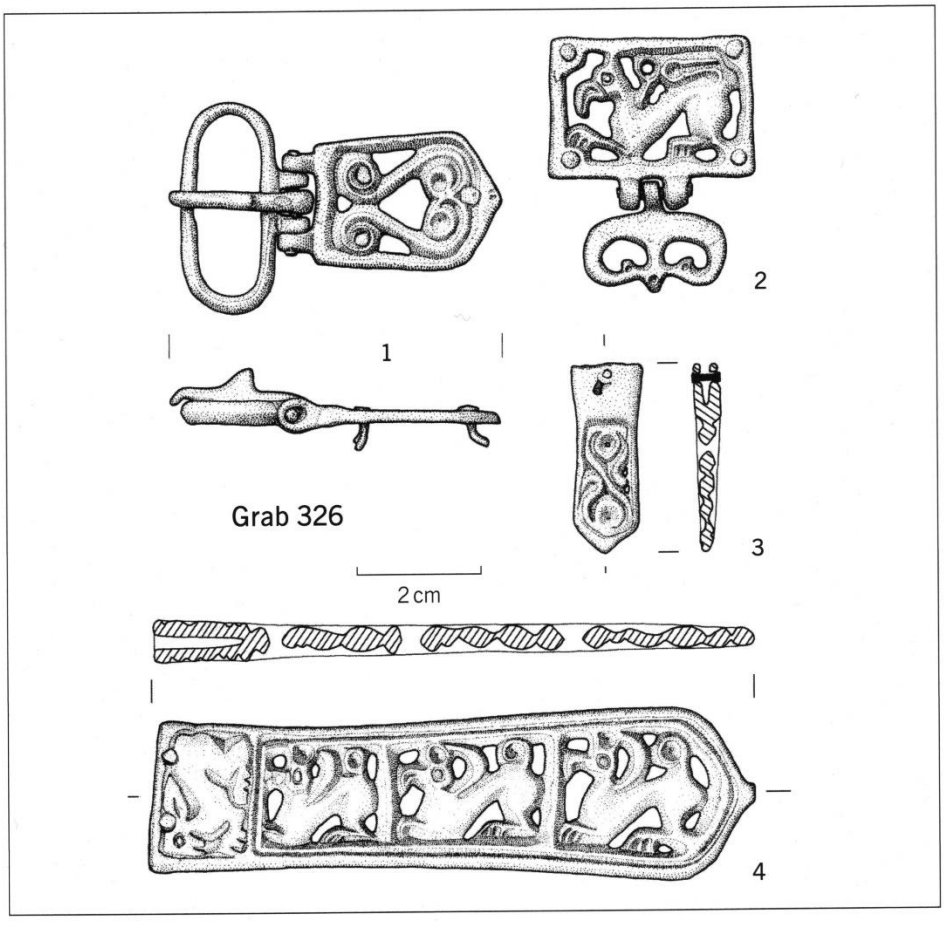


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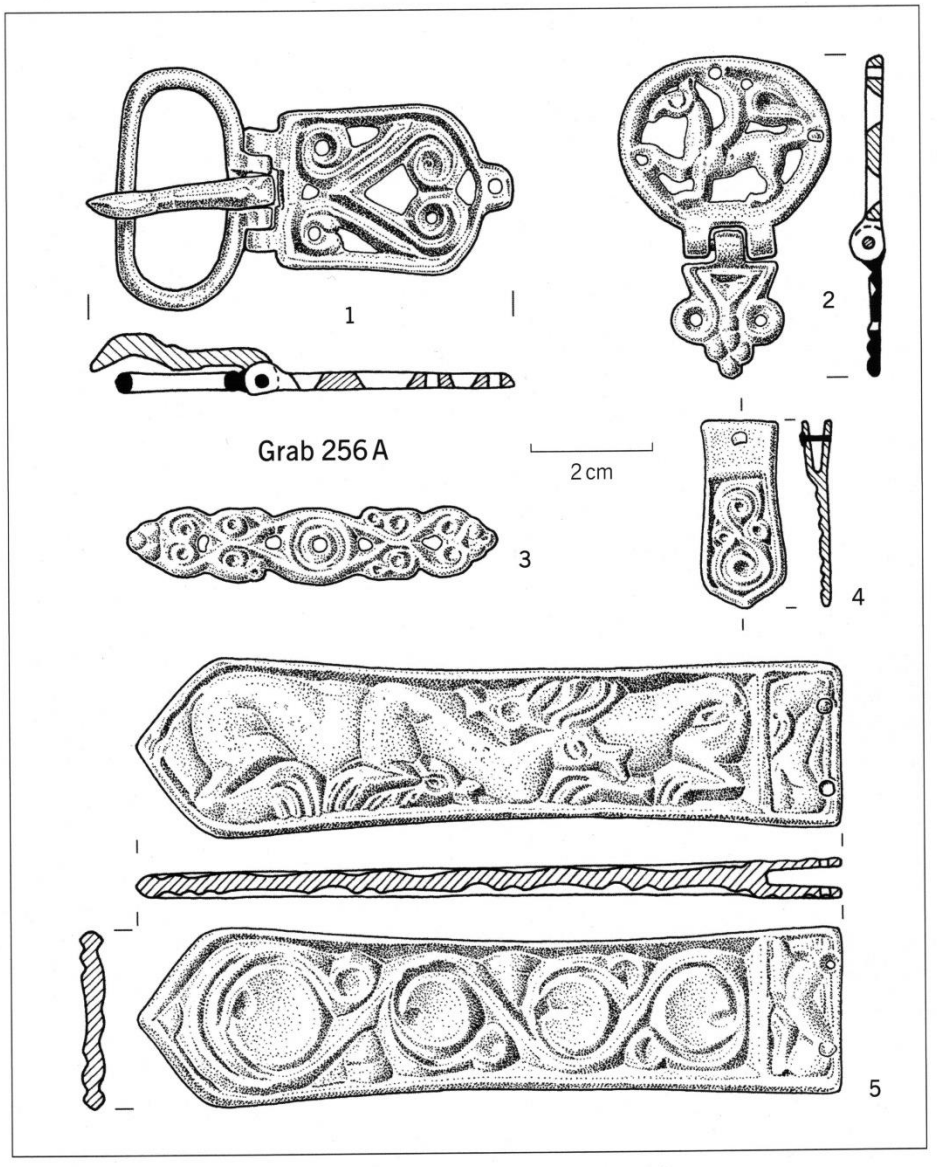


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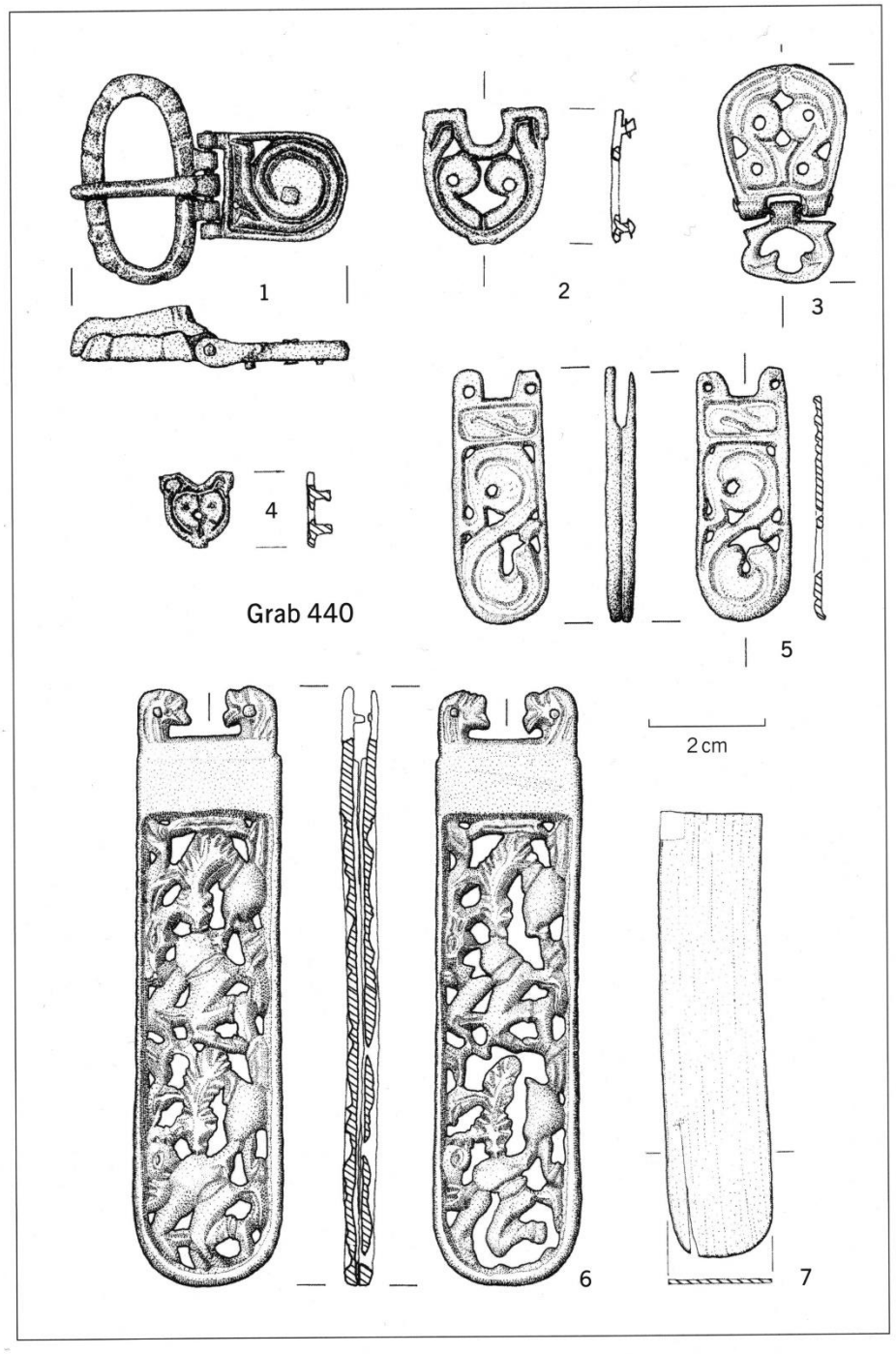


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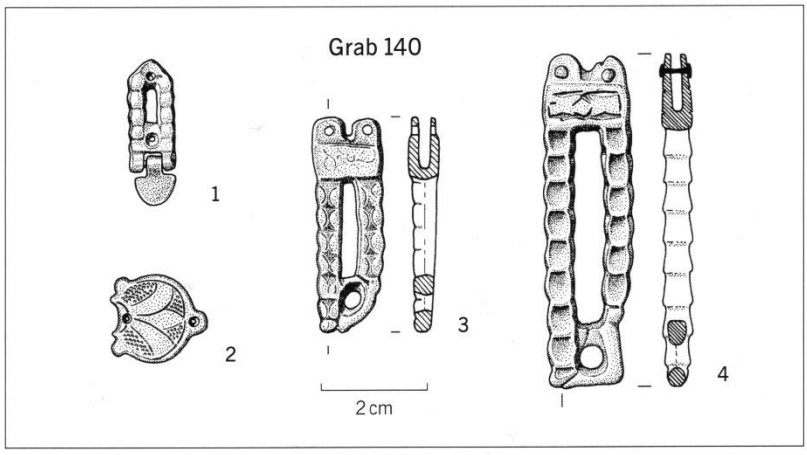

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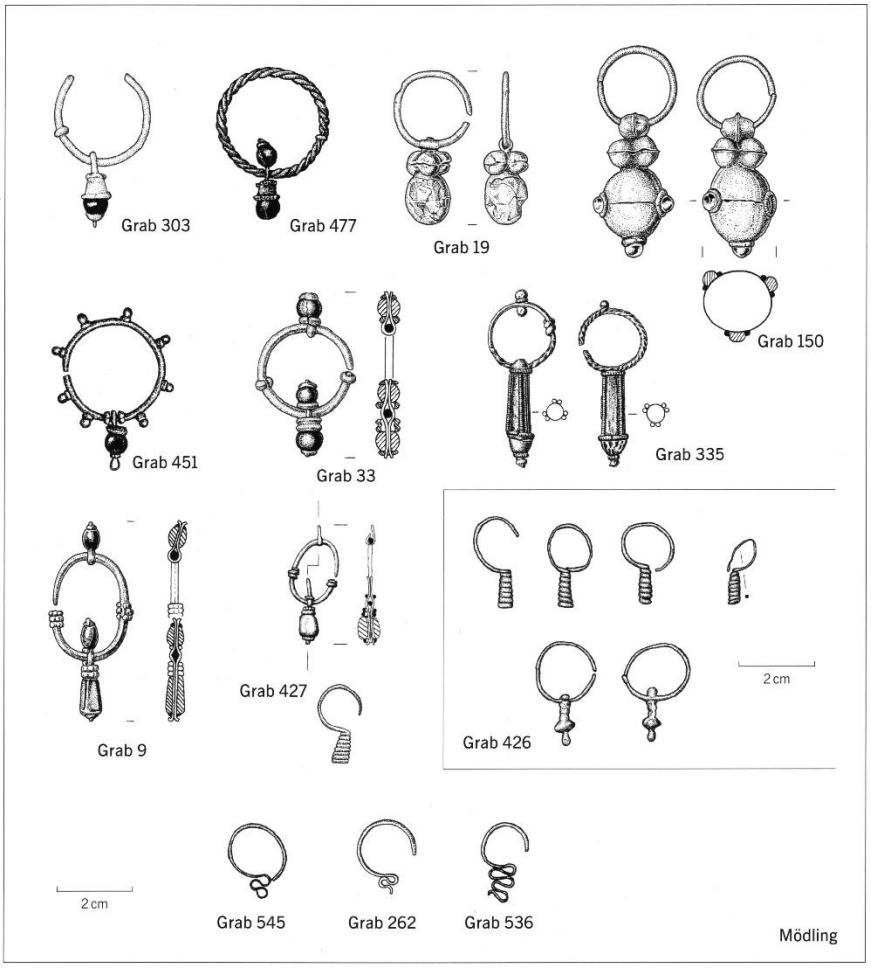

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Mödling

Fig. 19



Fig. 20

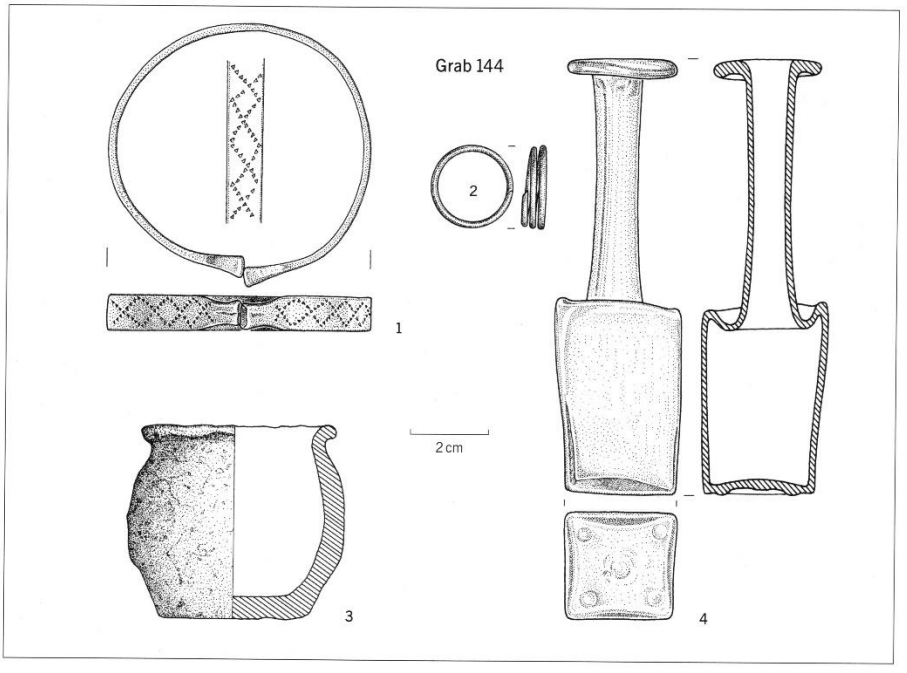


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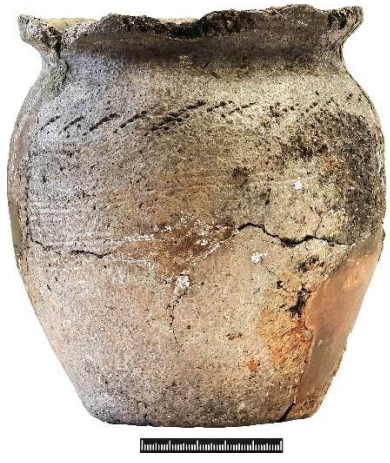


Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27

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Aboba – Pliska in the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle

Pavel Georgiev

Abstract: Passages have been analyzed from the two versions of the chronicle - the Slavic version, which was part of a manuscript from the early 17th century and the newly found version from the beginning of the 16th century, part of one of the works of the Turkish historian Kemalpaşazade, based on a Greek protograph from the 11th or 12th century - Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle (BAC-b).

The Slavic version says that Pliska and other important settlements were built by king Ispor, i.e. khan Asparuh, but this information is constantly called into question and quite rightly so. According to the anonymous chronicler, the building of towns and solid forts have begun as soon as the state was created and Pliska was the first and only state and dynasty center from the end of the 7th to the end of the 10th or the beginning of the 11th century. Initially it was built on a territory which he calls Karvuna land or "Stomogilie (a hundred mounds)" – meaning a territory where many encampments and towns have been built. He has identified two phases of the building process: before and after king Ispor came and settled in this land. The chronicler links the beginning of the first building phase to the name of Slav "the first king in the land of Bulgaria". During his reign, the "Kuman-Bulgarians" (i.e. nomadic warriors) came and "settled" in the existing "regions and towns". But he (Slav) "created" "a hundred mounds", i.e. earthen ramparts similar to the "great stone wall running from the Danube to the sea". Building new proper towns he links to the name of Ispor/khan Asparuh and according to him, the construction process continues under the reign of his legendary heir Isot who owned many "honorary towns", i.e. ruler's residences. Isot ruled for just over a 100 years and this period could be placed between the beginning of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th century AD. The period includes the reigns of kings that the chronicler had no information about who could be conditionally called "Isotedes". The analysis and comparison of the text of the chronicle with other written accounts and archeological data lead to the conclusion that the actual building of towns like Pliska (the Krum dynasty's capital), Drastar, etc. became possible not earlier than the end of the 8th century or the beginning of the 9th century AD.

The text of the second version of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle (BAC-b) brings new information about the construction process in Pliska's residence, linked

to the name of the third king, called San (not Isot). This supposedly was another name for khan Krum. The strange name - San – was possibly a misreading of the title "Kan" engraved on the golden pendants of the Great Khan Omurtag (fig. 2). San/Kan (Krum) usurped the throne and ruled under the title „chief" (probably of the army, i.e. kana subigi) and a descendant of the "Caesar", i.e. Khan Tervel. In 806, he proclaimed himself as the kanas ubigi, i.e. the rightful Sovereign of all Bulgarians. Then he built a "fortress" that he named Pelasta. The fortress was "majestic" and, according to Kemalpaşazade, it was located "in the fields near Shumlu" (Aboba field). It's where the remains of Pliska stone fortification are, which has not been built until Khan Omurtag came to power. Because of that, Krum's fortress is supposed to be a structure in his "aul" = palace), described in relation to its being burnt down in 811. The name Pelasta (comes from Palatium) is a confirmation that the site was both a palace and a fortress which could be identified as Krum's Palace located in the center of Pliska which has been properly explored. It is built next to a vast ensemble of residential constructions and other more presentable buildings dating back to the 780s or 790s and could be linked to Krum's predecessors – Kardam and one of his successors who went unnamed in (BAC-b).

Key words: Chronicle, Plyuska grad - Pliska, king Ispor – kan/khan Asparuh, Isot (Isotedes), San – Kan, Krum and Tervel, Karvuna land, "Stohalmie", Krum's Palace /ruler's residence, capital

Резюме: Анализирани са пасажи от двете версии на летописа (славяноезична, запазена в ръкопис от началото на XVII в. и новооткрита – в съчинение на турския историк Кемалпашазаде от началото на XVI в., основана на гръкоезичен протограф от XI – XII в. (БАЛ-б).

В славяноезичния текст е посочено, че Плиска е създадена заедно с други важни строежи от Испор цар, т.е. хан Аспарух, но тези информации се подлагат отдавна на основателни съмнения. За летописеца строителството на градове и солидни укрепления е започнало със създаването на държавата. За него Плиска е не само първи, но и единствен държавен и династичен център от края на VII до към края на X или началото на XI в. Възниква в нейната първоначална територия, която нарича „Карвунска земя" и „Стомогилие". С последното той я определя като „земя" с много укрепени лагери и градове. В тяхното изграждане разграничава две фази: до Испор и след него. Началото на първата свързва с „пръв цар в българската земя" на име Слав. При него „куманите-българи" (т.е. воини-номади) „населват" заварени „области и градове". Но той „сътворил" и „сто могили", т.е. защитен със землена фортификация места като тези от „великия презид между Дунава и морето". Строителството на нови и същински градове свързва с името на Испор/Аспарух, но то продължава при неговия легендарен наследник Изот, който разполагал с „много почетни градове", т.е. резиденции. Неговото малко над сто годишно управление може да се постави в действителност между началото на VIII и първата половина на IX в., като включва и това на владетелите, за които не е

разполагал с данни. Тях можем да наречем условно „Изотиди“. Анализът и съпоставката на текста с исторически свидетелства и археологически данни отвежда към заключение, че фактическото изграждане на градове като столицата на Крумовата династия - Плиска, Дръстър и други е било възможно не по-рано от края на VIII или началото на IX век.

Текстът на БАЛ-б внася нова информация за строителството в резиденцията на Плиска. То се свързва с третия владетел, наречен Сан, а не Изот. Зад него се крие личността на кан Крум. Необичайното му име е резултат от погрешен прочит на титлата „Кан“ върху златните медальони на Омуртаг (обр. 2). Сан/Кан (Крум) заел престола насилствено и управлявал отначало като „началник“ (може би на войската, т.е. kana subigi) и потомък на „Кесаря“, т.е. на Тервел. За kanas ubigi, т.е. върховен владетел на „всичките“ българи той се прогласил през 806 г. Тогава изградил „крепост“, която нарекъл Пеласта. Тя, била „величествена“ и се намирала, според Кемалпашазаде, „в полето край Шумлу“ (Абобското поле). Там се намират останките от каменната крепост на Плиска, но нейното изграждане започва едва при кан Омуртаг. Поради това, крепостта на Крум следва да е строеж в неговия „аул“ (=дворец), описан във връзка с опожаряването му през 811 г. Названието Пеласта (от Palatium) потвърждава, че става дума за дворец-крепост, който можем да отъждествим с проучения в центъра на Плиска „Крумов дворец“. Той е разположен в съседство с по-рано построен и благоустроен ансамбъл от жилищно-битови и представителни строежи. Тяхното изграждане може да се отнесе към 80-те – 90-те години на VIII в. и свърже с предшествениците на Крум – Кардам и неназован негов приемник, за който се споменава в БАЛ-б.

The question about the beginning of Aboba-Pliska

The discussions about this big early medieval city have started even before it was actually identified as being located in the Aboba field and have been going on for more than 150 years.[1] The real work on-site Pliska began when Škorpil brothers started inspecting the place and then the subsequent excavations were organized in 1899 and 1900 after the brothers' research results were made public and then published in 1905 by Karel Škorpil and F.I. Uspensky and other archaeologists from the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople (RAIC). These publications are to this day a reliable source for reference for further investigation of this vast and highly idiosyncratic early medieval city area.[2]

The archaeologist Rasho Rashev's (1943-2008) on-site and documental research of Pliska was a new peak in scientific progress and

[1] Georgiev 2000, 152-154.
[2] Aboba – Pliska 1905, passsim.

this article is published in his honour. His research results are summarized in his monograph about the pre-Christian Bulgarian culture which was published right before his untimely death.[3] In his monograph, he made a substantial review and assessment of the archaeological discoveries that were made back then and presented his concepts about their cultural and historic value in an objective and argued manner. He highlighted the problems concerning the dating of those findings and their meaning. In a certain sense Rasho Rashev's archaeological endevours might be considered a continuation of Škorpil brothers and F.I. Uspensky's work and as crucial for the development of contemporary Bulgarian archaeology and the history of Pliska.

Here, I will address the main question about the arguments in support of the theory of the emergence of Pliska right after the settlement of the Bulgars, led by khan Asparuh on this side of the Danube River by the end of the 7th century. As we know, the theory is not based on archaeological data but mainly on the information found in the so-called **Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle** (=**BAC**),[4] which became popular after Irecheck's article on the subject was published in 1898.[5]

Evidence found in the so called Kičevo collection of manuscripts (=BAC-a)

According to the recently compared with the original text,[6] the written record on the creation of Piska by Ispor / Asparuh says:

*"And then after him (Slav Tsar– P. G.) another king was found in the Bulgarian land - a child carried in a basket (въ кравѣ) for three years, who was given the name **Ispor Tsar**, [who] accepted the Bulgarian kingdom. And this king built big cities: on the bank of the Danube – Drastar; and he built a great stone wall running from the Danube River to the sea; **he also built Plyuska grad**. And this king destroyed a great multitude of the Ishmaelites. And he peopled the whole Karvuna land, where the Ethiopians lived before them. And **Ispor** had a son whom he named Isot. **Tsar Ispor** ruled the Bulgarian land for one hundred and seventy two years and then the Ishmaelites killed him by the Danube. After **Ispor**, **the king of Bulgaria** died, the Kumans called themselves*

[3] Rashev 2008, 45-104.
[4] Aladzhov 2009, 107-122.
[5] Irechek 1898, 261-267.
[6] Bilyarski 2011, 17-18.

Bulgarians, but before that under the rule of ***Tsar Ispor*** *they were heathens and infidels, living in great infamy; they were enemies to the Greek empire all the time and fought against the Greeks for a good many years. And after that he agreed again to return to power,* ***the son of Tsar Ispor*** *; his name was Isot…"*

Due to this information, as early as 1898 Škorpil brothers announced that the ruins near the village of Aboba (the modern town of Pliska) are from the "old Bulgarian capital of Asparuh, Omurtag and Malamir".[7] Since then it is commonly perceived by the Bulgarian and international archeologists and historians that Pliska emerged at the end of the 7th century AD. Rashev insisted that the first period of living in the ruler's residence in Pliska started sometime between 681 and 700. He was an honest scientist and admitted that the timeline of life and building construction in Pliska might be reconstructed knowing that "such a reconstruction could give rise to numerous reservations, considering the fact that there is no accurate temporal data whatsoever …".[8] Highlighting the historic character of the BAC, Rashev did not use it as a reference. In one of his studies on some contested archaeological information, found in the abovementioned chronicle about pre-Christian Bulgaria, he commented on the personality of Isot, whom he identified as Omurtag, disregarding the information about the creation of Pliska by Ispor/ Asparuh.[9] In his last written work, he only briefly mentioned that the capital city was referred to as "Плюска градь" (Plyuska grad) in the chronicle and that its creation "is attributed (sic!- P. G.) to king Ispor".[10] Thus he expressed his doubts about its authenticity.

In this case, the theory about Pliska being the capital city even before Asparuh came remains undetermined by evidence.

Recently I. Bozhilov (1940-2016) declared BAC as "a strange text in Bulgarian", that is not very trustworthy.[11] And about the information in the chronicle on construction of buildings during the rule of Asparuh, he wrote: "It's an understatement to say that this information is ahistorical. Of course, Drastar has not been built by Asparuh nor any other Bulgarian ruler … As far as the building of Pliska by Asparuh or any other Bulgarian khan is concerned, we cannot resolve this issue

[7] Georgiev 2000, 155, note 24.
[8] Rashev 2008, 103.
[9] Rashev 2005, 61-71.
[10] Rashev 2008, 50.
[11] Bozhilov 2017, 140, 220, notes 63, 64 (p. 231, 232).

right here and now …". And although he agreed with the theory of the emergence of Pliska in the 7th century AD, I. Bozhilov concluded: "unfortunately neither the written records nor the archaeological research – at least at this stage – could help us resolve this very important problem". This opinion of our eminent historian should make us pay special attention to this problem.

Before discussing the historical value of BAC, I have to say I disagree with the point of view about the author of the chronicle downplaying Asparuh's social standing by referring to him as "some king *Ispor*" and also "second among the Bulgarian rulers and not the first".[12] "If we should recognize Asparuh, reading this quite odd description" Bozhilov concludes, "then the founder of the Bulgarian state definitely needs a better chronicle of his life".

In fact, Bozhilov is not exactly right. Most of the rulers were mentioned in the chronicle once or twice whereas the name Ispor was mentioned six times and most of the times his titile "king" was also specifically mentioned. Only his heir Isot received that much attention – he was mentioned five times and king Simeon I The Great – four times. This makes me think that the anonymous author of the chronicle was aware of their particular roles in the forming and consolidation of the Bulgarian state. Because of that, I think that we should have more trust in the information about the nature of theirs as well as king Slav's rule (he was mentioned twice). Besides, we should reject the allegation that the chronicler overlooked the pre-Christian period of Danube Bulgaria history. Doing so will change our perception of the description of Ispor/ Asparuh and we will find it less "strange" or "odd" and won't consider the chronicle itself to be ahistorical. In this regard I will quote the opinion of one of the first researchers who studied BAC. "There is not much value in this chronicle", Y. Ivanov wrote, "But we could nevertheless use some of the indications and legends that we found in it to explain some events about which we don't have reliable historical records like for example the account of the building of a great stone wall running from the Danube to the sea by Ispor and also the building of the capital city of Aboba-Pliska (Пльсковъ) by the same king,…., another account about the name of the king Ispor (Isperih, Asparuh),

[12] Bozhilov 2017, 220. In one of his earlier works, the author was more inclined to consider BAC as the only written historical record which might be called "**a Bulgarian type of chronicle**" See Bozhilov 1995, 248.

etc."[13] In fact, Bozhilov also believed that the manuscript preserved in the 17th century "probably had an earlier version".

BAC being regarded as a proper chronicle has been the subject of discussions since it was published.[14] It is an ongoing discussion among historians, literary scholars and linguists. Despite them being quite critical as far as its historical accuracy is concerned, most scientists like K. Irechek, Y. Ivanov, Iv. Duychev, V. Beshevliev, I. Venedikov, M. Kaymakamova, A. Miltenova, T. Mollov, S. A. Ivanov, A. Turilov, D. Polivyanny, I. Bilyarsky, Ts. Stepanov, etc. do not deny completely its value as a domestic source. However, most of them think that the allegation that Pliska was built during Asparuh's reign is more than a little suspicious.

M. Kaymakamova considers it to be "historical" but points out that it "corresponds with the idea of city-states (poleis) order or "taxis", a characteristic feature of the Byzantine power doctrine"[15] which comes as a result of the author's efforts to try to explain more effectively the process of the validation of the state which started right after it was founded on this side of the Danube River.[16] According to her, the author of the chronicle "wasn't talking about the Slavic settlement which existed before Asparuh arrived on the scene but the first capital of Bulgaria that he founded". Bilyarsky thinks (in accordance with his own concept about the text being providential, a variant of the Bible texts about the "chosen people and the Promised land") that the chronicler considered the city to be a "central spot" around which the tribe settled and the state, the community and even the world were built. The place is cultivated and in a way is a replica of God's created world.[17] Thus king Ispor was hailed as some sort of a God inspired cultural hero who assumed the role of a leader of the Bulgarian nation and the demiurge of capital and state (like prophet Isaiah did before him). Even before Bozhilov expressed his doubts, Bilyarsky argued that the allegation that Asparuh also built Drastar or the "great stone wall" cannot be proven true as Durostorum – Drastar was actually an ancient city. Mentioning all those cities is the author's way to indicate the size of the territory of the state during Asparuh's reign.

[13] Ivanov 1970, 274.
[14] Bilyarsky 2011, 30-54; Kaymakamova 2019, 183-184.
[15] Kaymakamova 2006, 80.
[16] Kaymakamova 1984, 55.
[17] Bilyarski 2011, 84-86 et 88-92.

I agree with these general interpretations of the meaning of the text we are interested in, but I would like to point out that there is also specific historical content in the text. This could be seen in the form of the name of the old Bulgarian capital, "Plyuska grad", that the chronicler used, which is a later modification of the name of the city which was used during khan Omurtag's reign as evident in the Chatalar Inscription that dates back to 821/2 – Plskas tôn kánpon and the Slavonic translation of its authentic name Plískouba, Plískoba, used by the Byzantine chroniclers between the 10th and the 12th centuries.[18] It is important to say that the author of BAC also mentions other "big towns" built by Ispor and that Isot owned "honorary towns", i.e. residences of authority.[19] He specifically named Drastar and "the great stone wall running from the Danube to the sea". And then the chronicler mentions Plyuska grad. He introduces these cities after he mentions the start of the rulership of "Ispor, the king of Bulgaria" (sic!). If we strictly follow this time line, we might notice that according to the chronicler the construction process started along the banks of the Danube River where Drastar and the "great stone wall" were built. Mentioning Pliska after these two other places may be due to the fact that it is an inland town. The author redirects the focus to Pliska again, to emphasize the fact that it was there that king Isot "died" even though he owned "many honorary towns", i.e. residences of authority. Their names were not mentioned may be because their role was rather secondary or for an entirely different reason. It seems mysterious that the author announces the enthronement of Isot after making a recap of the drastic changes that the Bulgarian society experienced over the years after Ispor tragically died. And what is more, he even claims that the king (that's obviously a made-up name) – Isot – agreed to return "again" to power. It is hard to say what the author meant by that but he led us to believe that Isot regained the throne for a second time. It is more likely however that the word "again" has been transferred here from a previous version of the text. If that's the case then the word "again" is an indication that after Ispor died, the power has been overtaken by more than a few different rulers, though the chronicler doesn't mention any names. Beyond any doubt though, we can deduce that the first successor to the throne was Tervel.

[18] Georgiev 2009, 134-156, 141.
[19] Georgiev 2014, 58.

After informing us that Isot died in Pliska, the chronicler insists that the city continued to play a leading role during his long reign and was the capital of the state, even though he had other residences. We can identify some of those places as the градꙋ великїѣ (great towns) that his father built along the banks of the Danube River and also some others, which were inland. We can only assume that some of those towns emerged during the legendary Isot's over a 100-years reign.

However, is the chronicler's insinuations about Pliska truthful enough to make us believe that it was the main city in Bulgaria from the time when Ispor ascended to the throne up to the end of his successors'[20] reign whom he presented under the collective name Isot? In other words for a little over 272 years.[21] If we assume that the anonymous bookman specified this three centuries long period to months, we can conclude that he has obviously followed his own (or borrowed from other sources) projections although the length of rule of Ispor and Isot might be just a legend. But the precision with which the period was defined obliges us to take this more seriously.

The chronicler suggests that King Slav, who is still a mystery, has ruled the country for an unrealistically long period of time as well. The author calls king Slav "the first king to rule over the Bulgarian land" (and not "the First Bulgarian king" who was Ispor in his opinion) for 119 years. The same goes for Tsar Simeon I: he was supposed to have ruled Bulgaria for 130 years. This is seemingly the average numerical value related to the length of rule of Ispor (172 years) and Isot (over a 100 years) and a little longer than that of Slav (119 years). Clearly, the chronicler set only for the kings, whom he considered to be the most notable, to have long reigns and they are the ones whom he mentioned the most. His goal is clear: to impress his readers by telling them about their esteemed deeds. From our point of view, all that should be seen as the author's attempt to distinguish them as the most important figures in the prehistory and history of Danube Bulgaria. According to the chronicler, the founding and validation of the Bulgarian kingdom is a centuries long process.[22] This was noted by other historians as well and some of them were ready to presume that the bookman deliberately chose not to stick to historical reality.[23]

[20] About them, see Bozhilov 2017 I, 249-261.
[21] Total of 831 years and 3 months.
[22] Bozhilov 1995, 16 sqq.
[23] Kaymakamova 2006, 81.

The question requires a more detailed consideration. I will only say here that looking into the first centuries of Bulgarian history in his own particular way is the chronicler's attempt to prove that the founding of Bulgaria happened simultaneously with the emergence and further existence of the only (or the main) political center that he refers to as Плюска градь (Plyuska grad). When he writes about king Slav, Pliska is not mentioned at all, but he writes about "settling in depopulated cities and regions". There's no doubt that he means the military and administrative centers of the Roman-Byzantine provinces Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda[24] that already existed by the end of the 7th century. When he writes about the "Bulgarian land" he means the territory of Scythia Minor where Slav "made a hundred mounds" and was given the nickname "the hundred mounds' king" and ever since his "kingdom" was known as "Stomogilie, Stohalmie" (hundred mounds/hills). There is absolutely no mention of any particular "city" which was built by Slav, where he presumably lived and died, despite the fact that "there was plenty of everything" during his reign. We must not forget that king Slav inherited a territory "abandoned by the Hellenes 130 years ago" which was known even before that as Karvuna land. This land was promised to Prophet Isaiah by God himself for "the third Kuman tribe, called Bulgarians". The Bulgarians led by Prophet Isaiah came to this land and settled there. Only then he "chose their king" from among them.

In accordance with this very informative text, I would like to recall the early medieval European practices concerning the relationship between conquerors and conquered and especially choosing first residence in already existing cities or other settlement structures,[25] brought to our attention by Bozhilov.

Taking all of this into account, I must admit that the allegation about Pliska being the main city of Bulgaria under Asparuh lacks credibility. By stating that Pliska was built by Asparuh, the chronicler attempted to put an emphasis on its antiquity and strong association with the times when new towns and a stone rampart was built to defend the Karvuna land that he inherited from king Slav.[26] This was the land

[24] Bozhilov & Gyuzelev 2004, 10-14, 18-21 (I. Bozhilov). For some of these towns, see Aladzhov 2010, 34-42.

[25] Bozhilov 1995, 34-36, 55; 2017, 392-393.

[26] Bozhilov, Gyuzelev 2004, 29-30. Here is what Bozhilov wrote: "After we have overcome the idea that this written record is of a legendary character, it is not that

where Ispor settled, where "the Ethiopians lived before him", i.e. the naturalized local Christian population mostly of Barbarian origin[27] that the Kuman-Bulgarians found there. According to the chronicle, the toponym "Karvuna land" is an ancient one and it existed before the Kuman-Bulgarians, led by Prophet Isaiah, settled there. The name was still used under the reigns of the kings Slav and Ispor. He considered the phrases "Karvuna land" and "Bulgarian land" to be synonyms to the "Promised land", the God's gift to Bulgarians.[28]

History of Pliska's timeline, according to the chronicler – an attempt of reconstruction

According to the chronicle, the era of Pliska has clearly been under the reign of Ispor and Isot, relative to real historical time – it started after the Bulgarians led by Asparuh settled there in 680/681[29]

difficult to identify khan Asparuh's main goals: building new towns, the capital city of Pliska, the hallmark of "heathen" Bulgaria, being the best of them all; rebuilding abandoned ones, which have been destroyed between the 6th and 7th centuries like Drastar or reviving and repopulating already existent towns which were partially destroyed".

[27] Georgiev 2005b, 186-197.

[28] Bozhilov & Gyuzelev 2004, 380-381. According to Gyuzelev, "the military administrative area, Karvuna chora, established at the end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th century, was named after a long-known geographical area, which is today's Dobrudja".

[29] The author of BAC-a does not specify any dates, but there are some numbers that pop up here and there throughout the text (3, 28, 100 years and 3 months, etc.). In BAC-b (we'll discuss it later) one of the most important dates was actually mentioned which was associated with the "rise of the Bulgarians" before they settled on this side of the Danube River (Rusev 2021, 165, n. 38, 183-185, n. 70). According to Kemalpaşazade, that happened 50 years after "the Ascension of Jesus/Isa". The Bulgarian publisher of BAC-b, D. Rusev thinks that the dating made by the Turkish chronicler was according to the "the Ascension of Jesus" era (see Grumel 1958, 222-225). The statement that the Bulgarians, led by Asparuh, settling along the banks of the Danube River only 50 years after the beginning of this era is quite absurd. Here, the involvement of a Muslim editor is obvious. He actually used the Islamic Hijri (Hégire, meaning "an escape, relocation") calendar as reference (15th or 16th of July 622, see Grumel 1958, 225-226) in order to transform the original date on which the Bulgarians led by Por, i.e Ispor/Asparuh came to settle "along the banks of the Danube River", found in the protograph. If the calculation has been made according to the Byzantine "Ascension of Jesus", the date in question corresponds to the year 671 (49+622)(Grumel 1958, 226, 247). This appears to be the date of the end of the Bulgarian "escape" confirming that the Greek original author of BAC (a and b) (Rusev 2021, 159) most probably knew that the state of the "Kuman-Bulgarians" situated on the opposite bank of the Danube River was founded by Ispor/ Por (Asparuh) soon after

and lasted until the construction of Tsar Simeon I capital city of Preslav was begun; in total, a little more than two centuries (893-681=212). There are no indications, however, for the author to have set those time limits for Pliska being the capital of Bulgaria. On the contrary, it seemed that he added to the total score number the time during which Preslav was the capital (971-893=78), thus the total score amount increased up to almost three centuries (212+78=291). We do not know what the output data is for creating this timeline but it seems fairly reasonable not to reject it.[30] In my view, the chronicler calculated the length of the period of Ispor and Isot's unnaturally prolonged reigns so that it is approximately equivalent to the time period during which the main city of Bulgaria under the reign of Ispor and his successors (Isot and the "Isotedes") was in the northeastern part of the country (172+100 and ¼=272 and ¼). Measured from 680/681 (see footnote 29 here), when Asparuh's kingdom was founded, the calculations point to a date close to the time when Preslav actually lost its position as capital in 971 (681+272 and ¼=953-954). By the look of things, the anonymous bookman did the calculations based on his own conviction (or information?) that Pliska was the capital city not only during the reign of Ispor/Asparuh (who was real), but under the reign of the legendary Isot and Boris and Simeon who were presented as his sons, i.e. for about 250 years (927-681). This miscalculation is obviously based on the author's conviction that the first Bulgarian Christian kings were sons of the legendary Isot. Besides, even though he said that Simeon has been building Preslav for 28 years and that this was the place where he ascended the throne,[31] it looks like that he considered Tsar Simeon I capital city to be an ordinary residence which is not Pliska's equal (Pliska being the main city of Bulgaria and the "real" capital). The statement that Tsar Simeon I inherited the throne from his brother is based on the information about his older brother Vladimir-Rasate who was the first-born son and natural heir and ascended to the throne

the given date – 670/1 (it actually happened exactly 10 years later in 680 – 681; see Bozhilov 2017 I, 208, n. 14).

[30] See, for example, Kaymakamova 2004, 435.

[31] The author uses the verb съзида, i.e. built, and in order to explain Simeon's ascension to the throne – the phrase и тѵ в немь пр҃їемь ц҃рство, which tells us that what he had in mind was probably the event of Simeon I proclaiming himself King (and more specifically - Caesar) in 913 and not the succession to the princely throne in 893; see Georgiev 2022, 43-44. About the ceremony and the semantics of Simeon's title, see Georgiev 2019, 22-34.

before him. As we know this information is to be found for example in the hagiography of St. Kliment of Ohrid.[32]

It seems that the reign of Boris II and the event of John I Tzimiskes capturing the city of Preslav in 971 were unknown to the chronicler. It is possible that in order to come up with the exact number of years during which Pliska "the first capital city" actually existed, he calculated the sum of the reigns of Ispor, Isot, Boris I, Simeon I and his heir Peter I of Bulgaria (his reign was a short one – 12 years) in comparison with Simeon I's reign (72+100 and ¼ +16+130+12 =430 years and 3 months.).[33] Assuming that the chronicler distinguishes reality from fiction as far as Simoen I's reign is concerned, having it reduced to the real amount of time during which he actually ruled the country - 34 years (927-893=34),[34] the total time of reigns of the rulers[35] whom he knew about, goes down to 334 years and 3 months. Starting the countdown from 681 plus 334 years and 3 months, we reach 1015.[36] As it seems the sum total corresponds to a certain year and the chronicler (or one of his sources) consciously sought this result. The date and year coincide roughly with the one that John Skylitzes considered to be the date when king Samuel died – 6 October 1015 (instead of 1014). That's because the chronicler put the date in the time frame of the 13th indiction,[37] which started on the 1st of September 1015.[38] I don't think,

[32] Vita Cl. Achrid., XIX.60, see GIBI 1994, 33.

[33] The sum total leads us to the number 1111 and ¼, which is remarkable merely because it is made up of four 1's.; if we must seek a special meaning behind the four 1's - it might be the year when the chronicle was written (?)

[34] It seems that the chronicler presented an inflated figure, identifying the time period of Simeon's reign to make it proportionate to the reigns of his three predecessors (Slav, Ispor and Isot), rounding down the number indicating the time of their respective reigns. In BAC-b the reign of Simeon is 40 years, which is a result of rounding up the number to the nearest ten.

[35] The kings listed as the successors of king Peter I were Byzantine Basileis as well like for example Constantine who inherited Peter's kingdom, who Bilyarski thinks might be understood as the "collective image of a devout Christian ruler" and not Constantine I the Great or his contemporary – the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (944-959). See Bilyarski 2011, 185-188.

[36] See here footnote 29. The year 1015 AD, 13-th indiction corresponds to the year 5523 from the Creation of the world according to the Byzantine era, and in its turn it corresponds to the year 1014(6523-5509=1014) for the months from September to December but considering the indictional year which begins in September, it was 1015.

[37] Scyl. - Cedr. Hist.comp., 458,17-22, in: GIBI 1965, 284. See: Zlatarski 1971, I, 2, 700-701, 713; Bozhilov 2017, II, 177.

[38] Grumel 1958, 254.

however, that the author of the protograph of BAC-b knew the exact year when king Samuel died. It was even less possible that this was the date of his heir Gavril Radomir's assassination in mid-August, i.e. by the end of the same year.[39] As I see it, he most probably had something else in mind, namely the end of Krum's dynasty which came when Ivan Vladislav ascended the throne by the end of 1015 or the beginning of 1016. We can find direct evidence pointing to the fact in the *Alexiad* by Anna Komnene who says that king Samuel was "the last of the Bulgarian dynasty" which was founded by the legendary "Bulgarian Basileus" named Mókros and his descendants.[40]

We should add that even though the chronicler mentioned king Samuel and his son Augustus, i.e. Gavril Radomir, he did not mean to give the actual years of their reigns[41] or their deaths. We suppose that he used Anna Komnene's chronicles as sources of reference since she writes about the end of the Bulgarian dynasty in the context of the prehistory of the city of Great Preslav (Велика Преслава/τὴν μεγάλην Πρισθλάβαν), without mentioning for it to be the Bulgarian capital city. In BAC-a, the name of the city was given as вєл҃кꙋı гр҃а Прѣславь and in the BAC-b as "Presilan" and it might be an argument in favour of the theory that the author of BAC protograph used Anna Komnene's chronicle as a source of reference. Pliska was mentioned under the name "Plískoba", but we cannot be sure that he thought that "Plískoba" and Plyuska gard (Плюска градь) were one and the same thing. Most probably it was a calque that he found in another Byzantine written source like for example the Synopsis of Histories by John Skylitzes,[42] or maybe it was adapted from an Old Bulgarian written source.[43]

Of course, my attempt at analyzing the years of the reigns of some of the rulers of the First Bulgarian Kingdom could not be considered completely accurate. I just wanted to emphasize that it might be possible that the chronicler made the appropriate calculations

[39] Zlatarski 1971, I,2, 705, n. 8, 713.

[40] A. Comn. Alex. VII.3.234 (GIBI 1972, 63). The important thing is that the 13th century a Byzantine Greek historian mentions "Samuel the last of the Bulgarian dynasty" found by the legendary Mókros who prof. Duychev identifies as Krum and his "descendants" (Duychev 1972a, 161-202).

[41] This goes for all the other rulers he wrote about; for example, the chronicle wrote that Simeon ruled the country for 130 years, but looking at the calculations, we understand that he meant the actual 34 years, See here footnote 34.

[42] Scyl. - Cedr. Hist.comp., II 452,14-15, in: GIBI 1965, 280.

[43] Beshevliev 1981, 140.

and constructed a certain timeline as to serve the purposes of his opinion about the Bulgarian Kingdom having a capital city since it was founded and this was Plyuska grad (Плюска градь) which was located in the northeastern part of the country. It is also possible that the chronicler thought that Pliska lost its position as capital near the end of the 10th century, in 996, but the hostile military expedition undertaken by the Byzantine generals in the year 1000 suggests, that it was intended to reconquer the old Bulgarian state centers such as Great Preslav, Little Preslav and Plískoba and to crush the Bulgarian aristocracy who aimed at regaining their importance during the reign of king Samuel.

I am well aware that my analysis is not completely accurate. I did it to show that the author of BAC constructed the timeline of the history of Pliska only partially based on true historical events but so that he could easily convince his readers that it was the main city of Bulgaria since the time when king Ispor ascended the throne until the end of the Bulgarian dynasty which came after king Samuel and his son died.

From the chronicler's point of view, Plyuska grad (Плюска градь) was the Bulgarian dynasty center since the founding of the state. This idea of his, however, contradicts the historical data that he himself has brought forward, trying to defend his theory. As we have seen, the data shows that the earliest historical evidence of the existence of Pliska points to the times when the dynasty of Mókros, (i.e. Krum) ruled the country. This is clearly stated in ABC-b in the section on Krum's reign. We might as well doubt the allegations about Aboba-Pliska being built right after the Danube Bulgaria was founded. It seems more reasonable for us to assume that the one who actually built the capital city situated in the Aboba field was neither Asparuh nor his immediate heir Tervel but someone else who lived in the 8th century.

In this case the anonymous chronicler who wrote BAC-a made a conjecture, referring the building of Pliska in the year "X" during the reign of Isot (a collective name for several kings) to the time period when the "first Bulgarian king" Ispor was in power. The immediate reason for him to add to the text something of his own, was the lack of sufficient information about the kings who ruled the country after Isot, whom we call conditionally "Isotedes". Taking into consideration that according to the chronicler they were in power for a little longer than a hundred years, ergo the period runs from the time when Asparuh (or Tervel?) died to the beginning of the 9th century (after 801 or 821?).

The names of Plyuska grad and the "great (big) stone wall"

For the purposes of an objective analysis and evaluation of the information about the capital city of Krum dynasty, we must underline the importance of the fact that the 12th century chronicler[44] used this particular version of its name – Плюска градь (Plyuska grad). As I have already mentioned, this is the Slavonic translation of the name of the city that Leo the Deacon, John Skylitzes, the Anonym Patria Constantinoupoleos, Anna Komnene, etc. used - Pliskouba, Pliskoba - a precise transliteration of the Proto-Bulgarian name of khan Omurtag's residence. In BAC, the Turkic suffix –ouba, -oba was replaced by the word градь (town), but this does not necessarily mean that the author of the chronicle knew exactly what he was doing or that these are the two names of one and the same city. First of all, the chronicler had little or no knowledge of the similarity of meaning of those suffixes and secondly, he would have given a more precise phonetic rendition of the oiconym. He had written the name twice as Plyuska, instead of Pliska, as was the translated version of the name given by Symeon the Metaphrast in the 10th century. It was only a matter of a different pronunciation of a vowel which is missing in the Chatalar Inscription. In BAC the grapheme is –ю- (pronounced yu), instead of the correct one –и- (i) typically used in the 10th and 11th centuries. Of course, this mistake might be due to a dialectal pronunciation from the beginning of the 12th century.

We should have in mind that according to the archaeological evidence, the latest traces of life in the city of Pliska go back to the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century when it was completely deserted.[45] Similar material evidence was found at the site of the Shumen fortress which was built in the 5th or the 6th century, whereas the ancient city of Pliska stopped existing in the 11th century. The Shumen fortress which was repaired and renovated several times, was actively used until the Middle Ages.[46] This may suggest, that because of the Pecheneg and Kuman invasions, Pliska's population fled to the nearby strong Shumen fortress (about 20-25 km from the city of Pliska), so the names were mixed up. Yet another variation of the name – Plisca-

[44] Miltenova 2006, 858-859; Georgiev 2014a, 48-66.

[45] Rashev 2008, 105. The author refers, not entirely accurately, "the desertion of the large settlement agglomeration to the middle of the 11th century".

[46] Georgiev 2014b, 481-488, fig. 4-7.

was marked twice on Guillaume De L'Isle's map from 1707 [47] which might be considered evidence proving our point. The first marking on the map was the original location of Pliska in the Aboba field (to the North-East of the city of Shumen) and the second one to the West of Shumen. The earliest map marking of Plisca is on Nicolas Sanson–son's map form 1648, to the West of Shumen. Another hypothetical evidence that by saying Plyuska grad, the author of BAC might actually mean the Shumen fortress built no earlier than the 11th century, is the semantic equivalence of the fortress's name Shumen, Shumlu, etc. (the fortress was known by that name throughout the Middle Ages) with a probable meaning "noisy", i.e buzzing, lively, flourishing city and the name "Plyuska", which seems to be some sort of derivation from the Old-Bulgarian плюскъ (noise).

We may assume, then, that writing the name Plyuska, the author of BAC most probably meant that bustling city on the wooded hills, surrounded by a strong fortress, overlooking today's town of Shumen and not the deserted city of Pliska located in the Aboba field.[48] Another thing is that the chronicler mentioned the names of many newly founded or revived Bulgarian towns between the 10th and the 13th centuries, but never mentioned a city named Shumen.

Proving our theory that the 12th century anonymous chronicler mostly relied on oral historical narratives when naming the historical sites he wrote about is the name he gave to the big fortification in Dobrudja,[49] another one of khan Asparuh's building projects. He called the fortification the "great stone wall", which was "created" by Ispor (from the Old-Bulgarian verb съѕдѧ – build, create; the chronicler used the same verb when writing about the building of churches. Thus, he most probably meant the stone wall (rampart) built with mortar, a well-preserved structure in his time and not the two earthen ramparts – Great and Minor – which were built earlier. The Great earthen rampart and the stone one ran along the same route, facing north and there were respectively 30 and 35 camps pushed up against the inner side of the protective walls, located in a territory protected from the rear by the

[47] Beshevliev 1962, 16, fig. 5, 7, 10, 11.

[48] In the newly found Turkish version of BAC the location of the old capital city is identified correctly – "in the field of Shumlu" without directly mentioning its name (see below).

[49] Rashev 1982, 77-95, 27-28, tabl. XLIII; Georgiev 2005c, 23-40; 2010, 413-422.

Minor rampart.[50] When writing about building structures from the time of king Ispor, the chronicler meant the earthen ramparts and the 35 camps located between them. The chronicler identifying these structures as "stone walls" leaves us with no doubt that he (or one of his informers) actually meant the stone rampart and the adjacent 30 "forts"[51] also built of stone in the 10th century and very impressive and still looking good at the beginning of the 12th century.

Building phases during the early years of the Bulgarian Kingdom

The chronicler practically distinguishes two phases. The initial phase is linked to the legend about the Karvuna land where the Bulgarians came to settle. John Skylitzes and Anna Komnene call this land "Stohalmie" (100 hills) based on the same local legend about the "hundred mounds". It seems that the author of BAC knew this legend as well and he went even further saying that these mounds were built by the "first king to rule the Bulgarian land" Slav who was nicknamed "the hundred mounds king".[52] None of the authors clarified what these "mounds" or "hills" actually were, but after critically analyzing the texts, we can conclude that at first this was the word (mound) used to identify the already existent ancient earthen ramparts built by the local population of Barbaric origin. This strange word is derived from the Turkic "qürgan", which means "mound" and also a fortified settlement or a town. When the Bulgarians arrived at the banks of the Danube River, most of the ancient earthen ramparts that they found there were leveled, so by the end of the 7th century and even several centuries later, they had every reason to call them "mounds". The first Bulgarian military encampments behind The Great earthen rampart, i.e "the great stone wall running from the Danube to the sea", were of the same type. The earthen ramparts were lined up in a row, dividing the Karvuna land along the line that passes through its center. These earthen ramparts became a characteristic feature of the local landscape and no wonder its name was changed to "Stomogilie" or "Stohalmie" (the land of the hundred hills). Most of the structures resembling mounds, located there or inland were built in the antiquity, so that's why the chronicler

[50] Georgiev 2014a, 483-484, n. 69.
[51] Rashev 1982, 152-173; 2008, 39. Last observations by Paraschiv-Talmatchi 2019, 381-413.
[52] Georgiev 2002, 70-82; 2006a, 54-68.

wrote that they were created by the king named Slav who ruled this land before king Ispor.

According to the epigraphic and archaeological evidence, in the 8th century and in the first decade of the 9th century (the time of Isot and the "Isotedes") Bulgarians still built villages surrounded by earthen ramparts and lived there. The sight of the many ramparts all scattered around the country was etched in the memory of the local people and despite serious changes in the ethnic structure of the population which took place after the end of the 10th century, people in the Northeastern part of the country still called this land "Stohalmie" (the land of the 100 Hills).

In the Omurtag's Tarnovo Inscription from the 820s, a "glrorious home" was mentioned which was in the middle between two of the ruler's residences, one of them was on the banks of the Danube River and the other one inland (today's northeastern Bulgaria). We cannot be sure that these two residences were the cities of Pliska and Drastar respectively or some other cities which at that time were located nearby, in the so called Varna area (supposedly the area by the lakes near Provadiya river, which during the Middle Ages was called Varna) and by the lake Oltina.[53] The third "glorious" structure which was between the other two was defined as a tumulus or mound (toúmbas). The Greek phrase describing the mound - *tou(m)bín estin pánfumon* is an exact equivalent of the Old Turkic *magi qürgan* referring to the major military center and the main settlement (the so called Otuken) lying in the interior of the Second Turkic Khaganate. Because of these linguistic similarities, we might assume that the building structure in question was a major military settlement, surrounded by a rampart and a ditch, most probably located in the central part of the Ludogorie region.

According to the chronicler, the second city building phase takes place during the reigns of Ispor and Isot, but it practically happened during the reigns of the last of the "Isotedes". Considering our archaeological findings, we can come to the conclusion that these construction undertakings took place in the 780s, 790s or the 810s, 820s. At those times Pliska was reconstructed 3 times (by the end of the 8th century, at the beginning of the 9th century up to 811 and after that date).[54] According to the Chatalar Inscription, the excavated Aul (or palace) of Omurtag located near the village of Han Krum, on the banks

[53] Georgiev 2004, 27-36; 2005a, 55-65; Paraschiv-Talmatchi & Sova 2019, 413-426.
[54] Georgiev 2018, 22-25.

of Ticha River, was built in 821/2. The brick and stone masonry structure was located in the center of an ancient fortress which shielded an Episcopal centre in the 4th to the 6th century.[55] By the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century, most of the buildings in Pliska were wooden but there were some brick and stone masonry structures as well. The city was surrounded by newly built earthen ramparts and a mud brick wall. The same type of wall surrounded the Aul of Omurtag near the village of Han Krum. As far as Drastar is concerned, according to the archaeological evidence, the new city was built behind the wall of the ancient fortress Durostorum. The Aul of Omurtag and many other new buildings were located in the city's center or by the fortress wall.[56]

So the role of Ispor/Asparuh, and most of his successors during almost the entire 8th century, in "creating" Pliska seems anachronistic and should be excluded from the point of view of correlation of the data from the Slavic text in authentic written records from the first two decades of the 9th century and the testimonies of the Byzantine chroniclers from the 10th - 12th centuries, as well as the results of archaeological research inside or outside it.

Doubts about the appearance of Pliska as early as the end of the 7th century stand out when analyzing the passage about Ispor and Izot. If we look closely, we will notice that for the period after Ispor's death, the unknown author makes a summary of his main characteristics. With him, he points out, the Bulgarians were "Kumans" (i.e. war-like nomads, not the later ethnos of the same name!) during their movement to the Lower Danube. They are also "pagans and truly ungodly." After the beginning of the 8th century, however, they became (gradually!) a settled and relatively peaceful population, living in permanent settlements and defining themselves only as "Bulgarians". Apparently, the author is talking here about profound socio-economic changes, contrasting the status of the population before and under Ispor with that at the time of Izot and the "Isotedes" (mostly before the middle of the 8th century). It is unlikely then that we can expect that the actual building of cities and fortifications with solid construction and architecture, such as those mentioned by name, could have really been built by the "Bulgarians", since they were still "Kumans", i.e. war-like nomads.

[55] Georgiev 2022, 46-48.
[56] Atanasov 2012, 28-45.

The reasoning and conclusions presented here are a commentary on the text in the manuscript preserved in a single copy from the so-called Kičevo collection, which its second discoverer and researcher Anatoly Turilov dates to the beginning of the 17th century.[57] The late date of the manuscript, as well as the lack of possibilities for a comparison of its text with that of other transcripts cause doubts about its genesis, credibility and even authenticity.

Information about Pliska in the Turkish text by Kemalpaşazade

A few years ago, a hitherto unknown chronicle was published with a commentary, which is close to BAC and can be seen as its shortened version.[58] It is a text that was integrated by the Turkish historian Kemalpaşazade (circa 1468 - 1534) in the "Annals of the Ottoman Dynasty" completed by him in 1510, where it appears under the heading "Bulgarian History". According to the Bulgarian publisher Dilyan Rusev, this is an "independent Turkish adaptation", based on a translation of a hitherto unknown chronicle, which in terms of content and language is quite close to that of BAC from the so-called Kičevo collection. Rusev defines it as a revision of the same work, which reproduces an earlier prototype from the 11th - 12th centuries and gives it the conditional name BAC-b.[59] This edition dates before the beginning of the 16th century and Kemalpaşazade came across it in Skopje (now North Macedonia), and there is no information in what form. The Turkish analyst used an Ottoman Turkish or Persian translation for his work. When comparing the Slavic with the Turkish text, there are both similarities and significant differences. The publisher says for them that there is a possibility that they originate from BAC-b, or that they are the result of a transformation of the narrative in an Ottoman/Islamic environment. Furthermore, the translation used by Kemalpaşazade may have also included a semantic adaptation of the narrative, characteristic of fifteenth-century Turkish historical works. The fact that the Bulgarian chronicle is part of the Annals is the result of their characteristic "appropriation" of the history of Rum in order to legitimize the Turkish conquest from the end of the

[57] Turilov 1995, 2-39; Tapkova-Zaimova & Miltenova 1996, 192-206; Bilyarski 2011, 11-54.

[58] Rusev 2018, 435-510; 2021, 154-234. I would like to thank the author for the opportunity to work with his unpublished dissertation.

[59] Rusev 2021, 159 and the following, fig. 1.

14th century and the inclusion of Byzantine and Bulgarian lands within the boundaries of the Ottoman state.[60]

The text of BAC-b is extremely meaningful and important in various directions. My comment concerns the information that is dedicated to the third of the rulers of Danube Bulgaria and his residence. Here he is recorded with the mysterious name San, not Izot. Before that, I will also briefly touch upon the first two rulers, in order to clarify some of the chages made by the Turkish editor.

Ustom-Gil is mentioned as the first ruler of the Bulgarians. He ruled for 23 years, laying "the foundations of the Bulgarian sultan's court".[61] It is about Tsar Slav from the Slavic version of BAC, as the name of the ruler - Ustom-Gil comes from the Turkish pronunciation of the concept "stomogilen", used instead of the abandoned, probably consciously, "Slav".

The second ruler is named "an evildoer" named Por, who ruled for 33 years oppressing his people. Undoubtedly, king Ispor is meant here. The malice and generally negative connotations for him are due to a misrepresentation by Kemalpaşazade of the information from the primary source. A special role for the negative attitude of the Turkish editor was played by the information that Ispor was an enemy of the Ishmaelites, i.e. the descendants of Noah's son Ishmael, considered the progenitor of the Muslim people. In the passage dedicated to Por, the Muslim editor did not convey other information about the reign of Asparuh. The notice of construction already in his time is completely missing, and this may also be due to the negative image that the Ottoman editor of the text depicts. For this reason, there is probably no information about his pagan faith, as well as about the fact that the Bulgarians during his rule were "Kumans" and as such fought against the "Greek kingdom". In general, the part about Por is severely cut, and the name presented is in a reduced form: Por instead of Ispor.

The third ruler is presented in a very substantial text. In BAC-b he appears in the place of king Izot, but bears a completely different name - San. Here's what he says.

"In his (Por's - P.G.) place, a venerable man named San became sultan.

[60] Rusev 2021, 80 and the following.
[61] Rusev 2021, 165-166.

The Turkish verse by the author says:
"*His glory he exalted with eagerness,*
his name acquired deathlessness.
Those who translate in writing from Greek the history of the beys assert that the ruler [San], who had come from the eastern lands, was a Caesar (?) by birth. He took control of the Bulgarian land by force, killed its two famous beys, stayed there for a while and became a chief, which is why he is associated with the place. After this crown-bearer ascended the Bulgarian throne, he built a magnificent fortress in the field near Shumlu, named it Pelasta, and made it his capital. He ruled for seven years and nine months. Finally, his life's days slipped from his hand, and the skilful horseman of his soul dismounted from the wayward steed of life".[62]

A comparison of this text with that about Izot in the Slavic version of BAC shows serious differences. They are primarily due to the fact that the BAC-b manuscript used by Kemalpaşazade was written on the basis of sources that appear to be different from those available to the author of BAC-a (the one from the Kičevo collection).

This is primarily due to the fact that the author of BAC-b obtained the information not only about San, but also about the other rulers, from written sources in Greek. He seems to have read there that San took possession of the Bulgarian throne by force, and did not inherit it from his predecessor Por, who, however, is not named as his father. Furthermore, the name "San" has nothing to do with that of "Izot" and needs to be explained using additional sources. San then remained "within" (the residence?) of the two rulers he killed, occupying the position of "chief", therefore he was associated (by contemporaries or in the sources?) with his predecessors. After his accession to the throne, he undertook the construction, not of a city, but only of a "magnificent fortress", which he made his capital, i.e. a place of power, to which he gave the name Pelāsta (Pelāșta).

All the information is completely new and is missing not only in the Slavic version of BAC, but also in the known sources of Bulgarian history from the 8th-9th centuries. So far, it has been the subject of comments only by the Turkish publisher Turan and especially by the Bulgarian publisher Rusev.

[62] Rusev 2021, 356.

Who is the ruler named San?

The first thing that the author points out is that at first he was not a ruler, but a "respectable man", that is, of noble origin, who was by descent – "Caesar" and came from the "eastern lands"; Second, he forcibly conquered the "Bulgarian land" by killing its two previous "beys" (princes?) and was called "San" only after he became "sultan", i.e. "Tsar"; Thirdly, after removing his "famous" predecessors, he remained for a certain period in the capacity of being their deputy, ruling on their behalf; Fourth, as such, he resided "for a time" "within" (the residence or the lordly domain?). He was therefore "associated" (by contemporaries or in the Greek source?) with the power coming from his predecessors.

According to Rusev, the name San does not offer "possibilities for satisfactory identification".[63] There are such possibilities, but before I point them out I would like to try to clarify even in more detail what we are to understand by a "venerable man" and that he "was a Caesar (?) by descent". Rusev believes that the pronunciation of the word "caesar" is "chasar" and assumes that it was used by the Turkish analyst under the influence of the Austrian "kaiser", i.e. emperor, although it is stated as a term of descent rather than a title, and San who descended from "chasar" came "from the eastern lands" and not from the west. Therefore, the publisher allows the appearance of the term "chasar/caesar" to refer to the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus I Genicus (802-811) and to the "chesar" title of the direct successor of Ispor/Por - Tervel (c. 701-721).[64] Given that it is based on a Greek word, it should be transcribed as *τζασαρ and this suggests that it is close to the authentic title of ruler – "king", which the author uses in the form Char as part of the name of the 41st Bulgarian ruler (Char Istepan, instead of Tsar Stefan).[65]

In this sense, Rusev's assumption that it is possible that this is about Tervel's Caesarian title receives additional support. It seems that the author of the Greek manuscript was aware of this episode in the early history of Bulgaria from his own source. In my opinion, such could be not only the reports of Byzantine authors about declaring Tervel as "Caesar" because of the military support he gave to Emperor Justinian II during his restoration to the throne in Constantinople, but also

[63] Rusev 2021, 192.
[64] Rusev 2021, 194.
[65] Rusev 2021, 174, 231.

domestic evidence such as a text from the inscription around the Madara rocks' relief.[66] A more accessible source could be the molyvdovuls issued in Constantinople with the image of Tervel on the obverse and an inscription in Greek where it is titled "Caesar". We know of them today from a single specimen, which is kept in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, but it probably originated in the Byzantine capital. The inscription on its reverse side is in Greek letters, which convey Tervel's name plus the given title of Caesar: ΚΣΑΡΟ(Σ).[67] The first two letters in it are "kappa" and "sigma", which can be translated into Slavic Bulgarian as Ц or Ч. In such a case, the title could have been pronounced "ch(a)saro(s)". The fact that the molyvdovuls are easily portable, durable and circulated artifacts makes it possible that a copy of them documented Tervel's title in later times as well.

Very important for us is the well-known episode from the chronicle of Ioan Skilitsa, where the title of Basil II is rendered in Slavic Bulgarian, but with Greek letters as Τζαῖσαρ, (in another manuscript – Τζασάρ).[68] This example shows that the pronunciation of the title "Caesar" – "kesar" as "tsásár" or "chasár" was characteristic of the speech in the south-western Bulgarian lands at the beginning of the 11th century, and for the local population it was really understood as "Tsa (sa)r" or "Cha(sa)r". The title also had this meaning and pronunciation in the Greek manuscript discovered by Kemalpaşazade in Skopje - BAC-b.

The abovementioned makes it easier to reveal the meaning embedded in the name "San". It seems quite realistic to also look for it in sphragistic or coin-shaped artifacts that survived to the time of creation of BAC-b. On the one-sided gold medallions of Khan Omurtag, for example, his title "kan" (khan) is written in Greek and Latin letters as CANES. The first three letters of it are read without effort, both in Greek and in Bulgarian, precisely as "SAN".[69] Those on the right, however, are poorly printed and difficult to read. The researchers before Ivan Yordanov (1949-2021) were unable to read the second part of the ruler's title, as well as the name of Omurtag. Similar difficulties were faced in the Middle Ages. This has led to the perception of the beginning of the inscription as the three-letter name of the ruler

[66] Bozhilov 2017 I, 238.
[67] Beshevliev 1979, 231-232; Yordanov 2016, 31-35.
[68] Cedr. –Scyl. Hist. comp.II, 469: GIBI 1965, 290.
[69] Beshevliev 1979, 234, fig. 184-186; Yordanov 2016, 36-445.

depicted on the medallions with the insignia of Byzantine Vasilevs. This seems to be the explanation for the name of the Bulgarian ruler accepted by the author of BAC-b - San. It seems unlikely that he knew it was an image of Khan Omurtag, as he is not mentioned at all.

Who then is the ruler whom the chronicler called San? It is most likely that he was one of the Bulgarian rulers who had the title Khan. It is assumed that this was a household title of the ruler from the time of Asparuh and Tervel until the conversion of Prince Boris-Mikhail. In such a case, for the author of BAC-b, San could be a collective image of rulers from the 8th and the first half of the 9th century, as it is also assumed for Izot from the Slavic version (BAC-a).

Historians have different opinions about King Izot. According to some of them, he is a amalgam between the images of Tervel and Omurtag.[70] Others think that he should be identified only with Omurtag,[71] or only with Krum.[72] The basis of their preferences are arguments of a historical or linguistic nature, looking for the name's proximity to historical figures or a word from the Greek vocabulary. As a result of such attempts, for example, it is also assumed that "the strange name (nickname, title or simple imitation of a biblical name)" can also be among the "intermediaries between the cosmological (divine) and the historical (quasi-historical, human)".[73] Bilyarski is even more categorical and states that Izot is not a historical person at all, but an "ideological person" and looks for his prototype among biblical kings with a similar name.[74]

All of these solutions do little to unravel San's personality, even though he appears in Izot's place in the fuller version of the chronicle. It is of leading importance when comparing the two characters that for San the author has indicated a short reign, suggesting that he is writing about a historical figure who should not be identified entirely with the legendary Izot, especially if he is indeed the eponym of a series of rulers whom I call "Isotedes." In such a case, the person behind the name-title San, i.e. Kahn should be looked for in the second half of their more than a hundred years rule. According to the historical data, this period is

[70] Matanov 1980, 154; Gyuzelev 1981, 144; Kaymakamova 1990, 127-128; Andreev *et al.*, 1994, 170.
[71] Beshevliev 1982, 43-44; Rashev 2005, 69-70.
[72] Duychev 1972b, 126-137; Venedikov 1983, 87-88.
[73] Mollov 1997, 42, n. 26
[74] Bilyarski 2011, 113-139.

characterized by the fact that at the head of the state are rulers who bear the title "Khan".

So far, it is explicitly documented only in monuments from the time of Omurtag and Malamir. In their Greek inscriptions the full form of the title is a combination which is read by specialists as kana subigi, i.e. "the khan leader of the army" (from Turk. shu-beg) or kanas ubigi (great khan/han).[75] In Slavic-language monuments from the 10th - 11th centuries, the title is found also as "Kagan". However, it is disputed and most of the authors believe that the Bulgarian ruler was satisfied with the title "khan", without clarifying its content and character.[76] The fact that in domestic epigraphic monuments it is from two words and the first one is a derivative of the common Turkic qan gave Beshevliev a reason to assume that the combination should be understood as "a khan who is a syubigi" (=shu beg, i.e. head of the army) and that "it was hardly the original title of the Bulgarian ruler". This interpretation and chronological finding have more grounds, since the first word in the title (kana, kane) is an adjective with a possessive ending, and the second is a noun meaning "lord, chief of the army" and thus corresponds in meaning to what is associated with it in the first years of Omurtag's reign: "the khan/han chief of the army". Later, but still under the same ruler and his son Malamir, the unaltered title acquired a new reading and meaning, namely kanas ubigi: "supreme (greatest) khan/han".

The appearance of the title "Kan", albeit as a proper name, is a new benchmark in the discussion about its evolvement and semantics. It should be pointed out that this is exactly how the name of the Bulgarian ruler is indicated by the so-called Hungarian Anonymous, who lived towards the end of the 12th century and presented a legendary story about the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Magyars, based on a legendary Hungarian chronicle from the end of the 11th century.[77] It tells that the lord of Bulgaria, who ruled these lands even after the death of Attila until the Hungarian conquest of the homeland, was magnus Keanus, that is, Kean the Great (= Great Khan).[78] Researchers have long seen behind this name the domestic title of a Bulgarian ruler who actually ruled the lands between the Carpathians and the Middle Danube. Beshevliev and Gyuzelev believe that this is a ruler from the

[75] Beshevliev 1979, 65-66. Contra: Slavova 2010, 278-279.
[76] Stepanov 1997, 54-59; Slavova 2010, 214-216.
[77] Gesta Hungarorum, in: LIBI 2001, 13-14.
[78] Gesta, 12: LIBI 2001, 26 (translation I. Iliev).

beginning of the 9th century, who should be identified with Omurtag.[79] Although Bozhilov does not reject this, he accepts that identification with Krum is more grounded, since during his rule the eastern parts of the Avar Khaganate were included in the borders of Bulgaria.[80]

In BAC-b, whose archetype must have been created at a time close to the Hungarian chronicle, the title "Kan" is also presented as a personal name of a Bulgarian ruler. Because of this, the possibility that Krum's name is hidden behind San, rather Kan, gains new grounds. In the "Annals" by Kemalpaşazade, it is explicitly recorded that the "padishah" named San was originally only a "venerable man" and not a ruler who traced his descent from "Kesar", i.e. from the Emperor of the Tervel Empire. In addition, he had "appeared from the eastern lands" and "by force took possession of the Bulgarian land", killing its two previous rulers. These data, although too general, are sufficient to assume that it is a question of little known events about the transition of power from the hands of Kardam to those of Krum, and not the enthronement of Omurtag.[81] In the light of the newly discovered source, it becomes clear that the change of power in the last years of the 8th or the first of the 9th century took place after the murder of the old Kardam, and apparently also of his successor or only heir. However, the author of BAC-b writes that the bloody change was motivated by the fact that San, i.e. Krum pretended to be a descendant of Caesar Tervel. And this already shows that it is an aristocratic coup, which also led to a dynastic change. The fact that San came from the "eastern lands" makes us think that he was a representative of a Bulgarian community, which at least did not live near the ruler's residence.[82] After the change, the new Bulgarian ruler remained "inside" for some time, i.e. in the residence, or in the inner region of the state, that is, in the personal domain of the rulers of Danube Bulgaria, remaining at first only a "chief". The meaning attached to this concept requires a more detailed analysis, but it seems very likely that it is the title kana subigi, i.e. chief of the army (shu-beg), which, however, he may have had before the coup.

In support of the identification of San with Khan Krum, the other data about his rule can also be cited. He ruled only "seven years and nine months". The indication of months plus full years occurs only once

[79] Bozhilov & Giyzelev 1999, 126, note 6.
[80] Bozhilov 2017 I, 282.
[81] Bozhilov 2017 I, 277-278; 303-305.
[82] Clarifying this requires further consideration.

in the two versions of BAC that have come down to us, namely in Izot and San. This suggests that the term of the latter's rule may have been calculated already in the archetype of BAC. If we place the seven years and nine months in the first decade of the 9th century, we will find that they are adequate to the historically proven reign of Krum (between 803 and 814).[83] Counting back from our well-known date of his sudden death, April 13, 814, we only reach about the middle of 806. This date, however, seems not to be accidental, for the author points out definitely that in the first years after he removed his predecessors San, viz. Krum ruled rather as their deputy and "chief of the army". In such a case, the beginning of his sovereign rule after the month of June 806 seems justified and acceptable. I can say then that BAC-b is the first source (and of domestic origin!) that provides us with an exact date of Krum's enthronement on the Bulgarian throne, and also with the legitimate beginning of the new dynasty founded by him.

The year 806 is close to the time of the annexation of the eastern parts of the territory of the Avar Khaganate in 804-805, and it is very likely that this event served Krum (until then with the title kana subigi!) to declare himself the legitimate ruler of the state created by Asparuh and confirmed by Caesar Tervel of the three (proto) Bulgarian enclaves in the Balkans: the Asparuh's Bulgarians in Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda, the Kuber's Bulgarians in the area of Thessaloniki (Thessalonica) and in present-day Albania (the area of Vrap and Erseke), as well as in the Kissinia (=winter quarters) of Transylvania.[84]

What is new about the ruler's residence in Pliska

For the topic discussed here, the end of the text about San/Kan (=Krum) in BAC-b is even more important. The first thing I should note is that this part is written in the historical present, not in the aorist, as the previous part. Here is a quote: "***After this crown-bearer (sic! - P. G) ascended the Bulgarian throne (sic!), he built a magnificent fortress in the field near Shumlu, named it Pelasta and made it the capital.***"

The text seems to be only somewhat adequate to the information from the Kičevo collection about the construction of Pliska by Ispor/Asparuh. It does not speak at all about its foundation by any ruler. Its author points rather to a conclusion about the gradual formation of

[83] Bozhilov 2017 I, 277, note 8.

[84] See Georgiev 2013a, 27-44; 2016, 153-173.

a ruler's residence there, and thus agrees with the archaeological data about the gradual complexity of its structure. In the first years after the mastery of the supreme power, San, that is, Khan Krum, resided there, or in an unnamed place. It is quite possible that this was the residence of Kardam and his unknown successor, but for now we should not rule out the possibility that "Khan Shu-beg" Krum exercised his authority from other settlements in the ruling domain of Danube Bulgaria.[85] According to the available data, it can be located between the rivers Ticha (Great Kamchia) and Varna (Provadiyska river), since all the main centers of the state were located there from the end of the 7th to the second half of the 10th century, and also in the first decade after its restoration at the end of the 12th century.[86] After his ascension to the throne, however, Krum, already in the capacity of supreme ruler (*Khan megas), undertook the construction of a "magnificent fortress", which Kemalpaşazade or his informant placed in the field near Shumen, no doubt in the Aboba field with Pliskoba located there.[87]

With which of its fortifications can we identify Krum's "magnificent fortress"? Undoubtedly, Kemalpaşazade had in mind a large and impressive construction visible in the field near Shumen even at the beginning of the 16th century. Such can only be the Stone Fortress near the village of Aboba. It impressed passers-by, including those in the late Middle Ages, although the evidence of the time of its

[85] A certain indication of an earlier settlement of the first rulers of the new dynasty is given by the text of the Omurtag's Tarnovo inscription, speaking of his "old home", which seems to be different from the one in Pliskoba, which in the Chatalar inscription is called only Plskas tôn kanpon.

[86] For this see Georgiev 2022, 68-69, 91-92 and his bibliography.

[87] The question remains whether Плюска градь (Plyuska grad) was located there or whether it is identical to the early Byzantine and medieval fortress located on the wooded hill near Shumen (see Beshevliev 1962, fig. 7: on a map from 1720-1730 the inscription Pliska is marked between the heights of the upper reaches of Golyama Kamchiya and Rusenski Lom rivers). The localization of the early medieval Pliskoba - Pliska in a "field" near Shumlu, i.e. Shumen, was undertaken by Kemalpaşazade, based on the testimony of his informants, as well as in the localization of Veliki Preslav on the banks of Kamchia River. See Rusev 2021, 193, 197; Georgiev 2022, 63-64. There are then additional reasons to ask ourselves whether, by collecting data from contemporaries and eyewitnesses, the Turkish analyst from the beginning of the 16th century did not only want to specify, but also to correct the Greek text of BAC-b, which was translated by him, by emphasizing , that it is "in the field" and not on or among the heights?

construction and name were already lost.[88] The archaeological data about it unequivocally indicate that it was built only after the death of Krum, under his successors Omurtag and Malamir-Persian. So the testimony of BAC-b about Krum's construction cannot be applied to the fortress that defended the so-called Inner city of capital Pliska. During Khan Krum's rule, it was fortified with two separate and nested fortification lines explored under my guidance: "inner" earthen (with a ditch and a wooden-earthen rampart) and a wooden-adobe wall.[89] Both demolished (albeit to varying degrees) when the capital was burned down by the troops of Nicephorus I Genicus together with the so-called Krum's Palace, which is located in close proximity to the earliest constructions in its Palace complex.

Krum's Palace is a solid construction, with an area of 4,700 square meters. Its discoverer and first researcher - Krastyu Miyatev (1892-1966) defined it as a building, which he with forethought named: "Krum's Palace".[90] Only the foundations, built of large stone blocks, have been preserved from it. They form a network of intersecting bases that delineate the substructure plan of an almost square-shaped building and, near the corners, four towers-staircases to ascent to its ground part. The plan of the building has some of the characteristics of a late Roman or Umayyad castle-palace. Located within a wooden-adobe fence together with well-developed residential and representative buildings built before it, [91] it served as a military-administrative center and citadel of Pliskoba immediately before, and parts of it immediately after 811. Its location in the structure of the capital city, as well as the data on its chronology, gives me a reason to believe that this is the fortress capital of Krum, which the author of BAC-b pointed out. Judging from his information, construction had already begun on the eve of Krum's coronation in 806, but continued after that, so that in the summer of 811 it was still new and perhaps not even fully completed, judging by the data of his comprehensive study.[92] Based on the evidence from BAC-b, however, we must assume that it effectively fulfilled its role as a military-administrative building in the residence, and therefore it was perceived as Khan Krum's "capital".

[88] See Rashev 2008, 45-46; Georgiev 1999, 152-157; 2015b, 413, 420-423, fig. 5; 2022, 42-43.
[89] Georgiev 2018, 22-25, fig. 2, 3.
[90] Miyatev 1942, 105-130; Rashev 2008, 78-80.
[91] Georgiev 2006b, 83-95; 2013b, 495-519; Rashev 2008, 81-97.
[92] Rashev 2008, 78-80, fig. 23, tabl. XXVII, XXVIII; Georgiev 2018, 23, fig. 4, 5

The identification of Khan Krum's "fortress" with the so-called "Krum's Palace" and not with the Stone Fortress of Pliska is supported by the name preserved by Kemalpaşazade from the Greek manuscript. In its Turkish version it is written as Pelasta. Rusev finds a kinship or closeness with the name Plyuska grad from the Slavic variant of BAC and is inclined to identify them as the same building. At first I thought that was possible too. However, the comparison brings to the fore not only similarities, but also significant differences, especially in the second part of the name. This also suggests the possibility that the two names are not identical and that Pelasta refers only to Krum's palace-fortress in the residence of his two predecessors. In this sense, the unusual at first glance name Pelāsta (Pelāşta) seems to be a Greek or Latin-Greek word distorted by the Turkish editor, reflecting the name of Khan Krum's construction within the "capital" he inherited, which was apparently accepted by him for a place to govern the state. The basis of its name is most likely the Latin concept for such a building: Palatum, palatium, that is, palace, place of imperial power.

A direct indication of the use of the Latin-Greek παλάτιον, instead of αὐλὴν or дворь for Krum's Palace, burned in 811, we see in the Chronicle by Simeon Logotetus and Metaphrastus and its early Old Bulgarian translation.[93] It could be one of the sources of information about Khan Krum's Pelasta, i.e. Palace in the residence of the rulers whom he dethroned between the 8th and 9th centuries.

On what basis could the author of the BAC-b protograph actually talk about Khan Krum's construction? It is theoretically possible to think that the information appeared in a more complete, but yet unknown, text. It seems more realistic to me that the Greek-speaking author of the late 11th or early 12th century borrowed the information from Byzantine testimonies, which mention, albeit too sparingly, the "aul of Krum" burned in 811. Such is the so-called Vatican Anonymous, whose manuscript was discovered in a 12th-century manuscript.[94] We cannot rule out the role of Old Bulgarian translation works such as the 10th-century translation of the Chronicle of Simeon Logotetus and Metaphrastus preserved in a 17th-century manuscript, where we see a short review how Nicephorus I went вь ѕовомои дворь кнлзя и҃ Крочма 'into the court of king Krum'.[95]

[93] Zlatarski 1972, 394.
[94] Vatic. Gr. 2014. 119-122, see GIBI 1961, 10-15.
[95] Zlatarski 1972, 391.

Indirect indications in support of this assumption can be found in the Middle Bulgarian translation of the message by the Byzantine lexicographer from the 10th century, Suda, referring to the "council" called by Khan Krum after the inclusion of the Avars (as well as the local Bulgarians) from the eastern borders of the Avar Khaganate defeated by Charlemagne, circa 805.[96] As is known, there are two separate passages in the Lexicon: the first is under the heading "Bulgarians" and describes the assistance that Tervel gave to Justinian II Rinotmet in 705 and the gifts with which he was rewarded. The second text is again dedicated to the "Bulgarians", but for those from the time of Krem, i.e. Krum and tells about the "council" convened by him as "Bulgarian master" (sic!) at which he promulgated his laws. It is of particular importance for us to point out that the connection between the two passages is made with the following explanation: "These same Bulgarians completely destroyed the Avars", both in the Greek text and in its Old Bulgarian translation. So, there is no doubt that they are dedicated to two events of the early Bulgarian history that were different in time, but related in meaning and significance.[97] The essential difference between the Greek sentence and its translation is that in the original the Bulgarians called to a council by Krem are defined as "all", while in the translation they are indicated as "our own" (Българскїи гд҃рь Крємъ (Κρὲμ) ... созва българы своѧ (τοὺς Βουλγάρους πάντας) и повелѣ ѕаконополагаѧ ...). According to Zlatarski, the Old Bulgarian translation follows the complete Byzantine text by Suda, based not only on "notes" recorded during the reign of Constantine VII Bagrenorodni, but also on information from Bulgaria during the reign of Tsar Peter I.

This makes the heading "Bulgarians" in Suda's Lexicon one of the possible sources of information about the "genealogical" connection of San/Kan (=Krum) with Caesar (=Tervel) highlighted in BAC-b. But in the Greek text, as well as in the translation, the latter is indicated by his name, while in BAC-b he is presented with the title Caesar, which Suda does not mention. In such a case, it seems more likely that the Greek-speaking author of the BAC-b archetype used an unpreserved Excerpta of Konstantin Bagrenorodni,[98] for which Zlatarski also wrote.

[96] Zlatarski 1970, 365-366, 545-550. About the Greek text under the heading "Bulgarians": GIBI 1964, 309-310.

[97] Georgiev 2016, 167, note 18.

[98] Konstantin Bagriyanorodniy 1980, 23.

Important clues to our topic also come from the form of the ruler's proper name used in Suda's Lexicon - Krem, instead of the usual "Krum" and its various derivatives.[99] There is currently no consensus on their etymology and two possible solutions are proposed, namely "The Guard" and "The Rock", but Menges connects the name with the Turkic verb qurum 'raise, establish'.[100] In Russian historical writings from the 15th and 16th centuries, in texts about the capture and burning of Pliska by Nicephorus I, Krum's name comes close to or even replaces the Russian кремль, which, according to Sreznevsky, means castrum, regarding the palace of the Bulgarian ruler.[101] In the example he gave from a Chronograph from the 16th century, the text reads as follows: Цр҃ь Никифоръ на Болгаръı поиде ... и победи ихъ крѣпко, **ꙗко и гл҃мого двора кнꙗзꙗ ихъ, иже есть кремль,** пожеци его. Obviously, it is based on an Old Bulgarian source, but Vostkov's assumption that the word кремль 'kremlin' replaces the name of the ruler should be rejected, precisely in the light of the evidence considered here about a castle-fortress built by Krum in the aul of his predecessors. Considering the Russian word кремль as "fortress" in this case is based on the closely related concept кромъ, which means arx, i.e. an inhabited citadel that is outside any boundaries and thus corresponds exactly to the example cited above. Despite its erroneous association with the pronunciation-related name of Krum, the example has for us the value of another confirmation that Kemalpaşazade's testimony about San's construction should be connected with the construction of the so-called Krum's palace-fortress in Pliska, since it corresponds exactly to his position in the ruler's residence.[102] The other example by Sreznevski should also be cited as support. It is a Russian translation of the chronicle of Georgi Amartol from 1456, where the burning of Krum's aul is described as follows: ꙗко и гл҃маго двора кнꙗзꙗ и҆̑ апто крꙋмлꙗ пожеци. And since the combination апто крꙋмлꙗ is in the place of Κρούμου in Amartol, it is accepted again as his ruler's name (according to Zlatarski, the Genitive case of Крꙋмель). The word in front of it is Greek - ἀπτώς 'unfalling, stable' and so it seems

[99] Zlatarski 1970, 321-322.
[100] Simeonov 2008, 171-173.
[101] Sreznevskiy 1893, 1320.
[102] Georgiev 2018, 22-24, fig. 5.

to be an epithet, but not to the name of Krum, but rather to the Russian word equated with it, кремль. Thus, the collocation expresses exactly the Bulgarian construction a "sustainable (=solid) fortress".

In Suda's text, Krum's name is written as Κρέμ. This form seems to be the result of its similarity in sounding and interpretation with κρέμας meaning 'steep, overhanging rock', from the verb (pass.) κρέμαμαι 'suspended, hanging', or from κρεμαστός 'hanging, hung'. So it is very likely that it was given the meaning of "suspended (hanging) steadily (on a rock)". This leads us to the relief image of the horseman-ruler cut in the Madara rocks with inscriptions that show separately the names of the rulers Tervel, Krumesis and Omurtag.[103] The name of Tervel appears in the inscription in front of the Horseman, and it speaks clearly enough about the attempt undertaken in 705 to unify the (proto) Bulgarian enclaves in the Balkans in order to help restore Justinian II to the throne in Constantinople. The inscription behind the Horseman is less well preserved, but it is clear that it was also dedicated to the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations from the time of this emperor, respectively Tervel. In the large text below the relief, the name "Krumesis" is mentioned several times in the context of Krum's dynamic relations with Byzantium, therefore G. Feher and R. Rashev assume that the inscription speaks of him, and not of Kormesius of the early decades of the 8th century as accepted by V. Beshevliev. In what it says, there is no data for a story that is close to the one in Suda's Lexicon and its Old Bulgarian translation. Claiming that Khan Krum is a descendant of Caesar, i.e. of Tervel comes to explain, albeit too generally, why the texts are carved around the relief, mentioning the names of the rulers Tervel, Krum and his direct successor - Omurtag.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that with the discovery of the new version of BAC, Pliska finally finds its first domestic narrative source from the Middle Ages. It provides historians, archaeologists and other specialists with more certain and more concrete data about its onset and development as a royal residence. According to the two texts from the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle (BAC) that have come down to us, it arose as early as the 80s of the 8th century during the reign of Kardam, but as the capital of Krum and the dynasty founded by him, it began to develop at the beginning of the 9th century. It preserved its glory of the "first capital" of the Bulgarian kingdom even after its sunset

[103] For this see Féher 1928, 58-61; Beshevliev 1979,89-108; Rashev 2008, 212-218; Georgiev 2013a, 27-44.

in 1018. Its reputation in the historical legends of that time is defended by the anonymous author from the beginning of the 12th century, although he made a historically unreliable statement about its "creation" since the founder - king Ispor/Asparuh and existence as an old dynastic center until around 1015. What my analysis here confirms is that Pliskoba - Pliska established itself as a functioning center of political power in the last decades of the 8th and especially in the 9th century, but seems to retain its glory as a state center - a symbol of the Khan Krum dynasty until its end in 1015.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Molyvdovuls of Tervel, Caesar of the Empire. Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington (DO 58.106.4932) (see Yordanov, 2016).

a. Obverse with image of Tervel; b. Reverse side with Greek inscription: " Mother of God, help Caesar Tervel".

Fig. 2. A single-sided gold medallion of Omurtag with the image of the ruler and a circumscribed inscription in Greek and Latin letters: "(Medallion) of Khan syubigi Omortag". NAIM - BAS, Sofia, inv. No. 988. Photo by Krasimir Georgiev.

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Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b



Fig. 2

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Two wooden buildings and the Arena of Pliska

Andrey Aladzhov

Abstract: These surveys allow us to clarify the relative chronology of the two buildings and other structures located north of the Citadel and northeast of the Round Stone Ground in Pliska. In this area, we could trace the chronology of Pliska from the 8th to the 11th century.

Keywords: Pliska, Inner City, wooden buildings, arena, Palace Centre

Резюме: Това проучване позволява да се изясни относителната хронология на двете дървени сгради и други съоръжения, разположени северно от Цитаделата и североизточно от Кръглата каменна площадка в Плиска. В този район има възможност да се проследи хронологията на Плиска от VIII до XI век.

The two wooden buildings connected to the Round Stone Ground surround it (fig. 1). They differ in their shape, orientation, way of construction and chronology. The field surveys allow us to clarify the relative chronology of the two buildings and other structures located north of the Citadel and northeast of the Round Stone Ground in Pliska. An underground passageway is also situated in this area, relevant to the general stratigraphic situation.

Early wooden building

Over 3,400 square meters north, west, south and east of the early wooden building have been explored. Its final boundaries have not yet been established. It extends further north and east. The building has trench-pit foundations (fig. 2). Its construction consists of pairs of parallel trenches flanked with pairs of construction pits, usually one larger with a square or round shape (always with a pad of bricks or stones on the bottom) and a smaller and shallower with a round shape (sometimes also with a pad on the bottom) (fig. 3). The trenches intersect at right angles, thus forming cells, like the plan of Krum's

Palace. The whole building has a rectangular plan that frames the round building found under the stone pavement of the arena. The internal layout of the building includes large rectangular rooms with a side of 7-8 m, around which there are bypass corridors. Not all cells are the same size; some are smaller with a 3-5 m side. An excellent example in this respect is Structure 274 - a construction pit that flanks from the west one of the trenches of Structure 132 (the number under which the building was registered initially). In the construction pit, brick pads on two levels were revealed, the upper of which is formed by several halves of bricks like a rectangular bed for a timber beam. The lower level is built similarly but with more fragmented bricks. Between the lower and upper levels of Structure 274 there is a 0.25 m thick layer. The upper level of the pit and trench is at depth 182.51 m, the top pad in deep 182.46 m, and the lower level is at depth 182.21 m.

This situation has been repeated many times in all the sections studied. Two brick pads in the same pit at different levels, one below the other, can mean only that the building has been renovated at least once. This repair we specify as a second construction period, and it is with it that the most exciting finds from this large building are connected. The supposed third construction period is associated with the situation in squares K-L/11 (fig. 4). In them, one of the trenches with a north-south direction is filled at the top level with flat stones arranged on a rib. The fact that this situation is solely observed here can mean several things: the building is just repaired in this section, i.e., partial repairs; the chamber had more specific functions; or it should be a chamber that was reused after the building no longer existed or at least did not function according to its original purpose. It is too early to be definite because such a situation can be found elsewhere in subsequent surveys, but it is most likely the last explanation. The level of the stone fill is higher by ca. 0.20-0.35 m from the upper level of the trench and can be associated with a second stratigraphic layer of the site rather than a third. This is supported by Grave 3, which is from the Christian period of Pliska and is on the same level as the stones in the trench.

The foundations of the Early Wooden Building continue to be traced south to the northern brick wall of the Citadel and to the east, so far to square K/15. In this sector, the upper level of the trench is revealed at 1.30 m from the present-day surface and at levels 183.40-183.20. At this depth, the upper surface of the underground passageway is detected. It can be seen that the trench of the early wooden building, in the direction of south to north, cuts through the route of the underground

passageway. This means this building was built after the passage was concealed and ceased functioning as an underground communication route.

The early wooden building dates to the first half of the 9th century, according to the relative chronology of the site, which we managed to clarify for the first time in the northwest periphery of the Round Stone Ground. In 2021, this date was confirmed in the northeast area of the site by a rare find in Pliska – a golden solid of Emperor Theophilus (829-842).[1] According to Philip Grierson's classification, the solid is Class III. This coin emission is of a commemorative nature and dates to the period 830/831-840.[2] Presenting the contacts of the Byzantine institutions with the First Bulgarian Kingdom, Todor Todorov[3] also examines the problem of the coinage of Emperor Theophilus. He also accepted that the Class III solids were commemorative and narrowed the dating to the years 835-840 – the time between the death of the firstborn Theophilus' son Constantine and the birth and coronation of the second imperial son Michael. The coin was found in one of the construction pits from the building foundations. It has a fully preserved polished surface, meaning it was not in circulation.

Underground passageway

Right away north of the Early Wooden Building, we explored 55 m of the underground passageway route in an east-west direction. All the underground passageways studied so far are in a north-south direction and are invariably connected to the Palace Center.[4] The presence of a new underground passageway with a different orientation, located relatively far from the known palaces, means that probably in the Inner City of Pliska, there are unknown representative buildings associated with this underground passageway. The existence of such buildings should no longer surprise us. The geophysical measurements carried out in 2017 on almost the entire area of the Inner City showed that buildings of representative features exist not only in the Palace Center of Pliska.[5]

[1] Dimitar Dimitrov (Archaeological Museum Veliki Preslav) analyses the numismatic material.
[2] Grierson 1973, 79, 408-412, Tab. 8, 19.
[3] Todorov 2012, 72-75.
[4] Rashev 2008, 80-99, Tabl. XXIX.
[5] Filzwieser *et al*. 2019, 229-261.

This will probably be established in the subsequent excavation because, in 2022, we studied the exit/entrance along the route of the underground passageway (fig. 5). The exit is a vertical shaft that protrudes immediately south of the tunnel. Its floor is like the rest of the facility – square late antique bricks with a side of 30 cm arranged tightly next to each other in rows. The walls are lined with timber beams and subsequently burned. According to the palaeobotanical analysis, they are made of oak.[6] The shaft was closed with a wooden cap. Numerous iron parts of its fittings were found, as well as metal clamps and a metal square double plate with a hole in the middle, which we interpret as a lock. In sq. K/12, the brick pavement at the bottom of the underground passageway reached a depth of 181.70 m, and in sq. K/13 a depth of 181.90 m. This rising level to the east is associated with the shaft level. Just opposite the exit, the floor forms a weak arc. Suppose you extrapolate the route of the underground passageway another 15 m to the west of the westernmost point at which we have explored it, in that case, it will cross below 90° with the burning underground passageway starting from Krum's Palace to the north.[7] In this regard, the burned beams from the newly discovered underground passageway partially prove that the two passageways may be part of a common underground network.

The analogies with the burning underground passageway from Krum's Palace indicate the dating of the newly discovered tunnel. The burning underground passageway was burned down in 811, after which it ceased functioning.[8] The backfilling of the east-west underground passageway took place at the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century, as shown by the ceramics found in its embankment. Accordingly, the date of their use should be moved from the middle of the 8th century to perhaps earlier.

Late wooden building

In addition to the two structures (the underground passageway and the early wooden building) from the capital pagan period, another large building labelled as the Late Wooden Building is being explored in this section. It also has a trench-pit construction, but the orientation of its foundations is from northeast to southwest direction. It is the

[6] Tsvetana Popova (NAIM-BAS) carried out the palaeobotanical analysis.
[7] Rashev 2008, 80-81, fig. 24-26.
[8] Rashev 2004, 64-65, fig. 1, 3; Miyatev 1942-1943, 103-105.

latest building in stratigraphic position and dates to the first half of the 10th century. We could document superpositions between the underground passageway, the early wooden building, and the later one in several sections (fig. 6). One of the most exciting situations was revealed in sq. K/14, where the latter building rests on the earlier, and over both of them a furnace is dug, the material of which dates to the second half of the 10th century. This data is valid for the numerous furnaces studied on this site.

Conclusions

The analysis of the superposition between the three facilities and the comparison of the ceramics found in them allows us to offer the following conclusions – the underground passage with east-west direction functioned before the end of the 8th – the beginning of the 9th century when it was covered with a heavily tamped embankment, which allowed its route to be used as a basis for other facilities. The early wooden building was built several decades (2 or 3) after the underground passageway – in the first third of the 9th century. 835-840 can be perceived as *a terminus post quem* for its second construction period. The late wooden building was placed on top of the early one and functioned in the first half of the 10th century. The three structures are not part of a single construction horizon in the Inner City of Pliska.

Three stratigraphic layers have been studied so far on the site. The uppermost (I) and, respectively, the latest is a grey embankment saturated with stone destructions, in which ceramics and finds from the third quarter of 10th – to the first half of the 11th century are found: thin-walled ceramics designed on a fast pottery wheel, anonymous coins class A1 and A2, seals, belts and appliqués. This is the last stage of the city's life and the time of its abandonment. The brown layer next below (II) is the thickest layer (60 to 70 cm). This layer dates from the beginning to the last quarter of the 10th century. It is associated with the most intensive habitation of the area, as well as in the entire Inner City. One of the most interesting facilities are the brick furnaces for metal and glass production. So far, we have researched five, all with the same layout. To this stratigraphic layer belongs the late wooden building.

The lowest layer (III) consists of a yellow-brown embankment, in which the archaeological materials are relatively small and stratigraphically it falls into the second half of the 9th – the beginning of the 10th century. In some places on this level are found earlier

structures from the first half of the 9th century, which belong mainly to the early wooden building. The underground passageway is the earliest and deepest structure associated with this layer.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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Fig. 2. The early wooden building over the underground passageway.

Fig. 3. Pairs of construction pits (photo: Andrey Aladzhov).

Fig. 4. Early wooden building from the third construction period (photo: Andrey Aladzhov).

Fig. 5. The exit of the underground passageway (drawing: Vladimir Valchev).

Fig. 6. Superpositions of the early wooden building and the later one (drawing: Vladimir Valchev).

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Fig. 1



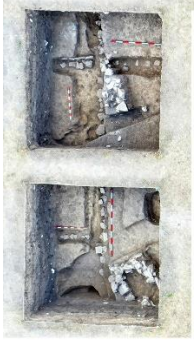


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

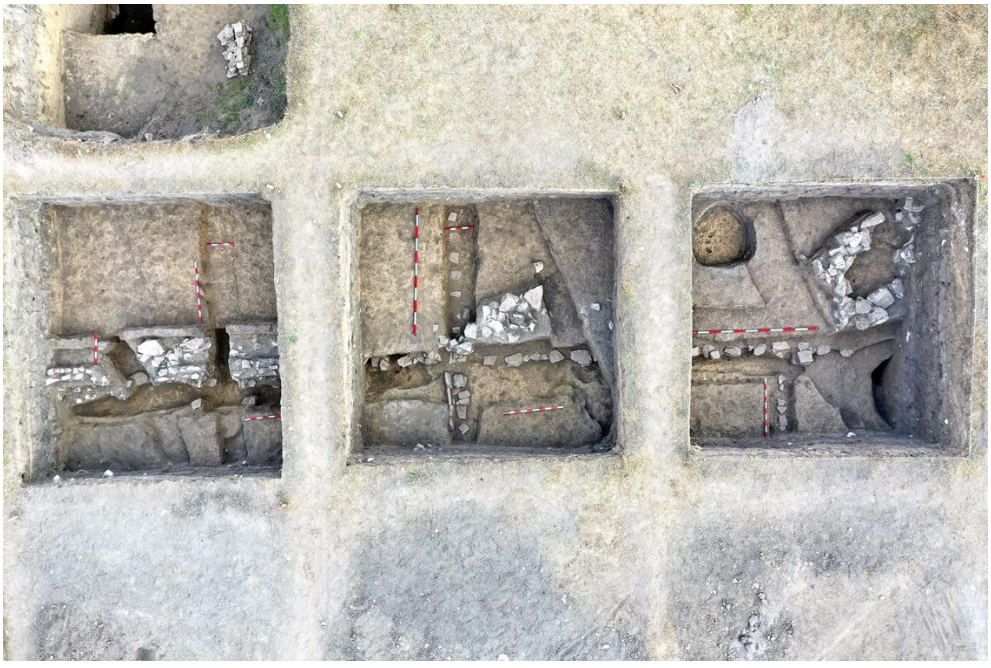


Fig. 4

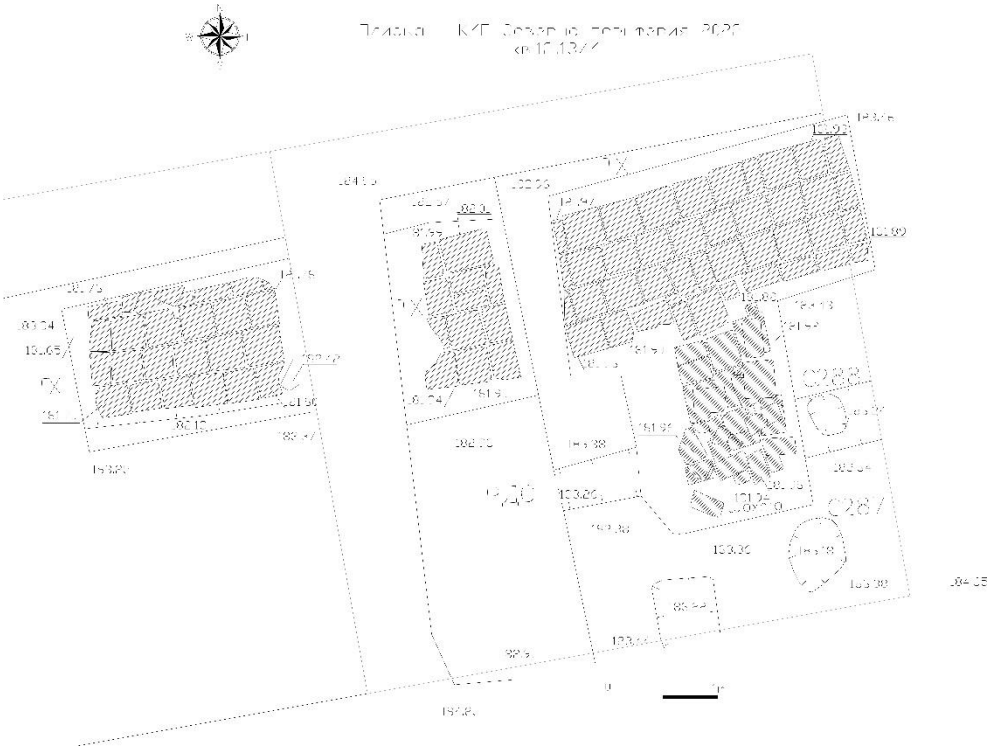


Fig. 5

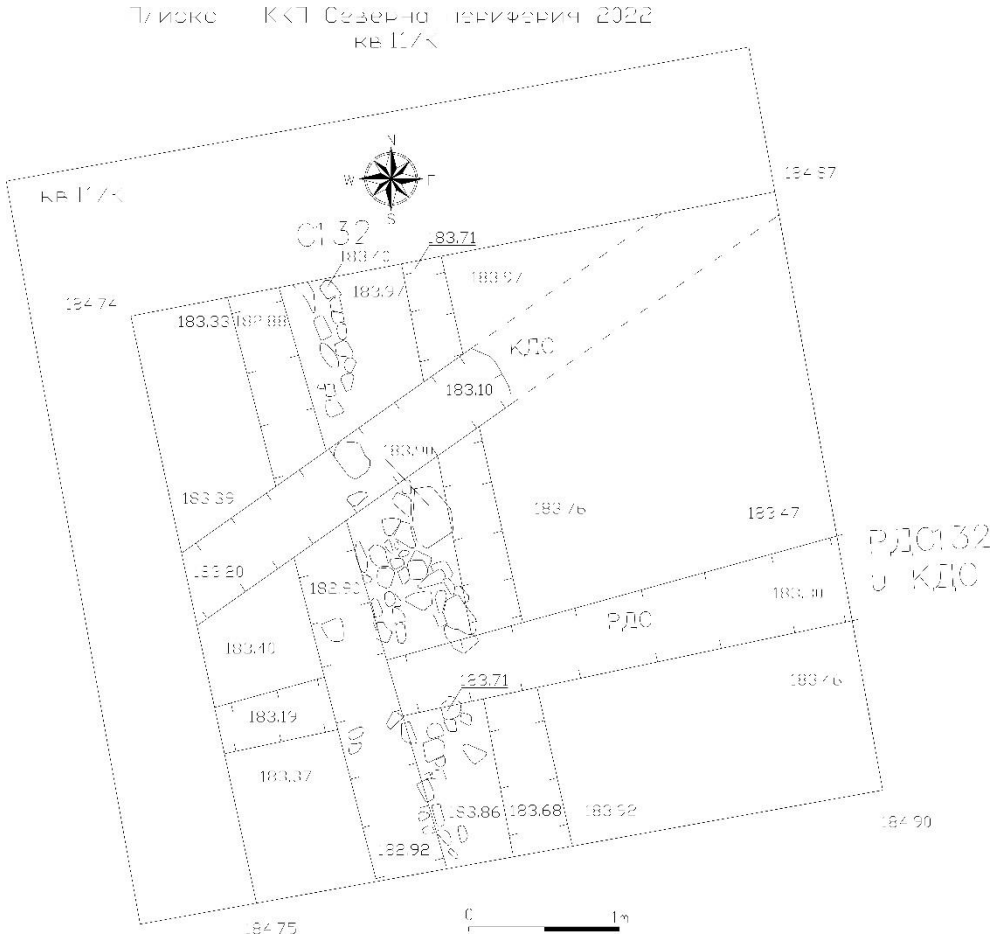

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Fig. 6

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New view on the "Dark Ages", one little known period in the Constantinople History

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Abstract: The "Dark Ages" for the Byzantine Empire is a little known period of its history, especially in their role of a connecting link – a transition between the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The coming change is sudden, rugged, unexpected and radical and comprises both the thinking of the population and its architectural manifestations. The results of it are most clearly visible in the imperial capital Constantinople. The main change, as a whole, is expressed in the evolvement of the role of public places. The big public spaces, such as fora, baths, public buildings, lose the function they perform in the Antiquity and are reconstructed, assuming a new function corresponding to the new bigger reticence of the processes in the society. The population decrease in the capital is a matter that shall be re-examined and in spite of all changes it is not so drastic as considered so far. Changes in architecture were big. Any civil construction in the capital was stopped. After its resumption two centuries later at the beginning of 9th century, it underwent radical changes in the shape and size of the new buildings that are by far smaller in terms of size and scale than the monumental construction in the middle ages. The external and internal problems of the empire drastically changed the face of the Byzantine society and the appearance of the imperial capital, but also proved its stability and the advantages it had, keeping and using its ancient cultural heritage and tradition.

Kew words: "Dark Ages", transition, Constantinople, Byzantine Empire, crisis, Middle Ages

Резюме: „Тъмните векове" за Византийската империя са малко познат период от нейната история, особено в ролята им на свързващо звено – преход между Късната античност и Средновековието. Предстоящата промяна е внезапна, груба, неочаквана и радикална и обхваща както мисленето на населението, така и неговите архитектурни проявления. Резултатите от него са най-ясно видими в имперската столица Константинопол. Промяната като цяло се изразява в това, че ролята на обществените места се развива. Големите

обществени пространства, като форуми, бани, обществени сгради, губят функцията, която са изпълнявали през Античността и се реконструират, приемайки нова функция, съответстваща на новата по-голяма затвореност на процесите в обществото. Намаляването на населението в столицата е въпрос, който подлежи на преразглеждане и въпреки всички промени не е толкова драстично, колкото се смята досега. Промените в архитектурата са големи. Спира се всякакво гражданско строителство в столицата. След възобновяването му два века по-късно в началото на 9 век, той претърпява радикални промени във формата и размерите на новите сгради, които са далеч по-малки като размери и мащаби от монументалното строителство през Средновековието. Външните и вътрешните проблеми на империята променят драстично облика на византийското общество и облика на имперската столица, но и за пореден път доказват нейната стабилност и предимствата, които притежава, съхранявайки и използвайки древното си културно наследство и традиции .

The terms “Queen of Cities” or simply “The City”, with which the contemporaries of the great Byzantine Empire named the capital Constantinople, reflect its main significance as a world phenomenon. It is the last real city built with the knowledge of the Antiquity, which collected and jealously guarded all the cultural and scientific achievements of the passing “Golden Age”. From today’s point of view, the City is the connecting link between the disappearing old order and the newly emerging one, on the wracks of the western Roman civilization during the coming Middle Ages. During its whole existence and development, it was Constantinople that dictated the fashion in the architecture, culture and led the politics in the next centuries, leaning steadily on its most loyal ally – Christianity.

The period of constant changes and tests to which the Byzantine Empire was put from the beginning of the 9th c. to the end of the 8th century may be most exactly defined by the term “Dark Ages” if they have to be compared to the previous periods of power and grandeur. But how “dark” they were is a matter that we will examine below in this material. What happened in the empire, and in particular in Constantinople, helps us to assess correctly the capacity of the state of the Byzantines to withstand the changes, to stand their ground and, where necessary, to adapt to them, but without losing their characteristic features. A fact that eventually will show us the constancy and the “eternity” of the Roman state doctrine in time, but will also help us to assess the weaknesses and strengths of Byzantium. The analysis of all changes in the imperial capital Constantinople will give us a more

clear picture of the changes in the society itself, the state and their depth.

The knowledge and the interpretation of the main data describing the real state of Constantinople since the beginning of its capital period will help us to make the necessary comparison for the changes made in it during the "Dark Ages". Besides them, we will examine and discuss the reasons for and the consequences of the changes for the population of the empire and the very urban structure of the capital. The new reasoning about the existing facts is necessary in order to re-examine some statements about the number of the population in the capital after yet another decrease, but also about the depth of the "Dark Ages" themselves in Constantinople. The results will help us to clearly understand the essence of the coming epoch of the Middle Ages and the consequences of it for the further development of the history and the town planning of Constantinople and to re-examine the existing data about the demography and the life in the imperial capital. We will use comparative and analytical methods on the basis of the data available to us, linking them historically, archaeologically, politically and culturally to the facts of the epoch. Thus, we will understand in full the significance and the scale of the change that was realized, the losses and victories that the society underwent and in particular the City. The transfer of the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople in 330[1] marked a new period in the development of the city. The choice of Emperor Constantine (fig. 1.) was not accidental, but was dictated by the strategic location of the new capital. The land ways between Europe and Asia, as well as the seaways between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, passed through it. Thus, problems along the borders of the Danube or Euphrates, in the West or in the East, could be easily faced.

The Golden Horn in the north gives a uniquely calm refuge and sea protection of the peninsula on which the city is located. Thus, Constantinople, stepping on the basis of the ancient Byzantium, started to grow with rapid strides to the west. The first task of the Emperor Constantine was to fortify it with new city walls. Immediately outside the old ones, he built an imposing round forum in his name, on which he erected a big monumental porphyritic column and put his gilt statue on its top.[2] One of the buildings of the Senate was also built there. Thus,

[1] Cedrenus 1839.
[2] Codinus 1839.

the state institutions started to function in the new capital. The construction of the heart of the imperial centre – the Great Palace,[3] also started, and the social centre of the empire – the Hippodrome, was completed and solemnly opened. There is also a big Roman amphitheatre, heritage from the ancient Byzantium. The Capitolium,[4] the Praetorium,[5] the Big Rotunda[6] opposite it – the second biggest after that in Rome, the great number of palaces formed the image of the city.

The heirs of Emperor Constantine continued to embellish Constantinople (fig. 2.), with everyone aiming at surpassing his predecessor. The empire had inexhaustible resources of gold and labour that were put to work in the construction of new buildings and monuments in the City. Emperor Theodosius alone amassed in the state treasury over 144 tons of gold, and the annual revenue of the empire varied from 8 to 10 million gold solidi, which equalled to about 36 tons of gold.[7]

The capital was embellished and decorated with a great part of the ancient monuments and statues carried to it from the four corners of the world.[8] Thus, only 100 years after its foundation, Constantinople became more populated than Rome[9] and its second expansion to the west was necessary. With the construction of the massive triple fortified walls in 413, Emperor Theodosius II doubled the fortified city area to 21 sq. km. The population increased to 250,000. New Fora were built and the monumental architecture was at its heyday. The Forum of Theodosius[10] alone had dimensions of 55 metres by 55 metres and was surrounded by a great number of churches, a palace, public buildings and colonnades.

The massive triumphal column at its centre, decorated with reliefs from battle scenes, rose to a height of 40 metres, and by means of spiral staircase in it, one can reach its top where a gilt statue of the

[3] Eusebios 1999.
[4] Feissel 2003.
[5] Mango 1993.
[6] Naumann 1966, 199.
[7] Harl 1998.
[8] Eusebios 1999, 143.
[9] Sozomen 2018.
[10] The Forum of Theodosius was built by emperor Constantine at the time of the transfer of the capital to Constantinople and originally was named Forum Tauri or "Forum of the Bull". It was located at about 500 m to the west of the Forum of Constantine in the main street Mese. In 393, however, it was renamed after Emperor Theodosius I, who rebuilt it after the model of Trajan's Forum in Rome.

Emperor was erected.[11] Similar are the columns of the Emperors Justinian,[12] Arcadius,[13] Marcian[14] and Leo,[15] standing in Fora similar in size (fig. 3.). Public baths served the capital's population that had no possibility for furnishing and owing own baths in their dwellings. It is known that, in Constantinople in 430, there were 153 private baths, as well as 9 public ones of monumental size.[16] For example, the public Baths of Zeuxippus[17] alone were adorned with over 80 antique bronze or marble statues. After that year, the number of baths continued to grow rapidly. All city streets had sewerage and were covered with beautiful colonnades, and the main street Mese had two rows of them. The public library stored over 120,000 manuscripts, and at the same time the first institution in the world,[18] which may be defined with the present-day name University,[19] as well as the first hospital in the world, started to function. The city was supplied with water due to a complex engineering system that carried fresh water from 250 km and was composed of aqueducts, pipelines and a great number of cisterns for its storage.

The Aqueduct of Valens[20] alone within Constantinople was over a kilometre long and 20 metres high. Several nymphaea in different parts of the capital supplied water to the population, with the main one being located in the eponymous Forum of Theodosius.[21] Over 10 harbours ensured the continuous trade, navigation and protection of the city. The biggest one was that of Theodosius,[22] which is located on the coast of the Sea of Marmara. Eight huge warehouses, the so called *Horrea*,[23] served to store various commercial products and foodstuffs. *Horrea Alexandrina* gathered the wheat from Alexandria, which was in huge quantity, and *Horrea Olearia* stored the various oils. The bakeries in the city were over 20, and the platforms for bread distribution – over 100. The state gave out

[11] Croke 2001, 112.
[12] Croke 2005, 66.
[13] Müller-Wiener 1977, 250.
[14] Mango 1951, 52.
[15] Martindale 1980.
[16] Preger 1975, 226.
[17] Ward-Perkins 2000.
[18] De Boor 1883.
[19] Feissel 2003.
[20] Janin 1964.
[21] Croke 2001, 112.
[22] Preger 1901.
[23] Janin 1964.

free of charge the so called annona – foodstuffs for the population, from the specially built platforms in the city. 80,000 loaves of bread per day[24] were given out under the rule of Emperor Constantine, and only two centuries later, under Emperor Justinian, the number increased tremendously to 8,000,000 or 36,000,000 modii per annum.[25] The church construction increased at the expense of the public one. While in a document of 5th century the existence of 14 churches only was noted, a century later, in Constantinople, they were over 50.[26] Their construction was not already linked to the needs of the community, but was with the purpose of sheltering a certain relic, to perform a given vow or simply for prestige. The most famous and most beautiful are Hagia Sophia,[27] the Church of the Holy Apostles,[28] the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, the Church of St. Mary of the Spring (Zoödochos Pege),[29] the Monastery of Saint John the Forerunner "at Stoudios", the unique Church of St. Polyeuctus (fig. 4),[30] Hagia Irene,[31] the Church of Theotokos Chalkoprateia[32], etc. They were adorned in the most impressive way – with mosaics, expensive marbles of different colours, silver, gold, precious stones, nacre, ivory, etc. The doors and the ceiling of the Church of Theotokos Chalkoprateia were made of silver, electrum and gold.[33] The decoration of the Church of St. Polyeuctus surpassed the most daring expectations, and its decorative programme was unseen till then. A great number of asylums and homes for the aged, being part of the socially useful activities that the religious institutions performed, were built to the churches.

After the apogee of the rule of Emperor Justinian, an economic collapse came in the following centuries.[34] This period may be described with the term "Dark Ages". The negative tendencies in it were additionally intensified by the Iconoclastic struggles that burst out at that time in the Byzantine Empire, which continued from 726 to 843. They were mostly

[24] Hansen 1995.
[25] Teall 1959, 87.
[26] Seeck 2016.
[27] Volker 1999.
[28] Müller-Wiener 1977.
[29] Janin 1953, 232.
[30] Stankov 2020, 78.
[31] Millingen 1912.
[32] Müller-Wiener 1977.
[33] Preger 1975.
[34] Broglio 1999.

caused by the crisis and the uncertainty of 7th c. and the need of the believers of divine support.

This period may be considered as transitional. In it, constant changes were made in all spheres of the Byzantine Empire during the transition from the Late Antiquity to the new epoch of the Middle Ages.

Justinian's heritage was a burden on the shoulders of the empire and his heirs. The empire was exhausted by wars and distresses, human and financial resources were short and the horizons shrunk.[35] The crisis in the city life intensified. A rapid loss of territories followed, including the fall of the protection of the Balkan Peninsula and the loss of territories in North Africa, the greater part of those in Italy, whole Egypt and Syria. Those provinces were also densely populated, and this also affected the demographic picture in the empire. While in 600 the population of the Byzantine Empire was 17 million, in 641 it amounted to 10.5 million only.[36] A period of decline and a process of de-urbanization started in the cities. The economic collapse that followed led to decrease of the trade, continuing reduction of the size of the cities whose existence depended on the wide economic and commercial connections that were broken or upset. Many cities lost additionally a big part of their population and remained existing only as fortified citadels, while others were completely abandoned and depopulated.

The loss of the provinces also reduced the revenue in the state treasury by nearly 75%. They decreased tremendously and if in the previous period the emperors had at their disposal up to 10,000,000 solidi per annum, at the end of the rule of Emperor Heraclius in 641 they decreased to 3,700,000 annually[37]. After he replaced the Latin language with Greek in 620, the gold coin solidus started to be called nomisma. The decrease in the revenue also continued in 668, with only 2,000,000 nomismata per annum. Until 780, the revenue of the Byzantine Empire reached the bottom of 1,800,000 nomismata annually.[38]

On the other hand, the empire was at constant war with its neighbours. The needs of the army increased incredibly. With the payment of the soldiers' salaries in gold, they were spent quickly for the acquisition of various commodities and goods. In this way, the gold quickly returned to the state in the form of taxes. Thus, the empire's

[35] Dimitrov 2006, 9.
[36] Treadgold 1997.
[37] Treadgold 1997.
[38] Harl 1998.

economy became self-sufficient and managed to register growth during the "Dark Ages".

The social and economic life in the empire started to turn into urban one with rural elements. Already with the coming to power of Emperor Heraclius in 610, the things in the capital started to change. In Constantinople, the construction stopped except for the construction for defensive needs. This reduction was mostly due to several factors that may be directly related to the stopping of the annona, the disappearance of the warehouses for foodstuffs, the decrease of the harbour capacity, which led to logical decrease of the population in the city.

In 618, exactly before the capture of Alexandria by the Persians,[39] the supply with Egyptian wheat for the capital stopped forever. Under Justinian the Great, Egypt fed the greater part of the population in Constantinople, which amounted to about 600,000 people. The free giving out of bread was cancelled by the heir of Emperor Justinian, Emperor Justin II, who introduced minimum charges that at least covered its transport and storage.[40] The pressure was huge and the next emperor restored the tradition in the capital, which started with Emperor Constantine the Great. The annona was finally stopped in 619, and Constantinople was forced to look for new sources of wheat and oriented itself towards the Northern Circum-Pontic region and Asia Minor. At the same time, Thrace was invaded by the Avars who cut off the Aqueduct of Valens, supplying Constantinople with water.[41] Under a permanent threat, it was difficult for the province to replace the missing deliveries of wheat and foodstuffs, which the capital needed. Asia Minot was in the same situation after the invasion of the Persians had started. At the end of the rule of Emperor Heraclius, the situation improved due to his victory over Persia in 628, but only to deteriorate rapidly again after the appearance of the new frightful enemy, the Arabs, after 629. The new Arab threat was so serious (fig. 5.) that Emperor Constans II wanted to move the seat of his government to Sicily.

In 715, foreseeing the seriousness of the second Arab siege of Constantinople, Emperor Anastasios II decreed that only those who had food reserves for 3 years might remain in the capital. The rest were obligated to leave it. This was a clear signal that the state no longer committed itself to the feeding of the population, but it had to do this at

[39] Kaegi 1992.
[40] Dimitrov 2006, 19.
[41] Haldon 1990.

its own expense. The new big plague epidemic of 747 killed so many inhabitants that the city remained almost deserted, as patriarch Nikephoros tells us.[42] The epidemic itself emerged and devastated the empire's population 18 times for the period from 541 to 750, which makes the average emergence in every 11.6 years.[43]

For these reasons the Constantinople's population fell at least by over 50%. If in 5-6th century the population reached almost 600,000, according to the researcher John Teall, under Emperor Heraclius it did not exceed 250,000.[44] The figures of the decrease are, of course, hypothetical and are a subject of serious discussion. I think with certainty that the supply of the city with food continued, but it was impossible that it was performed with the huge amounts and the constancy from the previous period. On the other hand, with the loss of territories and the end of a number of cities big in the past, population from the former provinces came in crowds to Constantinople, looking for rescue in the very heart of the state as the most secure place. This is supported by the information showing that, in Constantinople, no famine took place, but, on the contrary, the supply remained sufficient. Even during the Arab siege that cut off the access to the city from Thrace, the capital's population was not destitute. Victuals were sent from Asia Minor, or people relied on fishing and agriculture within the fortified area. At the expense of this, however, the Arabs starved to death. This is interpreted in a way that the Constantinople's population fell so much that it could live on the deliveries coming from afar, on the produced within the fortified city part, in the fields and gardens, and the fish from the Bosporus, the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara. Those victuals were sufficient to feed the capital's population. The Byzantinist Cyril Mango supposes that the capital's population, after yet another decrease, should not have exceeded 70,000 people. This would be supported by the fact that out of 5 warehouses for foodstuffs in Constantinople in the 5th century, only 1 remained in the 8th century.[45] Moreover, only during the city's sieges by the enemy armies in 626, 674 and 717, the army of defenders in the capital, according to the researcher Michael Decker, did not exceed 15,000 people.[46] In contradiction to all these negative hypothetical statements, if we take the figures of the defenders from 1453

[42] Alexander 1958.
[43] Stathakopoulos 2007, 99.
[44] Teall 1959.
[45] Mango 1990.
[46] Decker 2013.

and their number between 7,000 and 10,000 people,[47] we will see that it is completely impossible to protect the multi-kilometre fortified walls of several rows of Constantinople by land, as well as by sea, simultaneously, with this number of people alone. Moreover, both political and economic situations of the empire and the city from the sieges in 717 and 1453 are incomparable, but the perimeter of city protection remained constant. On the other hand, it is considered that the Justinianian army numbered over 300,000 people, and the one after 649 – at least 129,000.[48] The more convincing figures to me of the number of defenders are quite over 15,000 and at least 30,000, proceeding from the following facts: 1. The above-mentioned figures refer to the total army. 2. The protection of the capital is concerned, not that of another city. 3. The threat is extremely real. 4. Serious measures were taken for the organization of the protection at that time. These facts certainty would make the emperors prepare themselves and gather the maximum possible army for protection of the fortified walls of Constantinople and include their personal guards in this number. Moreover, the city surely had considerably greater population than Mango's statements. In the number of the population we have also to include, besides the numerous military units, the numerous clergy and the senate aristocracy with big households, plus the imperial court with its thousands of servants. Furthermore, the big number of defenders in the capital, necessary for the maintenance and defence of the fortified walls, required logistics, accommodation, feeding and a functioning internal city market with the labour, crafts, production, etc. necessary for all this. Therefore, Constantinople continued to be a big consumer not only of foodstuffs and staple goods, but also of luxury goods. This data is also supported by the existing town-planning structure for the studied period. The capital continued to be a huge market-place – the biggest market-place of the Byzantine Empire and one of the biggest markets of the East Mediterranean region, and also an important naval station.[49] On the basis of those facts, we think that the decrease of the population in Constantinople was not so big as the existing suppositions, and was probably at least 120,000 people. This number includes all necessary elements for protection, production, maintenance, trade and supply in order to manage the organism of the cosmopolitan capital and the adequate functioning of its defence forces.

[47] Runciman 1965.
[48] Treadgold 1995.
[49] Simeonova 2006, 39.

With respect to the city structure itself, the tendency of decrease from the previous periods is also related to the harbour capacity of the capital. Out of the four big harbours that served the needs of the city in the 5th century, two were abandoned. The Harbour of Theodosius ceased to function as it was silted up with deposits and in its place the population caught at the opportunity of planting vegetable gardens, a fact that is in support of the above thesis. The trade and military traffic was moved to the other two harbours.[50]

The big decrease of the water-supply volume led for sure to the stopping of the big nymphaea in the city, as well as of the big public baths. Probably, the open cisterns remained empty, too. In order to understand how the city's inhabitants coped under those conditions, it is sufficient to pay attention to the correspondence of Theodore – a metropolitan bishop of Cyzicus from the mid-10th century. Addressing his close friend Emperor Constantine VII, Porphyrogenitus said: *"I am tired of sending my donkey to the fountain. That is why, I accommodated a small tank in my house, for personal needs, and I ask you to request from the person in charge of water-supply to provide me with small amount of water in winter in order to quench my thirst in summer."*[51]

In his second letter to the emperor, it becomes clear that the "despot of waters", as the author ironically called him, did not fulfil his wish and gave him too little water for too big amount.

In the 8th century, the Roman amphitheatre was a big abandoned ruin, still adorned with mystic statues. The executions of the criminals were performed there. Their bodies were thrown away in a common grave in the western part of the city.[52]

At the same time, the city was flooded with animals. The herds of pigs unloaded at the Harbour of Julian were driven away to the Forum of Theodosius and to the butchers who had to buy them.[53] Lambs were also sold there before Easter. Rams were sold in the Strategion, horses and donkeys were sold in the Forum Amastrianum, and slaves – in the bakers' quarter, Artopoleia.[54] In order to protect the imperial palace from those unpleasant smells, the sellers of spices and perfumes were positioned at its entrance. The butchers were forbidden to hide pigs in the houses of the rich men in order to resell them later.

[50] Ahrweiler 1966, 430.
[51] Mango 1990.
[52] Franchi De'Cavalieri 1946, 157.
[53] Nicole 1893, 39.
[54] Koder 1991.

The Church of St. Mocius[55] collapsed for yet another time in 718, under the rule of Emperor Leo III. The public buildings we know, except for the Hippodrome, were neglected. Some of them ceased to exist, and others changed their purpose. The theatres, the big complex of the Basilica with its shops and schools, the Capitolium and the university, the two buildings of the Senate, the nymphaea and the palaces of the patricians of 4th and 5th century lost their functions. They were moved or gradually became ruins and disappeared.

After the Persians destroyed the Church of St. Euphemia, located in Chalcedon, the hexagonal main hall of the Palace of Antiochos (fig. 6.) was adapted and sheltered the relics of the saint, turning into church. Mausolea and cemeteries were created around the building.[56] During the iconoclastic period, the building again underwent transformation, turning into public one, and the relics of the saint were moved. Weapons and manure started to be stored and offered there.

The adjacent complex of the Palace of Lausus[57] was partially reshaped under the reign of Emperor Phocas into the St. John the Evangelist Church. The triclinium of the same palace was reshaped into a cistern.

The rotunda of the Philadelphion collapsed and was destroyed. Only its lower part remained, up to 5 metres high, which was covered with vaults borne by reused columns. In this way, a platform was formed, on which a palace belonging to the patrician Krateros was built.[58] Later, an owner became Romanos I Lekapenos, the future emperor. He turned it into a monastery called Myrelaion.

The Praetorium was burned out for yet another time under the rule of Emperor Phocas, as George Kedrenos tells us.[59] The buildings in which the Praetorian prefect of the East was housed, located on the Acropolis, ceased to be occupied by him. The position itself was eliminated in 629, and his judicial and fiscal functions were transferred to the buildings of the administration located in the Great Palace.[60]

The Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, part of the Monastery of Kosmidion, was destroyed during the siege of the city by the Avars in

[55] Özgümüş 1996.
[56] Bogdanovic 2017.
[57] Mango 1992, 89.
[58] Naumann 1966.
[59] Janin 1950.
[60] Mango 1993.

626. Then, the Church of St. Nicholas, located in the immediate proximity to the monastery, was also destroyed.

In 726 the Emperor Leo I burned down the Octagon, together with the teachers in it, who opposed his iconoclastic theories. The new library with over 35,000 books was also destroyed by the fire. The teachers, lawyers and judges were not housed there anymore.[61]

Hagia Irene was destroyed by an earthquake in 740 and subsequently restored. This is ascribed to Emperor Constantine V, but analyses show that this happened only after 799.

The statue of Arcadius, located on the column in the eponymous forum, fell during the earthquake of 740,[62] and the Quaestorium burned out in 791 together with the patriarchal palace – Thōmaitēs, and the arch Milion.

The abandonment of the public baths is also well-known.[63] Nevertheless, we have a piece of information that the Baths of Zeuxippus continued to function in 713 when Emperor Philippikos bathed in them.[64] A little later, one part of them was turned into barracks, and the other one into prison.

The Thermae of Constans were abandoned in the 8th century. The other thermae, such as those of Achilles, of Anastasios, of Arcadius, of Eudokia, of Helena, of Honorius, disappeared in the historical sources. The obvious shortage of water, fuel and sufficient customers did not justify the expenses for the maintenance of such luxury and big complexes. In the period, of course, the smaller baths that continued their existence were used.

The location of the Bakeries in the period changed. They were concentrated between the Forum of Constantine and the Forum of Theodosius, unlike the previous periods, when they were scattered all over the city.[65]

The construction of new fortified walls was provoked by the urgent need to strengthen the defence of Constantinople in the region at the Blachernae suburb. This happened exactly in the troubled years of the 7th century. The Emperor Leo III ordered to install an iron chain that should hinder the entry of enemy ships into the Golden Horn.[66] It

[61] Procopius 1940.
[62] Theophane 1883.
[63] Preger 1901.
[64] Cameron & Herrin 1984.
[65] Mango 2000.
[66] De Boor 1883.

was borne by floating drums and stretched along the whole entrance of the Golden Horn. Its one end was tied to the Tower of Eugenius, which was located in the present-day Sirkeci, and the other one – to a big square tower called Kastellion, located in Galata.

It is important to draw attention to another change, not a physical one, but in the minds of the people from this epoch. Since the beginning of the 8th century, the monuments from the Antiquity – statues, reliefs, arches, inscriptions were interpreted differently by the inhabitants of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire. All this presupposed a new sense loaded with magical and mystic meaning. The reasons for this radical change may be also sought in the change of the city's population after the big disasters and the depopulation. In this way, at the time of the repopulation of the city, the ancient city traditions of the lower strata of the population were lost. The old monuments created fear and astonishment because the ordinary "new" citizen could not understand how they were erected without the interference of the occult forces. The whole literature of the epoch was loaded with such thoughts and superstitions, which become an integral part of the spirit of the whole epoch.

We think that the mediaeval Constantinople of the 7th-8th century, which we examined above, retains without doubt the heritage and grandeur of the city from the time of the Emperors Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian (fig. 7).

The "Dark Ages" are dark only if we compare them to the previous, bygone epoch of grandeur. Per se, there are continuance and adaptation in them, which as factors are positive characteristics. The main street Mese was one and the same. The main fora only changed their purpose and started to be used for market needs, and the main sights, the Hippodrome and the big churches, continued to be in favour of the urban population. Exactly those monumental buildings and the constructed in the 6th century "support" the functioning of the city over the "Dark Ages".

At the end of the 8th century when the construction started to recover, it followed the model and scheme established before this in Constantinople, but on a much smaller scale. It was not possible that the society and the culture did not undergo all above-mentioned changes after all the natural calamities, epidemics, cataclysms and wars. The decrease of Constantinople's population played a key role in the loss of the connection of the populace to the ancient tradition, but a re-examination of its number is necessary, as we made clear, it should not

be less than 120,000 people at the worst moments of the capital in this period. The population introduced subsequently from the outside did not feel at home with the monumental buildings from the previous epoch and they did not feel at home with their meaning and purpose, either. It is more important to note that this rich ancient tradition was retained at state level, in the imperial institution, in the bureaucracy and science, through which the empire was presented with respect to foreign policy, but it underwent its rebirth and was inherited in the architectural manifestations of the Byzantine Empire in the following centuries. Moreover, almost all emperors during this difficult period of transition carried out incessant reforms and made attempts to improve the condition of the empire. Emperor Heraclius reorganized with exceptional success the army and reformed the government and the administration corrupted by Emperor Phocas. Emperor Constans II pursued constant home and foreign policy, and Emperor Constantine V created the first theme "Thrace" with the purpose of better organization of the governance and defence against the newly emerged Bulgarian threat. Emperor Justinian II made efforts to strengthen the fleet. He continued the new reorganization of the state structure with the creation of the theme "Hellas" and defended the rights of the peasants who were the main source of personnel in the army. Emperor Tiberius III, on his part, continued those efforts and renovated part of the fortified walls of Constantinople. Emperor Leo III, in his turn, consolidated the administration of the state, continued the organization of the theme structure by creating new themes in the Aegean region. He undertook a number of civil reforms related to the rights of the peasants, civil law, family law, maritime laws, criminal law. The new measures taken by him were codified in the so called Ecloga published in 726. His heir and son Emperor Constantine V continued with the reorganization of the themes and for the first time created a small professional army based on his palace guards. His financial policy was also reasonable and left in the treasury a considerable amount of gold. Due to him, the arable land in the empire expanded and as a result of this the food became considerably cheaper.

Thus, in spite of the decline in all spheres of life, the capital also concentrated in itself the literary production of the empire, reduced in terms of volume. The existence of educated people, such as Theophanes, Stephen Deacon, Ignatius deacon, and of eminent erudites, such as John of Damascus, Tarasios, Theodore the Studite, Patriarch Nikephoros, Leo the Mathematician, etc., would have been impossible without the

educational centres and libraries within the city.[67] Due to the doctrine "one God, one emperor, one empire" and the continuous philosophy of its usual supremacy over all remaining ones, the borders of the empire continued to stretch beyond its political ones. And this means only one thing that is also proven by the following centuries – its rebirth, supremacy and immortality, standing steadily on its ancient heritage and century-old experience.

Due to all this and in spite of the decline in almost all spheres of the urban life during the "Dark Ages", Constantinople survived, adapted and continued to develop. It remained the most populated, the biggest and the most cultured city in the whole existing world of that time.

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Fig. 1

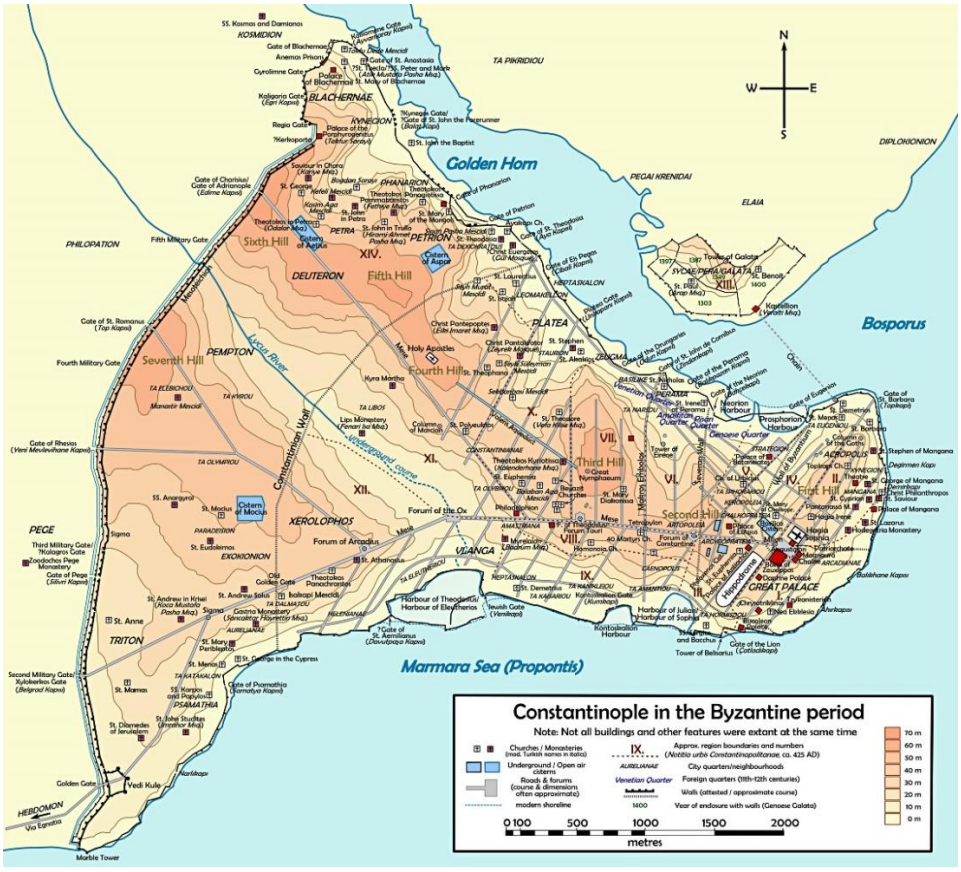

Golden Horn
Marmara Sea (Propontis)
Bosporus
Constantinople in the Byzantine period
Note: Not all buildings and other features were extant at the same time
metres

Fig. 2

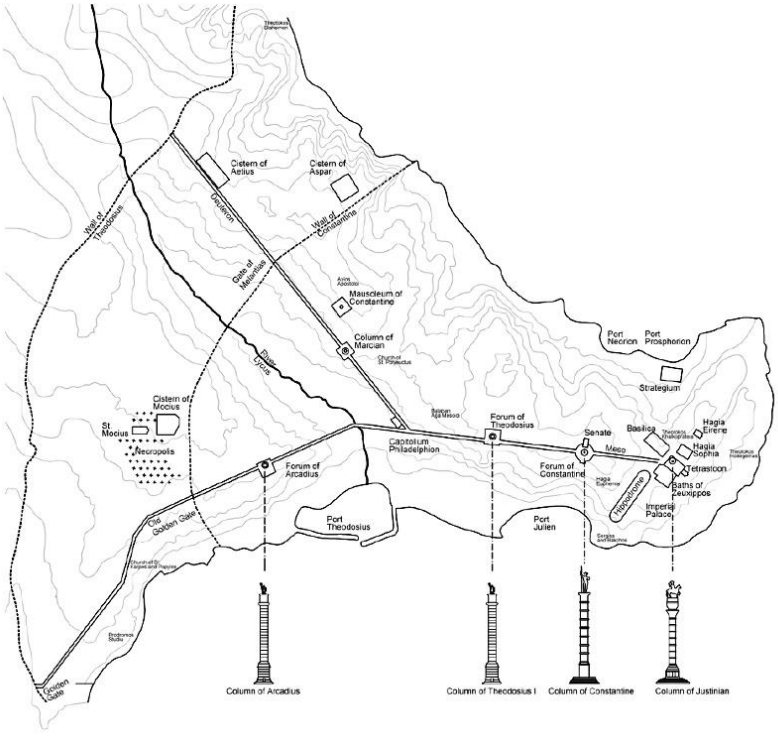

Cistern of Aetius
Cistern of Aspar
Wall of Theodosius
Constantine
Wall of Constantine
Gate of Mesonisia
Mausoleum of Constantine
Column of Marcian
Port Necron
Port Prosphoron
Strategium
Cistern of Mocius
St. Mocius
Necropolis
Forum of Arcadius
Capitolium Philadelphion
Forum of Theodosius
Senate
Basilica
Hagia Eirene
Hagia Sophia
Tetrastoon
Baths of Zeuxippos
Imperial Palace
Forum of Constantine
Milion
Mese
Old Golden Gate
Port Theodosius
Port Julien
Golden Gate
Column of Arcadius
Column of Theodosius I
Column of Constantine
Column of Justinian

Fig. 3



Fig. 4


Ravenna
Rome
Thessalonica
Constantinopole
Black Sea
Carthage
Antioch
Mediterranean Sea
Jerusalem
Alexandria
1. Exarchate of Ravenna
2. Venetia and Istria
3. Duchy of Rome
4. Duchy of Naples
5. Duchy of Calabria
6. Thema of Hellas
7. Thema of Thrace
8. Thema of Opsikion
9. Thema of Thrakesion
10. Thema of Anatolikon
11. Thema of Karabisianoi
12. Thema of Armeniakon
Constantly raided

Fig. 5

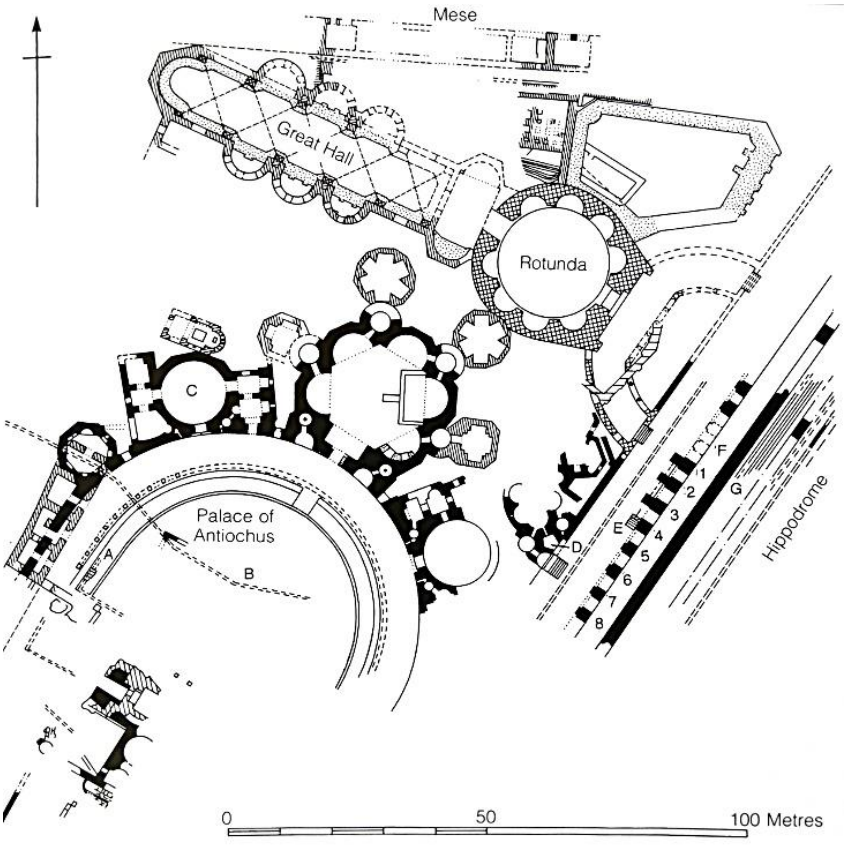

Mese
Great Hall
Rotunda
C
Palace of Antiochus
B
A
D
E
F
G
Hippodrome
0
50
100 Metres

Fig. 6



Fig. 7

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Settlement patterns north of the Lower Danube in the Early Middle Ages. Case study: Târgșoru Vechi area (Prahova County, Romania)

Bogdan Ciupercă, Cătălin Dîscă, Tudor Hila, Mirela Mihon, Cristian Mănăilescu, Alexandru Petre, Doru Păceșilă

Abstract: Important transformations in respect with the settlement patterns took place to the north of the Lower Danube between the 8th - 10th centuries AD. During this time span, marked by the decline of the Avar Khaganate and the ascension of the of Bulgarian Tsardom, there was both a growth in the number of settlements and a significant improvement in the quality and quantity of the archaeological inventory. Unfortunately, the research carried out so far has allowed rather to formulate hypotheses than to find satisfactory answers. Such, for example, three main hypotheses have been proposed to explain these transformations: 1) an increase of population; 2) a different way of exploiting the land or 3) a combination of these two.

Some clarifications and a significant amount of new data on the development and functioning of the settlements north of the Lower Danube in the early Middle Ages has been brought by the investigations carried out over the last years on the territory of Târgșoru Vechi village in Prahova County. Alongside solid evidence for the hypothesis of wandering settlements, these investigations are also pointing to a certain degree of planning and systematization, as well as the existence of an authority responsible for such tasks.

Key words: Lower Danube, Early Middle Ages, settlement patterns, wandering settlements, planning and systematization, social organization, radiocarbon dating

Резюме: Важни трансформации по отношение на моделите на заселване са извършени на север от Долния Дунав между 8-ми и 10-ти век сл. Хр. През този период от време, белязан от упадъка на Аварския каганат и възхода на българското царство, се наблюдава както нарастване на броя на селищата, така и значително подобрение в качеството и количеството на археологическия

материал. За съжаление, проведените досега изследвания позволиха по-скоро да се формулират хипотези, отколкото да се намерят задоволителни отговори. Така, например, са предложени три основни хипотези за обяснение на тези трансформации: 1) увеличаване на населението; 2) различен начин на експлоатация на земята или 3) комбинация от двете.

Някои пояснения и значително количество нови данни за развитието и функционирането на селищата на север от Долен Дунав през ранното средновековие внасят проучванията, проведени през последните години на територията на Търгшор Вечи в окръг Прахова. Наред със солидни доказателства за хипотезата за номадски селища, тези изследвания сочат и известна степен на планиране и систематизация, както и наличието на държавна власт, отговорна за подобни задачи.

General framework

To the north of the Lower Danube the time span between the 8th and 10th centuries AD has been treated in the specialized literature as a distinctive period from the perspective of the archaeological assemblages. From a cultural point of view this period is overlapping with the final stages of Romanian ethnogenesis, while from a political point of view it is marked by the decline of the Avar Khaganate and the accession of the Bulgarian Tsardom.[1]

During these centuries to the north of Lower Danube there was both an important growth in the number of settlements as well as a significant increase in the quality and quantity of the archaeological inventory. In this respect this time span contrasts with both the earlier and later periods, when a considerably smaller number of sites and a significantly smaller volume of archaeological material are known.[2]

Up to date more than 550 sites have been identified with finds dating broadly from the 8th to 10th centuries AD. The mapping of these findspots revealed that most of them are grouped in four large areas arranged from west to east as follows: 1) along the Danube (fig. 1/I); 2) on the middle and lower course of Vedea and Teleorman rivers (fig. 1/II); 3) between the lower course of Argeș river and the middle course

[1] Simeon Magister, 615, *apud* Fontes, II, 630–631; Leo Grammaticus, 231 *apud* Fontes, II, 650–653; Comșa 1960, 395–422; 1963, 413–438; Madgearu 1997, 194–197; Luca & Măndescu 2008, 43–70; Madgearu 2005, 103–120; Stepanov 2005, 152–161; Curta 2006, 173–204; Teodor 2006, 205–246; Fiedler 2008, 151–236; Madgearu 2008, 63–71; Sophoulis 2012, 117–119, 287–310; Makoldi 2014, 55–60; Kardaras 2018, 135–151; Curta 2022, 57–77; Komatarova-Balinova 2022, 40–61.

[2] Rusu *et al.* 2001, 40–41; Pascu *et al.* 2001, 146–148; Ioniță 2005, 41–54, 110–116; Ciupercă & Mirea 2010, 106–115; Ciupercă 2012, 361–372; Gáll *et al.* 2020, 139–170.

of Ialomița river (fig. 1/III); and 4) at the periphery of the Curvature Subcarpathians[3] (fig. 1/VI). However, it is difficult to say at this stage of research what factors determined the location of the settlements in these groups.

Actually, the research carried out so far has allowed rather to formulate hypotheses than to find satisfactory answers. For example, the considerable increase in the number of settlements and the volume of archaeological material in this period has been linked by some scholars with an increase of the population, by others with a different pattern of land use, and by some other scholars as a combination of the two. In any case, there is not enough evidence to substantiate any of these hypotheses, since only a few sites have been subject of extensive archaeological investigations.[4]

Results of the investigations in Târgșoru Vechi area

A number of clarifications and a significant amount of new data on the development and functioning of the settlements north of the Lower Danube in the early Middle Ages have been brought by the investigations carried out on the territory of Târgșoru Vechi village in Prahova County. Situated 15 kilometres to the west of Ploiești city, the village of Târgșoru Vechi is today well known in the literature due to the numerous discoveries from the area of the former medieval princely court (fig. 1; fig 2/3; fig 3/3). Systematic excavations have been carried out in this area since 1956; the investigated sites belong to various periods from the Neolithic up to the modern period. Among the most representative sites from this area are a Roman fort, a cemetery from the 3rd - 4th centuries AD, a princely medieval court and, of course, a medieval town responsible for the present name of the village.[5]

In the current state of research, in Târgșoru Vechi area, there are at least two major settlements dating from the 8th -10th centuries AD, one of these settlements being located in the area of the former medieval princely court mentioned above. Alongside this settlement known for several decades another one was recently discovered and investigated on the sites "Holcim gravel pit" (fig. 2/1; fig. 3/1) and "The forest Barrow" (fig. 2/2; fig. 3/2). Through rescue excavations was investigated an area of more than 7.2 ha. In any case, as the results of

[3] Luca & Măndescu 2008, 43–70; Ciupercă 2012, 361–372; Gáll *et al.* 2020, 139–170.
[4] Ciupercă 2009, 133–162; Ciupercă, 2012, 361–372; Gáll *et al.* 2020, 139–170.
[5] Diaconu 1965; 2003; Măgureanu *et al.* 2013, 91–106.

the excavations pointed out, the settlement covers actually a much larger area.[6]

The investigations on the above-mentioned sites started in 2016 when a mound at "The forest Barrow" was dug and continued in 2019, 2020 and 2022 at the "Holcim gravel pit". The investigations in the last-mentioned site, determined initially by the existence of another mound nearby, were necessary since a gravel pit was planned in this area. In these circumstances it was possible to carry out archaeological investigations over a very large area. These investigations revealed material from various periods, from the Bronze Age to the modern period, but the most substantial finds date from the 8th -10th centuries AD (pl. I).[7]

From a functional point of view, most archaeological features dating from the 8th-10th centuries AD investigated at "The forest Barrow" and "Holcim gravel pit" are represented by dwellings, more specifically pit-houses (pl. III; pl. IX/3, 4). The 44 such dwellings investigated so far are located in 2 distinct areas on both sides of a former watercourse which appeared on old maps as "Bularu brook" (pl. I).

These dwellings, consisting of a single room, were usually identified at depths between -0.5 - 0.6 meters from the present ground level. In plan these structures had generally a trapezoidal shape with slightly rounded corners, and measured between 3.5 and 4.5 meters. In depth, they measured on average between -0.3 - 0.4 meters from the identification level, but in some cases were somewhat deeper, reaching even in one case -1 meter from the identification level. In one of the corners was the fireplace, represented in many dwellings by the so-called "stone hearths". In a few cases, however (such as that of feature no. 30) there were also found fireplaces made out of clay plaster straight on the dwelling's floor (pl. III; pl. IX/3, 4).

Alongside the above-mentioned dwellings, there were also several funerary discoveries. Most of these, grouped in 2 distinct areas on the peripheries of the settlement are represented by inhumation graves in which individuals are laid on their backs on the west-east axis, with their arms extended over pelvis (Pl. I; Pl. IV/1). In the absence of a

[6] Frînculeasa *et al.* 2017b, 211–213; Ciupercă *et al.* 2020, 511–515; 2021, 519–523.

[7] Frînculeasa *et al.* 2017a, 9–58; Ciupercă *et al.* 2023, 663–665; Mihon *et al.* 2023, 182–187.

funerary inventory, radiocarbon dating was essential in assigning them to the 8th - 10th centuries AD settlement.

In 5 distinct areas, located as far as we can tell towards the periphery of the settlement, were also identified and investigated 12 craft kilns out of which 9 were specialized in pottery production (pl. I). From these kilns hundreds of fragments of pottery vessels were uncovered, as well as several pieces of bricks and ceramic pipes. Three of the kilns (Features nos. 215, 216 and 217) were housed in a building structure measuring 4.5 meters in breadth and 5.5 meters in length, two of the kilns (Features nos. 215 and 216) were even fuelled through the same stoking tunnel (pl. IV/2).

Beyond the limits of the excavations carried out at the "Holcim gravel pit" and "The forest Barrow" several other hectares were investigated in this area through fieldwalking. After some ploughing works that affected the soil up to a depth of -0.6 meters, dozens of agglomerations consisting of mud-bricks, charcoal, pottery fragments and ceramic pipes specific to the 8th - 10th centuries were outlined (pl. I).

Significant quantities of pottery were uncovered from both the kilns and the dwellings. The most frequent type was represented by slow wheel thrown oxidizing-fired pottery decorated with different patterns of incised lines and waves. This type of pottery is representative of the 8th - 10th centuries AD, found over a very large geographical area both to the north and the south of the Lower Danube (pl. V; pl. VI).[8]

In addition to the above-mentioned type of pottery, there were also identified numerous fragments of fast wheel thrown fine grey pottery (pl. VI/12, 14-16), as well as imported fast wheel thrown pottery covered with olive-green glaze (pl. VI/5; pl. VIII). These types of pottery were very likely imported from the core area of the Bulgarian Tsardom to the south of the Danube.[9]

Alongside pottery vessels from this site were also uncovered several other types of items, including bone tools, spindles, knife blades, arrowheads and ceramic pipes.

[8] Zaharia 1967, 79–93; Comșa 1979, 231–264; 1980, 323–339; Doncheva-Petkova 2007, 293–314; Petrova 2007, 315–339; Fiedler 2008, 151–236; Corbu 2013, 109–125; Hristova 2014, 77–82.

[9] Zaharia 1967, 79–93; Comșa 1978, 60–115; 1979, 231–264; 1980, 24, 323–339; Corbu 2013, 109–125; Doncheva-Petkova 2007, 293–314; Henning 2007, Tafel 4, Tafeln 10-12; Petrova 2007, 315–339; Fiedler 2008, 151–236; Hristova 2014, 77–82.

Among the most relevant finds from this settlement are undoubtedly the three hoards of pottery vessel and iron implements identified also towards the borders of the site. In the first hoard (Feature no. 44) were discovered 6 pottery vessels of very good quality, two lead ingots as well as numerous battle axes, ploughshares and plough coulters (pl. VII/2). In the second hoard (Feature no. 46), one pottery vessel of very good quality was discovered as well as numerous battle-axes, ploughshares, plough coulters and other different types of agricultural tools (Pl. VIII). In the third hoard (Feature no. 116) was identified a plough coulter and several other iron tools (pl. VII/1).

Dating the archeological finds from the Târgșoru Vechi area

Based on the archaeological inventory uncovered during the excavations, the settlements in Târgșoru Vechi have been broadly dated between the 8th - 10th centuries AD. However, for a better chronological assessment radiocarbon dating was used, so far around 30 ^{14}C dates are available (pl. IX/1, 2).[10] The radiocarbon dating was necessary since the inventory of many archaeological features consisted of only potshards and bones. Moreover, a significant number of features, including the inhumation graves, lacked any inventory that would provide a hint in respect with the chronological framework.[11]

The radiocarbon dating process was carried out on Type I collagen extracted from bones founded in various states of preservation. The experiments were conducted at RoAMS Laboratory from "Horia Hulubei" National Institute for Physics and Nuclear Engineering (IFIN-HH). The process started with a visual and microscopic evaluation of the bones followed by an acid-acid pretreatment according to the standard AA procedure. The Type I collagen was graphitized using the Automated Graphitization Equipment (Elementar -AGE3). The graphitized samples are then pressed into the targets for AMS measurement. ^{14}C analyses are performed on a 1MV Tandem accelerator mass spectrometer to obtain isotopic ratios $^{14}C/^{12}C$ and $^{13}C/^{12}C$.

The ^{14}C data not only confirmed the general chronological framework established on the basis of the archaeological inventory, but were instrumental for a detailed periodization.[12] Specifically, the

[10] Mihon *et al.* 2023, 182–187.
[11] Ciupercă *et al.* 2020, 511–515; 2021, 519–523; 2023, 663–665.
[12] Mihon *et al.* 2023, 182–187; https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html; Reimer *et al.* 2020, 725–757.

radiocarbon data revealed that, while the most finds west of Bularu brook are dated from the end of 7th century to the end of the 8th century, those to the east of Bularu brook are generally dated between the end of the 8th century and the first half of the 9th century (pl. IX/1, 2).

Observations and interpretations regarding the settlement patterns

As just mentioned above the discoveries from the "Holcim gravel pit" and "The forest Barrow" are located on either side of the former Bularu brook. This settlement pattern is found frequently on the sites dating from 8th - 10th centuries AD investigated to a larger degree to the north of the Lower Danube. To list just some examples, one could mention the settlements from Bucov,[13] Oltenița,[14] Mironești,[15] Curcani[16] and even that from Târgșoru Vechi situated in the area of the former medieval princely court (pl. II).[17] Under these circumstances, arises the question as to whether the settlements on the other sites were also located in an earlier phase on one of the banks of a watercourse and then "migrated", in a later phase, to the other bank. Such developments could have been determined by an environmental strategy

[13] Situated on either side of the Gârla Morii and Bucovel brooks; the "Rotari" point, Code RAN: 130794.01 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=130794.01; Code RAN: 130794.10; the point "La Morcovescu", Code RAN: 130794.10 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=130794.10; the "Tioca (Gârla Morii)" point, Code RAN: 130794.04 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=130794.04; the point "La Brezeanu II", Code RAN 130794.08 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=130794.08; Comșa 1978, 12, fig. 1.

[14] Situated on either side of the Coada Lupului valley; the "Coada lupului" point, Code RAN: 100629.03 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=100629.03; the point "Puțul de Cărămidă", Code RAN: 100629.09 - https://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=100629.09; Sâmpetru & Șerbănescu 1976, 241–270.

[15] Situated on either side of the Rachrii valley; the point "În Vale", Code RAN: 103390.02 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=103390.02, the point "Biserica Sfântul Nicolae", Code RAN: 103390.15 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=103390.15; the point "La sud de Malul Roșu", Code RAN: 103390.12 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=103390.12; Sâmpetru & Șerbănescu 1975, 241 – 270.

[16] Situated on either side of the Luica valley; the "Topilele (Balta Luica)" point, Code RAN:102428.01 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=102428.01; the point "Moară", Code RAN: 102428.02 - https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=102428.02.

[17] Situated on either side of the Leaotul brook; the point "La Mănăstire", Code RAN: 130927.01 - https:// ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=130927.01; Ciupercă 2013, 335, pl. I.

characterized by the phenomenon of the wandering settlements. This phenomenon, backed to some extent by the radiocarbon data from Târgșoru Vechi, has been proposed as one of the explanations for the large number of sites dating from this period.[18]

In respect with the general layout of the archaeological features at the "Holcim gravel pit" and "The forest Barrow" sites it stands out that many are arranged along several alignments that could be interpreted as a network of roads (pl. I). However, it should be mentioned that no actual roads were found during the excavations, as they were probably affected by the intensive agriculture practiced in the area. The arrangement of the pit-houses on either side of the fairly well aligned lines seems to suggest not only the route of the roads used at the time, but also a certain degree of planning and systematization, as well as the existence of an authority responsible for such tasks.

A planning activity can also be traced in relation with the craft areas. Thus the 12 kilns, which suggest that the crafts played a significant role within the settlement which was perhaps a centre producing for other neighbouring communities, are grouped in 5 points located to the borders of the settlement (pl. I).

The same is true of the burial spaces, which also seem to be organized in small groups of graves towards the borders of the settlement (pl. I). In this context we should also address the problem of the discrepancy between the large number of settlements and the small number of cemeteries characteristic for this period. This problem which has been raised for many decades, seems to have received some plausible explanation during the investigations from Târgșoru Vechi. Thus, on the one hand, this discrepancy can be determined by the stage of research, many of the points being known only from fieldwalking reports and small surveys. On the other hand, the practice of burying the deceased at very shallow depths probably led to the destruction of a considerable number of graves by agricultural works and subsequent interventions. Also, it should not be overlooked that the lack of burial inventory has long made it difficult to directly associate some necropolises with 8th-10th century settlements. At Târgșoru Vechi, as I already mentioned, it was only possible to associate the graves with the nearby settlements after radiocarbon dating.

Finally, in relation with the topography and planimetry of the "Holcim gravel pit" site, it is also worth mentioning that three hoards of

[18] Oltean 1979, 403–441; Teodor 1980, 125–126; Corbu 2006, 32–33, 74–76.

pottery vessel and iron implements were located, like the graves and craft kilns towards the borders of the settlement (pl. I). Linked with a depositional horizon that has not yet received a general accepted explanation, these hoards have been seen by some as a practice of hoarding valuable objects and by others as a possible form of ritual deposition.[19]

Final remarks

The investigations carried out so far in the area of Târșoru Vechi reveal for the period between 8th - 10th centuries a certain degree of social organization, the existence of some rules in respect with the development of the settlements and the presence of an authority responsible to implement such rules.

Although the investigations from Târșoru Vechi do not absolutely confirm the hypothesis of wandering settlements, they brought solid evidence for it.

At the same time the investigations from Târșoru Vechi brought some plausible answers to the question why the number of cemeteries from the period between 8th-10th centuries is starkly lower than that of settlements.

Finally, one can argue that the period between the 8th and 10th century AD is marked by a higher volume of archaeological inventory, a growth in the number of sites and a higher degree of complexity in respect with the settlements' planning and organization. These achievements, which chronologically overlap with the control of the Bulgarian Tsardom to the north of the Danube, are pointing towards a climate of stability and development.

Acknowledgements

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[19] Canache & Curta 1994, 179–221; Henning 2007, Tafel 9; Ciupercă 2010, 271–288; Dragotă 2015, 331–341.

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Fig. 2. Points with discoveries from the 8th - 10th centuries AD in Târgșoru Vechi area (DEM) (map: C. Dîscă).

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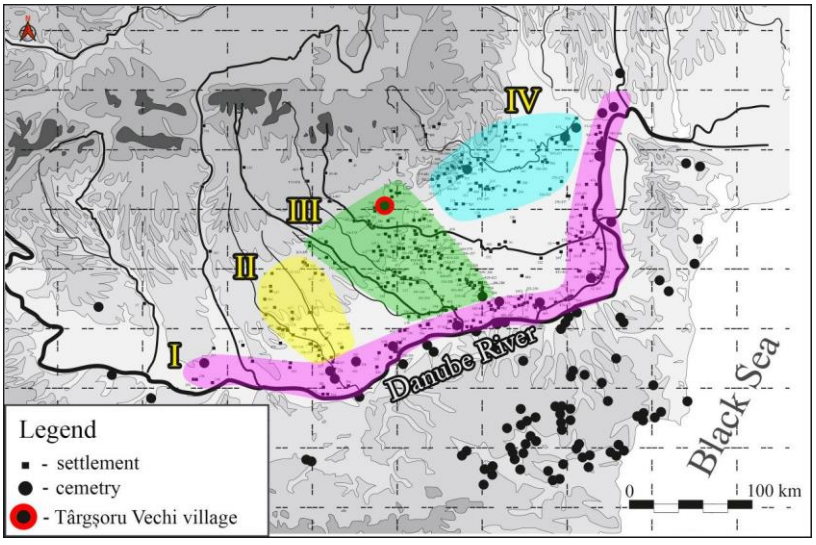

IV
III
II
I
Danube River
Black Sea
Legend
- settlement
- cemetry
- Târgşoru Vechi village
0
100 km

Fig. 1.

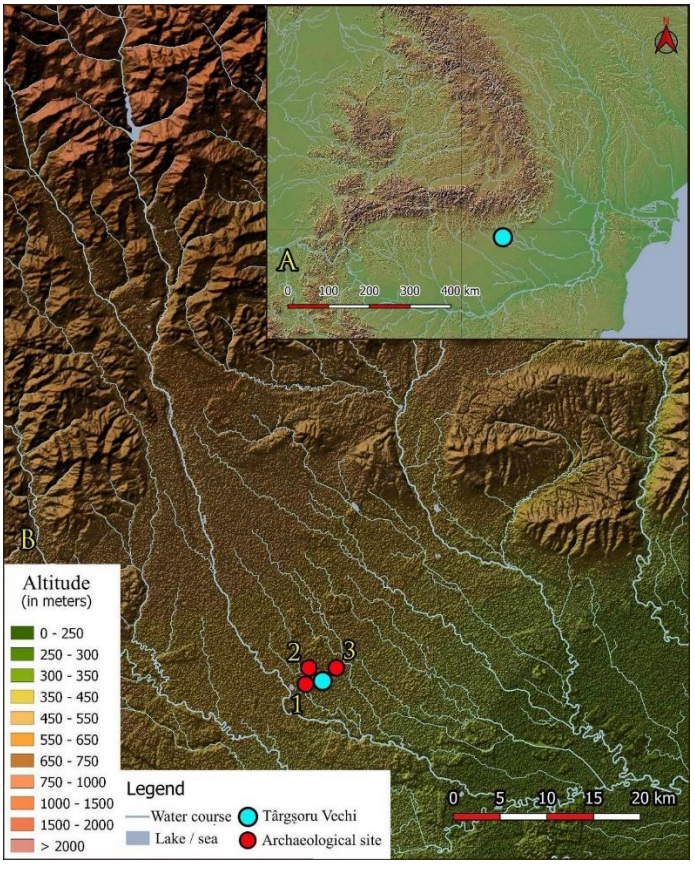

A
0 100 200 300 400 km
B
Altitude
(in meters)
0 - 250
250 - 300
300 - 350
350 - 450
450 - 550
550 - 650
650 - 750
750 - 1000
1000 - 1500
1500 - 2000
> 2000
Legend
Water course
Lake / sea
Târgşoru Vechi
Archaeological site
1
2
3
0 5 10 15 20 km

Fig. 2

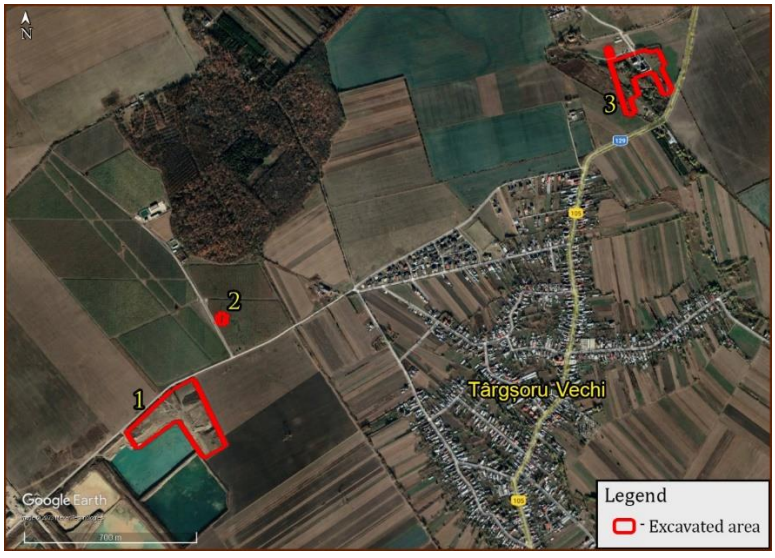
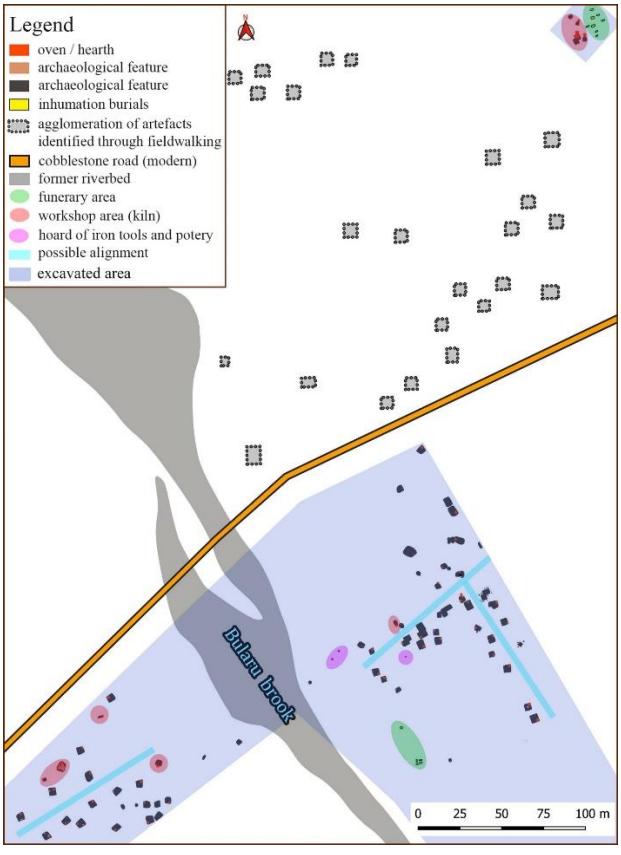
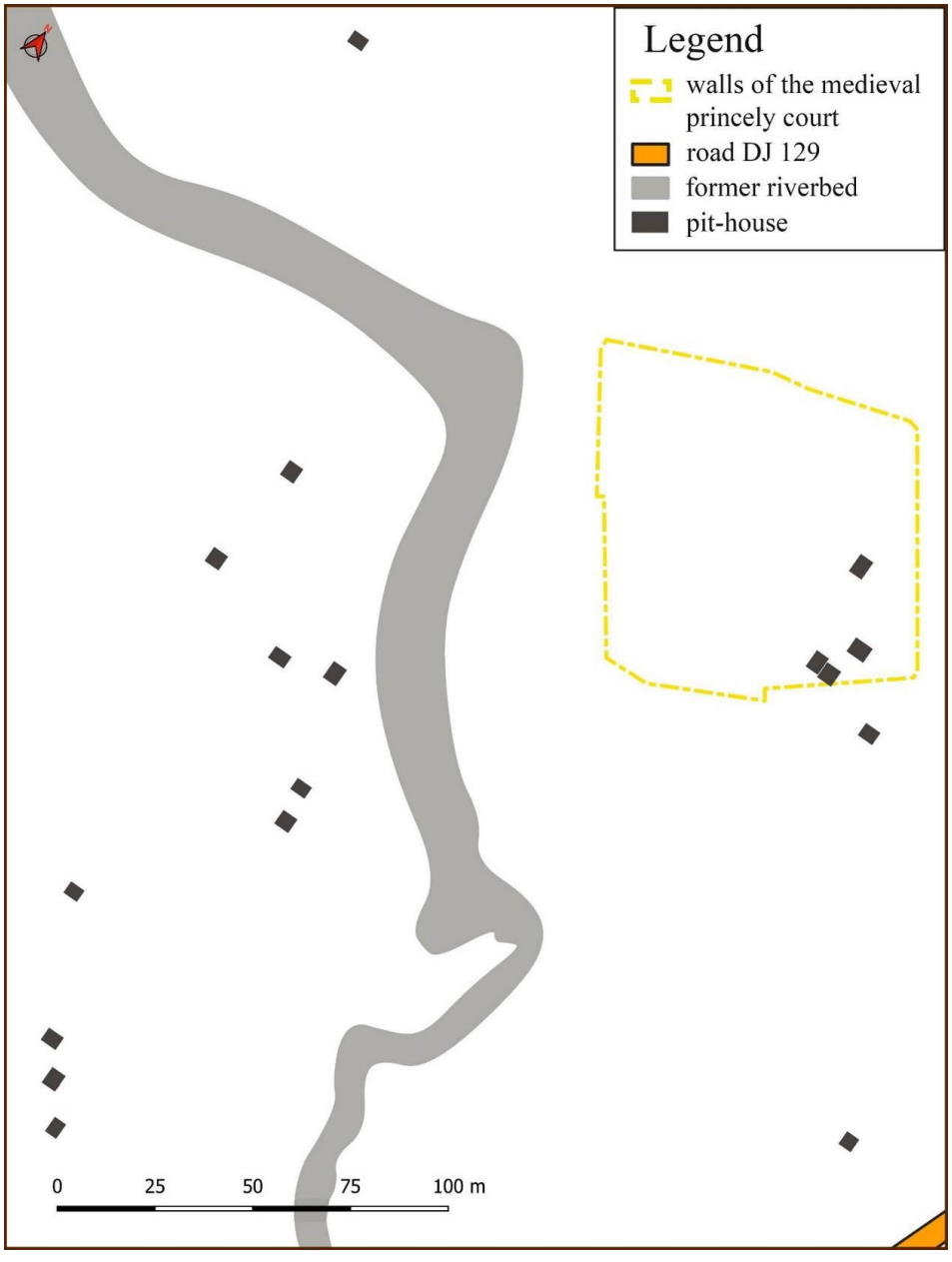

N
1
2
3
Târgșoru Vechi
Google Earth
Legend
Excavated area

Fig. 3


Legend
oven / hearth
archaeological feature
archaeological feature
inhumation burials
agglomeration of artefacts identified through fieldwalking
cobblestone road (modern)
former riverbed
funerary area
workshop area (kiln)
hoard of iron tools and potery
possible alignment
excavated area
Buharu brook
0 25 50 75 100 m

Pl. I


Legend
walls of the medieval princely court
road DJ 129
former riverbed
pit-house
0
25
50
75
100 m

Pl. II



1



2

Pl. III

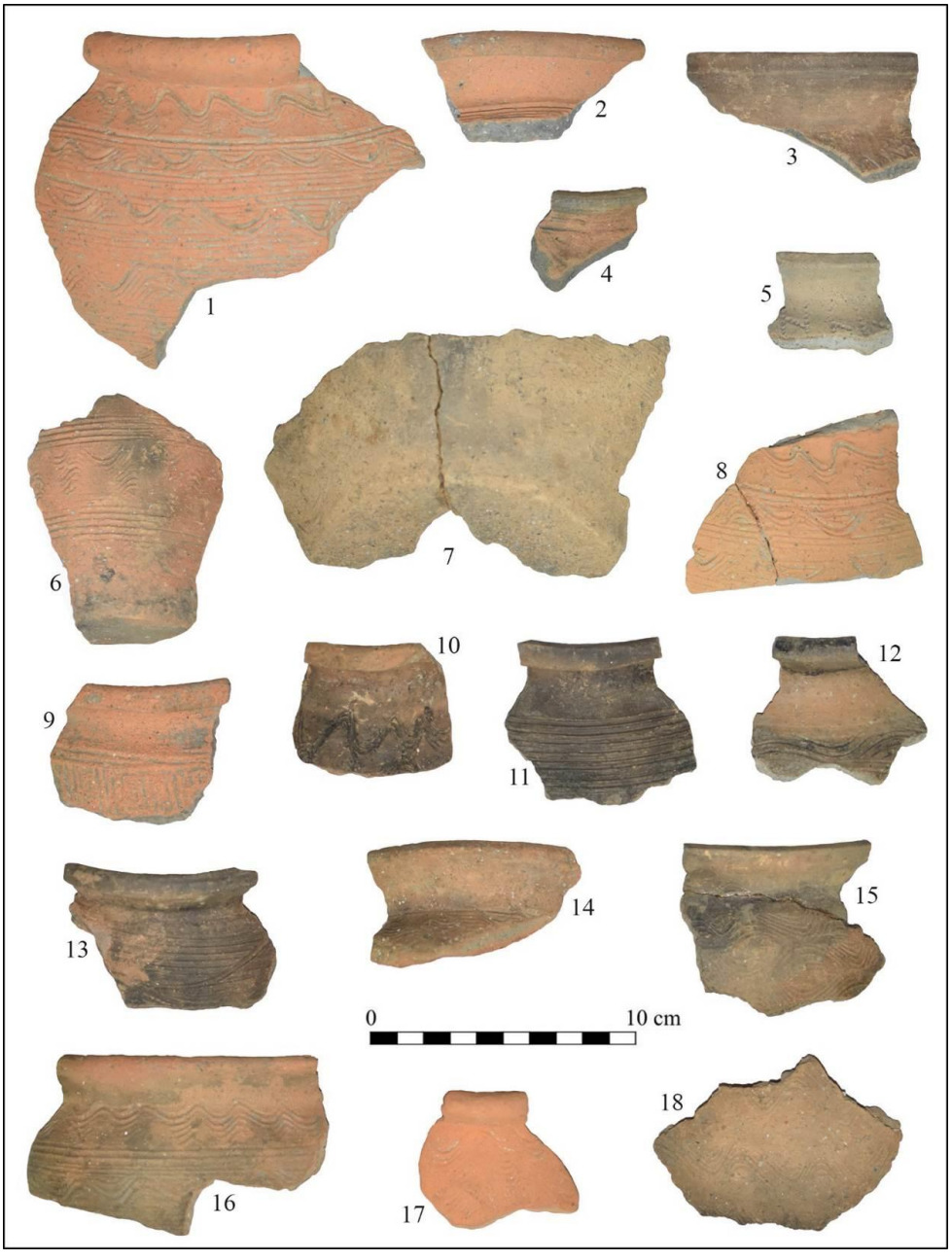


1



2

Pl. IV



Pl. V



Pl. VI



1



2

Pl. VII

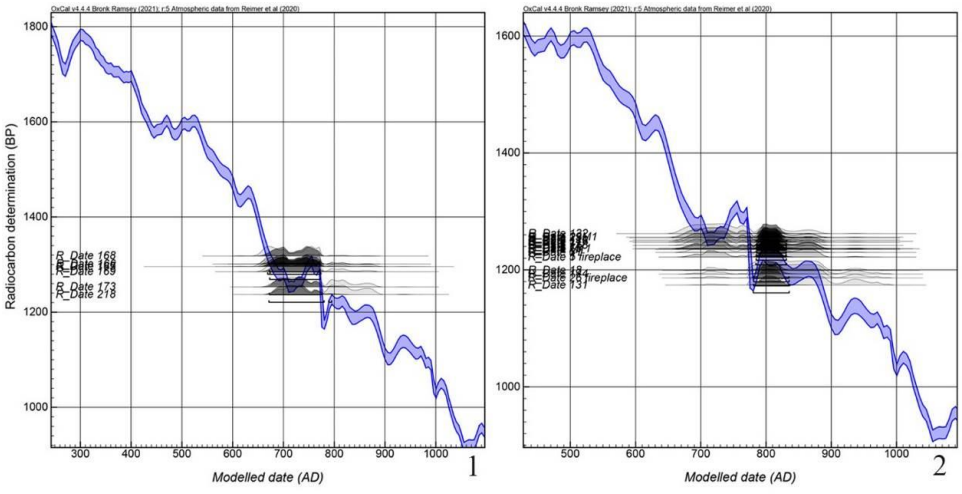


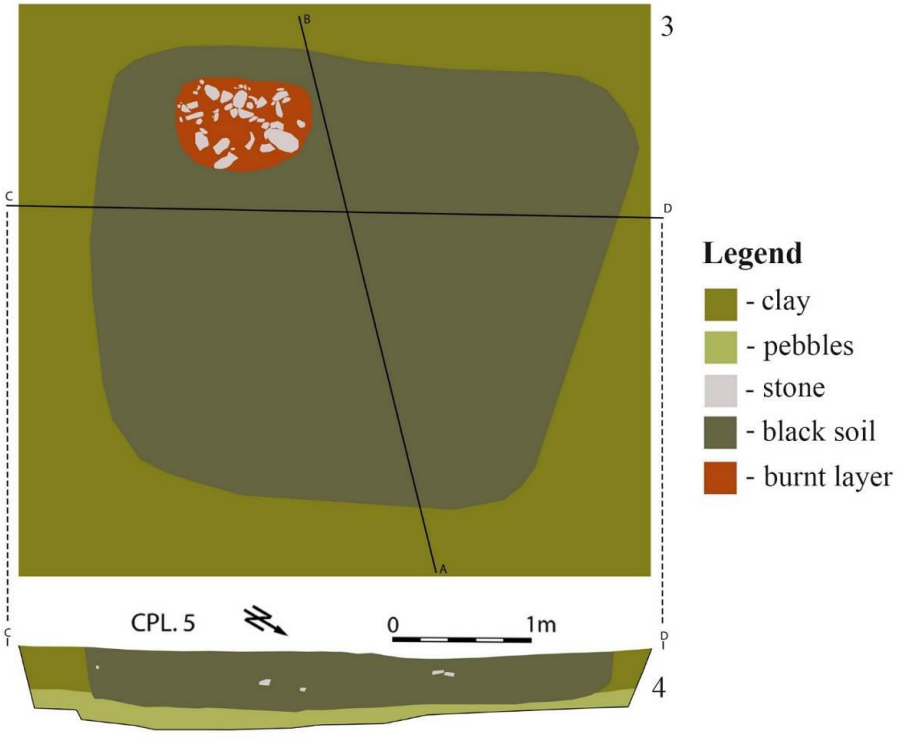
1



2

Pl. VIII


Radiocarbon determination (BP)
Modelled date (AD)
1
2


3
4
A
B
C
D
CPL. 5
0
1m
Legend
- clay
- pebbles
- stone
- black soil
- burnt layer

Pl. IX

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Aspects regarding the early medieval habitation in the small enclosure of Hârșova fortress

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Abstract: This paper presents aspects related to the early medieval settlement within the small enclosure of the fortress at Hârșova (Constanța County, Romania). The small enclosure represents the fortification built on the right bank of the Danube after 971 AD, following the reintegration of Dobrudja under the administration of the Byzantine Empire, with the role of protecting the territory and the new frontiers. Probably, in Hârșova, the construction of a new enclosure was determined by its location at the point where the Danube meets the Borcea branch, near the Ialomița Lake, next to the most important crossing point from Dobrudja to Muntenia. From the old Roman fort of Carsium, the new enclosure occupied only a small area on a rocky plateau, which provided it with a naturally fortified, dominant position and the ability to oversee a large distance. Its small size, compared to the late Roman and medieval fortresses, earned it the name "small enclosure".

Archaeological research has revealed that the Byzantine enclosure has its walls and the tower on the north side built on rock, and that for their construction, ground preparation was done, consisting of leveling, in the second half of the 10th century. The early medieval settlement at Hârșova citadel dates from after 971 AD and continues until the end of the 11th century.

The focus of this work is on the results of archaeological research from 2007-2012, which remained mostly unpublished. These findings come from the SIA section located within the small enclosure. Alongside information regarding daily life, these findings have revealed that trade played a significant role in the development of the settlement. Artifacts originating from workshops in the northern Black Sea region (glazed clay eggs, jasper spindle whorls) or from centers near Constantinople and the Balkan Peninsula (amphorae, micaceous ceramic, bronze objects) have been discovered.

Key words: Hârșova, fortress, small enclosure, archaeological research, artifacts

Резюме: В статията са представени аспекти, свързани с ранносредновековното селище в рамките на малкото заграждѐние на крепостта

в Хършова (окръг Констанца, Румъния). Малкото заграждение представлява укрепление, построено на десния бряг на река Дунав след 971 г. след повторното присъединяване на Добруджа към Византийската империя, с цел защита на територията и новите граници. Вероятно в Хършова изграждането на ново заграждение се определя от местоположението му на мястото, където Дунав среща ръкава Борча, близо до езерото Яломица, до най-важния пресечен пункт от Добруджа към Мунтения. От старата римска крепост Карсиум новото заграждение заема само малка площ върху скалисто плато, което му осигурява естествено укрепена, доминираща позиция и възможност да наблюдава голямо разстояние. Неговите малки размери, в сравнение с късноримските и средновековни крепости, са му спечелили името "малкото укрепление".

Археологическите проучвания разкриват, че стените на византийската ограда и кулата от северната страна са изградени върху скала и че за изграждането им е извършена подготовка на терена, изразяваща се в изравняване, през втората половина на 10 век. Ранното средновековно селище в цитаделата Хършова датира от след 971 г. и продължава до края на 11 век.

Фокусът на тази работа е върху резултатите от археологически проучвания от 2007-2012 г., които останаха в по-голямата си част непубликувани. Тези открития идват от секцията SIA, разположена в малкото заграждение. Наред с информацията за ежедневието, тези открития показват, че търговията е играла значителна роля в развитието на селището. Открити са артефакти, произхождащи от работилници в Северното Черноморие (глазирани глинени яйца, ясписови вретена) или от центрове в близост до Константинопол и Балканския полуостров (амфори, керамика, бронзови предмети).

The small enclosure of the fortress at Hârșova was built in the context of the economic, political, and strategic-military concerns of the Byzantine Empire to maintain control and influence over the region between the Danube and the Black Sea after it came back under its administration (post 971 AD). To protect the territory and exercise better control over the new frontiers, an extensive program of reusing and rebuilding old Roman-era fortifications on the right bank of the Danube[1] and constructing new ones was deemed necessary and carried out in the last quarter of the 10th century and the beginning of the following century. Likely, the construction of a new, robust enclosure at Hârșova was determined by its location at the point of contact between the Danube River and the Borcea branch, near the Ialomița Swamp, close to the most important crossing point from Dobrudja to Muntenia (fig. 1). The new Byzantine enclosure occupied only a small area situated on a rocky peak, which provided it with a dominant,

[1] Ciobanu 1970, 25; Teodor 1981, 54; Baraschi 1991, 138; Panait *et al*. 1995/1996, 121; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2009, 423–424; Damian 2015, 228.

naturally well-fortified position and the ability to oversee a distance of several kilometers (fig. 2).

The new archaeological research conducted in 2020 revealed that the Byzantine enclosure (also known as the "small enclosure" because it has the smallest surface area compared to the Roman and late medieval fortifications) has its walls and the tower on the northern side constructed on the southern part, on the rock,[2] which appeared at a depth of 3.98 meters next to the tower (on the north, the archaeological excavation stopped higher). For their construction, the ground was prepared by leveling it in some squares up to a height of about 2 meters above the rock, which was deposited over the walls of a Roman building. This consisted of well-compacted yellow-brown soil, which included numerous Roman ceramic fragments (4th-6th centuries) but also early medieval ones (quantitatively less than the Roman ones), dated to the second half of the 10th century. The latter highlights the chronological moment when the ground was prepared for the construction of the northern part of the small enclosure. The new fortified perimeter follows a quadrilateral plan with sides of about 76 meters to the east, 86 meters to the west, and 80 meters to the north,[3] on the southern side, approximately 90 meters in length, there is no wall, as it was naturally defended by the very high and steep rock facing the Danube.

The dominant and naturally fortified position highlights that the strategic factor played a crucial role in choosing the location for the new fortification. Part of the line of fortifications whose main role was to protect the right bank of the Danube, the new citadel needed to withstand attacks from populations coming from the northern Pontic territories or other potential enemies north of the river. In this regard, for effective defense, the Byzantine administration supplemented the protection provided by the geographical features with walls measuring 3.70-4.40 meters in thickness,[4] protected by massive towers placed at the corners and along the sides,[5] with the exterior surface made of large, rectangular shaped blocks, separated by rows of bricks, and the core constructed from various-sized boulders and a tough mortar mixture mixed with charcoal and broken pieces of bricks. The

[2] Talmațchi *et al*. 2021, 416.
[3] Panait *et al*. 1995/1996, 124.
[4] Panait *et al*. 1995/1996, 124; Talmațchi 1998, 169.
[5] Barnea & Ștefănescu 1971, 80; Mănucu-Adameșteanu 2001, 45.

foundations and elevation were reinforced with wooden tie rods placed longitudinally and transversely, as evidenced by the preserved imprints.[6] In two of the holes, reinforcement actions were observed in 2020 using iron tie rods (bars and pegs) that passed through the wooden beam, also anchored at one end in the masonry.[7] Inside the tower on the north side, a few steps made of large stone slabs are still preserved.

The first systematic archaeological excavations at the Hârșova fortress were conducted by Victor Brătulescu in 1939. Together with Grigore Florescu, he returned to the site in 1943. After the 1939 excavation, V. Brătulescu conducted a study on Hârșova,[8] however, this study was based on older fortuitous discoveries, information from foreign travelers' accounts, and general historical information about Dobrudja, leaving the presentation of the archaeological research results from the summer of 1939 for future work,[9] but the announced study did not see the light of day. The results of the second campaign in 1943 were presented in a limited report.[10] There is information about stratigraphy, concluding with a brief recommendation, probably addressed to those who wished to undertake the challenge of researching this site: "...systematic excavations in Hârșova cannot be carried out without the necessary equipment, especially wagons and Decauville railway lines".[11]

The archaeologists from Constanța, Andrei Aricescu and Mihai Bucovală, resumed research in Hârșova, but two decades later, in 1963. There was only one campaign and one dedicated study, mostly focused on the archaeological material from the early Middle Ages (10th-12th centuries), which was the best-represented period in the discoveries made that year.[12]

Another three decades passed until the next archaeological interventions took place there. In 1993, the fourth stage of research was initiated, starting as a student experimental excavation under the coordination of medieval archaeologist Panait I. Panait.[13] With

[6] Panait *et al*. 1995/1996, 124; Talmațchi 1998, 169.
[7] Talmațchi *et al*. 2021, 416.
[8] Brătulescu 1940, 3–24.
[9] Brătulescu 1940, 24.
[10] Florescu 1946, 179–180.
[11] Florescu 1946, 180.
[12] Aricescu 1971, 351–370.
[13] Panait *et al*. 1995/1996, 122.

relatively frequent changes in the team members, archaeological excavations continue to this day, accumulating consecutive campaigns of varying scale and numerous studies.[14]

Systematic archaeological research is supplemented by an almost six-month campaign of preventive archaeological excavation conducted from June to November 2020. This was done in the context of a project for the restoration, conservation, and cultural-touristic development of the site, which also included the tower on the northern side of the small enclosure.[15] This provided us with the opportunity to continue research in section SIA, measuring 14x5 meters, which was opened in 2007. It expands to the west of the main section SI (oriented north-south), first initiated by A. Aricescu and then continued by P. I. Panait and C. Nicolae. It is delimited to the north by the small enclosure and to the south by a wall from a medieval period (postdating the 11th century). The research conducted in this area from 2007 to 2012 had reached a depth of 1.75 meters near the tower and 2.50 meters in the higher part of the terrain, in square 6. The preventive archaeological research carried out at these levels recorded 12 new early medieval complexes, mainly consisting of dwellings but also pits with various features.

Since we are still reliant on the results of older archaeological research from 2007-2012, this present work will primarily focus on those findings.

Although the surface area of section SIA is only 28 square meters (fig. 3/1), it has particular importance in the research of the Hârșova fortress. It is located inside the small enclosure, in an area where the archaeological deposits reach a height of 3.98 meters. In comparison, in the southern part of the main section SI, facing the Danube, the rock appears at a depth of 0.40 meters from the current ground level.[16] Additionally, its proximity to the small enclosure provided an opportunity to study its foundations down to the rock layer in 2020.

During the period from 2007 to 2012, archaeological excavations focused primarily on the Ottoman period levels. Of interest for the early medieval period are two dwellings and artifacts discovered in the layer.

[14] Bugoi *et al*. 2015, 296–301; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2016a, 121–142; Nicolae 2016, 49–84; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2017, 271–285.
[15] Talmațchi *et al*. 2021, 416; Șova 2021, 58.
[16] Panait *et al*. 1995/1996, 127.

The first one is a surface dwelling, Complex 1/2008, which was discovered at a depth of 1.60 m. It was partially investigated because the eastern part was within the perimeter of section SI, researched about 15 years earlier by Panait I. Panait and Arestide Ștefănescu. The preserved surface of the dwelling, delimited by a row of stones and holes for posts, measured 3.50x2.70 m (fig. 3/2). On the northern side, near the row of stones, and on the western side (where we assume the entrance was located marked by a worn stone slab) and towards the southwest corner, traces of burned beams from the upper structure of the dwelling were preserved. The yellow clay floor was intersected in the northwest corner by a late pit. On the northeast side, an arrangement of Roman period paving slabs with a layer of fired clay above and a remaining wall made of stones and clay (fired at the time of discovery) indicated the location and type of the hearth installation.

The inventory of Complex 1/2008 was quite rich and included, along with numerous pottery fragments, a grindstone, a conical clay weight, spindle whorls made of bone and clay, and a Byzantine coin from the reign of Emperor Roman III Argyros (1028-1034), class B.[17]

Ceramics found in the dwelling were mostly made on the slow wheel, using common clay and kaolinitic clay, and were fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. The most represented type of pottery was the pot without handles, alongside which there were a few bowls (one made of kaolinitic clay and one made of common clay with sand), jugs, and amphorae. The pots without handles and bowls were ornamented using incision techniques with horizontal lines, sometimes associated with lines in a wavy pattern, alveoli, bundles of oblique lines, and notches in the shoulder area. Some of the vessels were decorated solely with dentate wheel impressions covering the entire exterior surface, possibly preceded by a wavy line incised in the shoulder area.

The jug is represented by fragments from two vessels made on a fast wheel, featuring smooth surfaces and thin walls (with the exception of thickened areas on the curved parts) covered with a golden micaceous slip.[18] They were fired in an oxidizing atmosphere, acquiring a light brick-red hue as a result of the firing process. Considering their rarity in the Dobrudja discoveries, we will provide a brief presentation of each of them in the following sections.

[17] Talmațchi 2009, 118; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2016b, 131.
[18] Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2011, 104–105.

From the first jug (fig. 4/1), fragments have been preserved, originating from the lower part of the vessel, including the base, body, and part of the handle. This jug was made from clay with sporadic traces of crushed shells and was fired thoroughly, except for the thicker areas where, towards the interior and in the cracks, the wall has a grayish tint. The preserved walls have a thickness of 5-7 mm and feature grooves on the exterior. The base, with a diameter of 14 cm and a thickness of 6-10 mm, bears traces of the cord used to remove the vessel from the fast wheel. The handle was flattened. The vessel was covered with golden slip over the entire surface, including the base.

From the second jug, two fragments have been preserved, originating from the neck and the base (fig. 4/2-3). The first fragment features a rib obtained through modeling. The second fragment is a ring-shaped base. They were made from clean clay. The neck fragment has a thickness of 4-5 mm, except in the ribbed area where it reaches 8 mm. The base has a diameter of 9 cm and a thickness of 3-4 mm. Like the previous jug, the entire exterior surface was covered with a golden slip.

Probably from the same jug but with an almost square horizontal section (quadrilobate), there is a glazed fragment. It was made on a fast wheel, from paste with sporadic small white limestone granules, fired in a reducing atmosphere, and has a thickness of 8-9 mm. In the lobed part, it was decorated with a diamond shape, each corner featuring a circle with a dot in the middle, and at the bottom, there is a band with three grooves (fig. 4/4). After creating the incised decoration, the exterior surface of the jug was covered with glaze, which, after firing, turned shiny green-olive. This fragment is similar to one found in the Danube Island fortress of Păcuiul lui Soare (in the 11th century layer).[19] It is not the only one with glaze found in this dwelling; also coming from here is a handle on which a depression was made with a finger[20] (fig. 4/5).

The amphorae are represented by two fragmentary vessels, one of the spheroidal type and one of the pyriform type with a collar.[21] From the first one, the upper part is preserved, made of clean, high-quality clay, and fired thoroughly, with a uniform reddish-orange color. It has a short neck, a narrow mouth (with a diameter of 0.082

[19] Diaconu & Vîlceanu 1972, 90, fig. 34/1.
[20] Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2017, 275–277, fig. 1/2, 26.
[21] Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2016b, 131.

m), and the lip is slightly turned outward (fig. 4/6). The massive, arched, small, and circular handles, circular in section, start from the short neck area and stop on the shoulder of the vessel. On the exterior surface of the amphora, horizontal grooves covered with yellowish slip can be observed, and it has an incised mark on the shoulder after firing.

For the second type, we have a portion of the shoulder of a vessel made from clay with rare small micro-inclusions and traces of plant material, fired thoroughly (except for the thickened area at the base of the handle), in a reddish-brown color. It has four grooves at the top, cut by a vertical incised line before firing, and a cream-colored slip on the exterior surface (fig. 4/7).

The inventory of this dwelling is notable, especially due to the presence of vessels with micaceous slip. Thanks to these vessels, the settlement within the small enclosure at Hârșova can be included on the limited map of similar findings in Dobrudja, such as Garvăn-Dinogetia[22] (Tulcea County), Nufăru[23] (Tulcea County), Capidava[24] (Constanța County) and Păcuiul lui Soare[25] (Constanța County). In all these sites, vessels with micaceous slip are very few compared to the rest of the ceramic material. In some cases, the vessels have been reconstructed based on analogies, or nearly complete examples have been discovered. For example, at Garvăn-Dinogetia, a jug is uncovered and the upper part of a handled pot; at Nufăru, three jugs were identified; at Capidava, a cup with handle, a provisioning vessel, and a jug spout were found; and at Păcuiul lui Soare, most of the fragments come from jugs. Vessels with micaceous slip have also appeared in Bulgaria, in the city-forts in the central-northeastern part, and in settlements south of the Balkan Mountains.[26]

Trying to reconstruct the vessels from Hârșova based on analogies, it is assumed that in the first case, it is a jug with an ovoid body, straight bottom, and a flattened handle, probably with a rib. Analogies can be found at Nufăru,[27] Păcuiul lui Soare[28] and Plovdiv.[29]

[22] Ștefan *et al*. 1967, 272–274, fig. 164/4, 5 (for the vessels discovered at Garvăn-Dinogetia I. Barnea mentions a "silver varnish", 272, 274).
[23] Baraschi 1989, 190–191, fig. 5-6; Damian *et al.* 2007, 118.
[24] Florescu 1961, 201; Baraschi 1989, 189.
[25] Diaconu & Vîlceanu 1972, 113–115.
[26] Dzhambov 1960, 193, fig. 2; Gatev 1985, 92–97; Baraschi 1989, 191–192; Borisov 1989, 215–220; Koleva 2018, 153–164; Talmațchi *et al*. 2021, 323–327.
[27] Baraschi 1989, 191, fig. 5.

In the second case, it is observed that the two fragments come from the same type of vessel: a medium-sized jug with a single handle, whose upper end started from the middle of the neck where there was a rib. The bottom of these jugs could be ringed. Analogies can be found at Păcuiul lui Soare.[30]

Based on the inventory, Complex 1/2008 can be assigned to the second quarter of the 11th century.

The second one is also a surface dwelling, Complex 1/2010, which was discovered at a depth of 2.2-2.27 m, relative to the current ground level, and had an area of 3.30x3.80 m. The southeast corner was cut by section SI. The dwelling had a yellow clay floor, and the walls, with a thickness of 0.50-0.54 m, had a stone foundation embedded in yellow earth.[31] Three postholes were identified (in the middle of the north, west, and south sides), with the role of supporting the superstructure of the dwelling. In the central-southern area, slightly towards the southwest corner, there was an oven. It had an oval shape, with an interior measuring 1.04x1.20 m, accentuated by the extension towards the mouth, which was 0.15 m long (fig. 5). The walls of the oven were constructed from stones and fragmented bricks, covered with a layer of yellow clay. On the interior, the fired clay retained fingerprints from the time of construction, and on the exterior, the clay was carefully smoothed. The oven's mouth and the upper part of the walls, which leaned inward and had a rounded edge, were also fashioned from clay, as revealed by several pieces found in its fill (fig. 5/2-3). The opening at the top was approximately 0.50-0.60 m wide. The reconstructed height of the walls was about 0.30 m, with a thickness of 0.20–0.25 m at the base, 0.10 m at the top (narrowing to 0.04 m at the rounded edge), and 0.28–0.30 m at the mouth. The oven had two phases, with repairs made to the mouth during the later phase. In the first phase (the older one), the oven's mouth had an opening of 0.27 m and was located slightly inward compared to the mouth of the later phase. The hearth was arranged on a layer of small and medium-sized gravel, broken bricks, and ceramics, with the ceramics sometimes stacked in two rows in height. In the later phase, the oven's mouth had an opening of

[28] Diaconu & Vîlceanu 1972, 113–114, fig. 49/3,5.
[29] Dzhambov 1960, 193, fig. 2.
[30] Diaconu & Vîlceanu 1972, 113–114, fig. 49/2. Here they specify that these jugs had a "probable height of 0.30-0.35 m, a maximum diameter of approximately 0.15-0.18 m, and a bottom diameter of 0.08-0.10 m".
[31] Talmațchi 2011, 46; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2016a, 135.

0.21 m, and the hearth, which had turned reddish-brown due to repeated firings, was arranged on a layer of ceramics, small gravel, and yellow clay. Altogether, the hearth was 12.5 cm thick.

Several pots without handles have been reconstructed from the ceramic fragments found in the oven hearths (fig. 6). These vessels were made on a slow wheel, using common and kaolinitic clay, and they were fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. They were decorated with incised horizontal and wavy lines or indentations made with a serrated wheel.

In addition to pottery, the inventory of Complex 1/2010 also includes a fragmented iron knife found in the oven fill, two 5th century coins, one of which was embedded in the clay of the oven wall, and a coin from the reign of emperors Basil II - Constantine VIII (976-1028), Class A2, Variant 24,[32] found in the floor clay to the northwest of the oven.

The dominant position, the proximity to the Danube River, the presence of Lake Ialomița, and the ford for crossing the Danube ensured that the fortified settlement played an important role both in the political-military life[33] of the Lower Danube region and in the economic sphere. This is evident from the discovery of artifacts that arrived here through trade or were brought by individuals who visited the area occasionally, and whose parental workshops were located in more distant regions.

This is the case of the glazed clay egg that was discovered at the same level as Complex 1/2008 but in a layer 1.30 meters south of the dwelling (fig. 7/1). It is made of clay with fine grained black sand and was fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. The exterior surface is glazed and decorated with yellow-green accolades on a brown background.[34] The height of the glazed clay egg is 4.75 cm, and the maximum diameter is 3.60 cm. It has slight unevenness on the surface, and at the thicker end, it has a small hole. Inside, it contains a small ball that makes noise when shaken. Based on analogies and the archaeological context in which it was discovered, it is dated to the 11th century. In the Istro-Pontic territory, glazed clay eggs have also been found at Garvăn-Dinogetia, both within the fortified settlement and in the *extramuros* area (in the layers dating from the 11th century and the

[32] Mănucu-Adameșteanu 2017, 554–555.
[33] Talmațchi 1998, 163; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2009, 421.
[34] Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2017, 278.

first half of the 12th century),[35] in the settlement[36] and in the early medieval necropolis at Isaccea, Tulcea County (the second half of the 11th century),[37] in the settlement of Nufăru, Tulcea County, in the early medieval levels[38] and in the fortress on the island Păcuiul lui Soare.[39] Glazed clay eggs have a wide distribution area,[40] which extends from Poland to the Caucasus, from Sweden to Bulgaria, and the workshops where they were produced have been discovered in Kiev and its vicinity.[41]

From the habitation level, five bronze appliques were found, four of them for belts and one for textiles. Two of these were discovered during the preventive archaeological research in 2020, but given their small number, we will present them together.

The first one is a heart-shaped applique with a shield-like appearance, featuring a heart-shaped cut at the base flanked by two thorns, a turned border, and two outward-facing bulbs. In the central part of the piece, more pronounced, there is an undecorated medallion delimited by a pearl border. It was made of bronze through casting, and on the back, it retains two attachment nails: preserved height = 1.82 cm; l = 1.9 cm (fig. 7/2).

The second one is a heart-shaped applique with a shield-like appearance, featuring two bulbs and two thorns at the base, a turned border, and three outward-facing bulbs. In the central part of the piece, slightly pronounced, there is an undecorated medallion delimited by a smooth border. It was made of bronze through casting, and on the back, it has three attachment nails: h = 1.72 cm; l = 1.96 cm (fig. 7/3).

The third piece is similar to the applique presented above. Its dimensions are: h = 1.7 cm; l = 1.93 cm (fig. 7/4).

These appliques were discovered in 2009, in squares 4-5, at a depth of 1.60-2 m. They have the same appearance, and they appear to represent a set. Analogies for them can be found at Adamclisi[42] (the

[35] Ștefan *et al*. 1967, 327; Barnea & Ștefănescu 1971, 315.
[36] Vasiliu 1984, 140, n. 120.
[37] Vasiliu 1984, 109–135, 532. pl. VIII.
[38] Yotov 2002 (2005), 145; Mănucu-Adameșteanu 2018, 111.
[39] Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2017, 278.
[40] Arbman 1948, 435–438; Barnea & Ștefănescu 1971, 315.
[41] Rybakov 1948, 362; Yotov 2002 (2005), 145; Pletnov 2008, 129–130; Szmoniewski & Stănică 2023, 371–403.
[42] Paraschiv-Talmațchi *et al*. 2014, 178.

end of the 10th century the first decades of the 11th century), Skala[43] (10th century - the first decades of the 11th century), where an applique was discovered in a sunken dwelling along with an anonymous Class A2 follis, and at Preslav[44] (9th-10th centuries) and in the collection of the museum in Varna [45] (10th century). This type of appliqué was produced in the Novosel center[46] (10th century).

The fourth applique has a shield-like appearance with a semicircular cut at the base and a smooth surface. It was made of bronze, through casting, and has three attachment nails on the back: height = 1.64 cm; length = 1.55 cm (fig. 7/5). It was found in 2020, in square 4, at a depth of 2.20 m, in the soil dug in the archaeological excavations prior to 2007, which was deposited in SI to cover a Roman edifice. For this, I have not found, at the moment, analogies.

The last applique is circular and has a pearl-like circle on the edge, which is difficult to see. The central part is smooth and raised. It was made from a sheet of bronze and has two holes located opposite each other, which were used to attach the piece to an object through sewing: diameter = 2.43 cm (fig. 7/6). It was found in 2020, in SIB (parallel to SIA), square 8, at a depth of 1.40 m. Similar appliqués were discovered at Dinogetia-Garvăn (11th-12th centuries),[47] Tufani,[48] Oltina,[49] in Dobrudja, and in Bulgaria at Vetren,[50] Skala (the first decades of the 11th century),[51] in the necropolis at Odartsi (11th century),[52] etc. The majority of them have decorated relief parts. In general, they are attributed to late nomadic populations, and it is believed that their fashion was brought to the Lower Danube region by these populations in the early 11th century.[53]

Two older discoveries made in 1963, but little known, will be mentioned here. These are two handles for the battle whip, made from horn and dated to the 11th century.[54]

[43] Yotov & Atanasov 1998, 109, pl. CXIV/442-443.
[44] Bonev 1993, 72–73, fig. 12/в.
[45] Pletnov & Pavlova 1994/1995, 87 type XVI/variant 5, 128, pl. XLV/786.
[46] Bonev & Doncheva 2011, 206–207, pl. XXXIV/250-254.
[47] Ştefan *et al*. 1967, 291–293, fig. 172/22.
[48] Paraschiv-Talmaţchi 2018, 394–395, pl. II/15.
[49] Paraschiv-Talmaţchi & Custurea 2018, 376, pl. II/28, 30.
[50] Stanilov 1993, 148, fig. 7/3.
[51] Yotov & Atanasov 1998, 110, pl. CXV/461.
[52] Doncheva-Petkova 2005, 138–139, fig. 20/350.3.
[53] Ştefan *et al*. 1967, 293; Yotov & Atanasov 1998, 110.
[54] Aricescu 1971, 361–365, fig. 15-16; Paraschiv-Talmaţchi *et al*. 2020, 164.

The first one is slightly curved, with polished edges, measuring 12.9 cm in length and having a diameter of 3.1-3.47 cm. At the thinner end, the edges are deepened, and it is perforated. On its surface, three animals (horses or donkeys) were incised in a schematic manner. The representations, reminiscent of the drawings on the walls of the rock churches at Murfatlar-Basarabi, are incised, with one on the thinner part of the handle, and the other two partially overlapping, one of which is incomplete (fig. 7/7).

The second one is also slightly curved, with polished edges, measuring 10.6 cm in length and having a diameter of 4.85 cm. At the thinner end, it has perforations with worn edges due to friction. Its surface is decorated with an incised geometric motif: a wide band composed of adjacent rectangular fields that encircle the handle. Between the perforations, on the outer curve, another rectangular field was incised, attached to the band (fig. 7/8).

Overall, at Hârșova, from the SIA section located inside the small enclosure, during the period 2007-2012, the majority of the early medieval material collected is ceramic, particularly household vessels. These were made from common clay and kaolinitic clay, using both slow and fast wheel techniques, and were mostly fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. Modeled pottery made from common clay includes pots without handles, pots with handles, conical-shaped bowls with thickened bases, bowls with slightly profiled shoulders and straight necks, plates, and cauldrons. Vessels made from kaolinitic clay are well-represented in the discoveries and include pots without handles, pots with handles, and bowls (with sporadic fragments from vessels decorated with red paint). Alongside these, there is a small proportion of vessels primarily made on the fast wheel, using clean clay, and fired in either oxidizing or reducing atmospheres. These vessels have their exterior surfaces covered with green-olive glaze (some with incised or applied decoration) or micaceous slip. The last two categories are represented by jugs, both medium-sized and small, found in fragmentary states. There is also a significant presence of spheroidal and pear-shaped amphorae with collar.

Alongside these pottery items, other objects made of ceramics (spindle whorls; fishing net weights), bronze (crosses, buckles, rings, earrings, fishing hooks), bone and horn (knife handles, knucklebone, spindle whorls, bone awl), glass (bracelets), stone (jasper spindle

whorls, grinders, sharpening stones), iron (arrowheads, knives, nails), and coins have also been discovered.[55]

In conclusion, we can say that the archaeological research carried out inside the small enclosure at Hârșova revealed that the Byzantines chose to build a new enclosure from the ground up, rather than repairing the ancient one, which was much larger. The settlement here, chronologically dated post-971 (beginning in the second half of the 10th century and continuing until the end of the 11th century), initially developed inside the Byzantine enclosure and then expanded around it, towards the east (where a craftsman's quarter was formed),[56] west and north.

Like most fortifications on the right bank of the Danube, the settlement gradually developed a semi-urban character, facilitating active trade and the development of crafts. Trade played an important role in the economic activity here, as evidenced by the discovery of products originating from workshops in the northern Black Sea region (glazed clay egg, "Ovruch" spindle whorls made of jasper) or from centers near Constantinople and the Balkan Peninsula (amphorae, micaceous ceramic, bronze objects, glass bracelets), as well as Byzantine coins from the 10th-11th centuries.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Administrative localization of Hârșova (Constanța County) in Dobrudja and Romania (map: Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi).

Fig. 2. Aerial image of the Hârșova fortress on which the small enclosure and the SIA section are marked (photo by Mircea Stoian, marked by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi).

Fig. 3. Section SIA, view from S to N (1); Complex 1/2008 (2) (photo by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi).

Fig. 4. Ceramics discovered in Complex 1/2008: with micaceous engobe (1-3), with glazed (4-5), amphorae (6-7) (photo and drawing by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi).

Fig. 5. The oven from Complex 1/2010 (1); pieces of the upper part of the oven wall (2-3); image from the dismantling of the hearth arranged on a ceramic layer (4) (photo by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi).

[55] Talmațchi 2009, 118; 2011, 46; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2016a, 135–136, pl. V.
[56] Șova 2021, 15–34.

Fig. 6. Pots without handles that were reconstructed from the ceramic fragments on which the hearths of the oven in Complex 1/2010 were arranged (photo by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmaţchi).

Fig. 7. Glazed clay egg (1), appliques (2-6) and handles for the battle whip (7-8) discovered in the Hârşova fortress (photo by Cristina Paraschiv-Talmaţchi).

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ROMANIA
BULGARIA
Dobruja
Hârşova
Danube
Black Sea
2000 m
1500 m
1000 m
500 m
200 m
100 m
0 m
0
100
200 km
N

Fig. 1

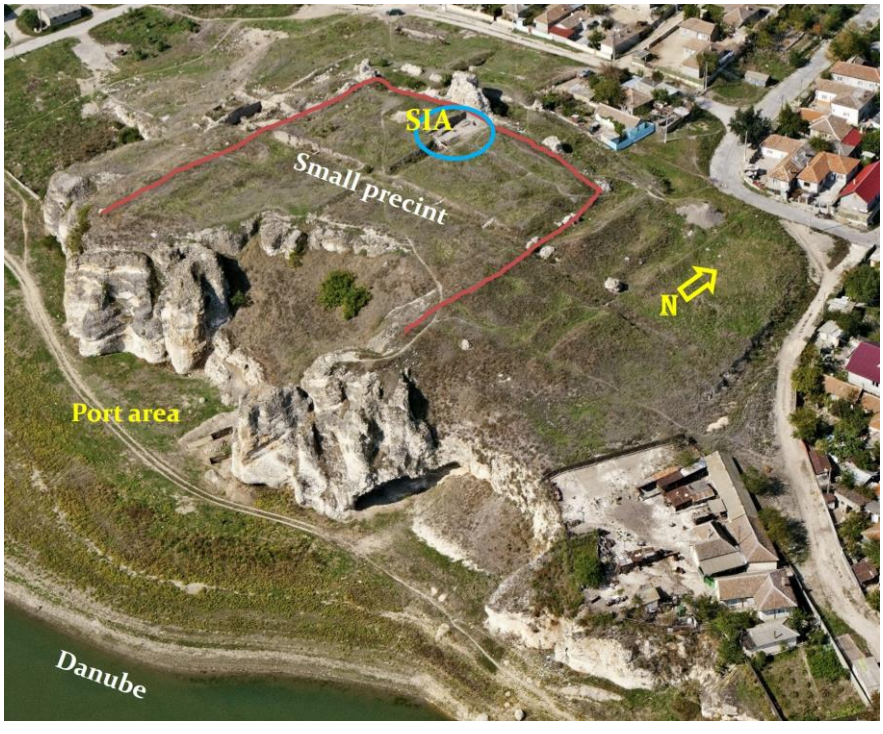

SIA
Small precint
N
Port area
Danube

Fig. 2



Fig. 3

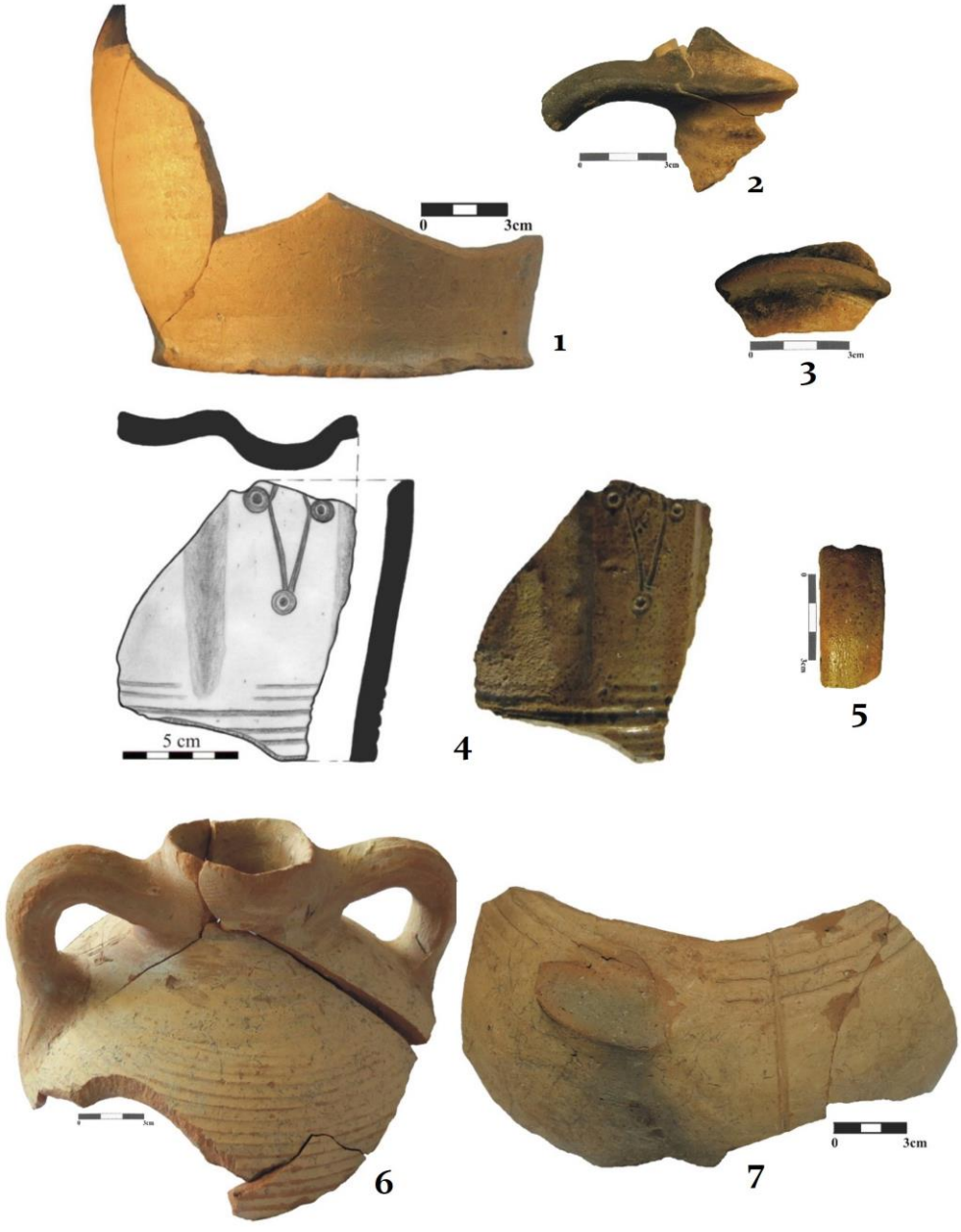


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

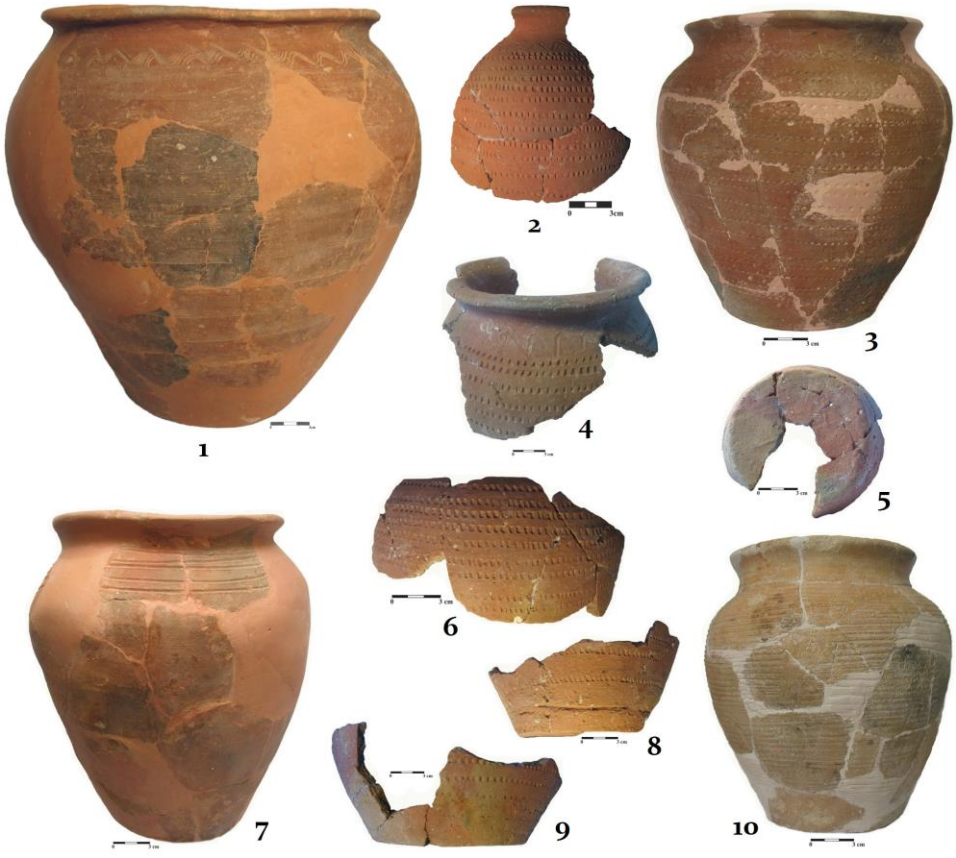


Fig. 6

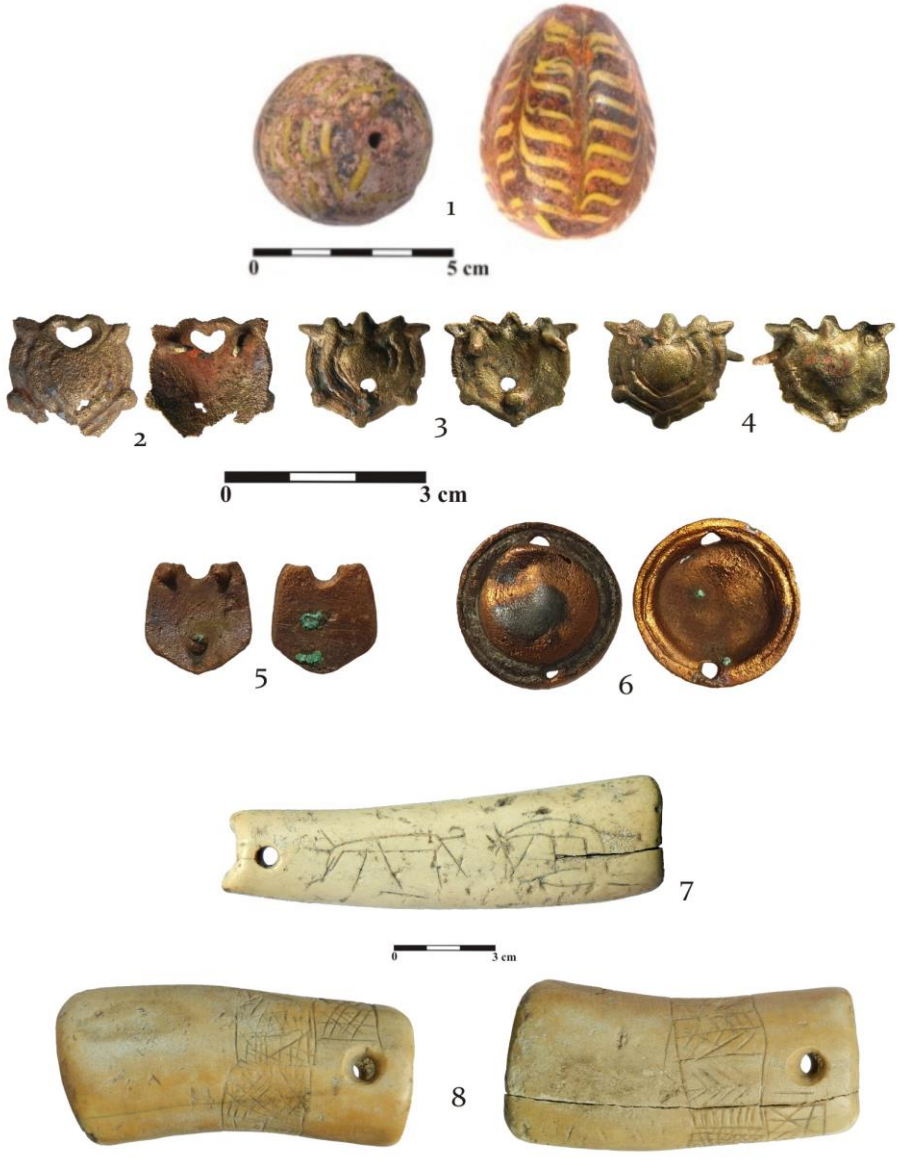


Fig. 7

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Carașova. A small fortress between two superpowers

Silviu Oța, Liana Oța

Abstract: A lot of information about the medieval stone fortress of Carașova can be found in the historical and archaeological literature since the 19th century. Its name (Krassófő vár) was confused with another fortress, with a similar name (Krassóvár). The fortress of Carașova is situated on the territory of Carașova commune, in Caraș-Severin County. It was built on the Grad hill in the gorges of the Caraș River. In the Middle Ages, it was part of the Wallachian Carașova Districtof Caraș County. The fortress was built of stone, on the top of a hill, basically a large limestone cliff with several slopes. The first trustworthy data about the fortress date back to 1323 when Carașova was ruled by master Nicolae, who was, at the same time, chatelaine of Vršac.

As a result of archaeological excavations, it was observed that it has three phases of construction. In each of them, the area of the fortress was increased.

At the beginning, during the 14th century, Carașova was built as a small royal fortification. In the 15th century it became an important centre in support of the anti-Ottoman struggle. In the 16th century, as a result of successive attacks and destruction, Carașova had the status of a small border fortification. According to the latest research, in the 16th century it was partially destroyed after an Ottoman attack that can be dated most probably during 1551-1552. After the middle of the 16th century, Carașova became an Ottoman possession, near the border with the Principality of Transylvania, more precisely with its southwestern part, known as the Banate of Lugoj and Caransebeș. Towards the end of the same century (1595), the fortress was most probably completely destroyed by the Transylvanians.

Key words: fortress, border, walls, towers, coins, stone.

Резюме: Информация за средновековната каменна крепост Карашова присъства в историческата и археологическа литература още от XIX век. Името й (Krassófő vár) неточно се обвързва с друга крепост с подобно име (Krassóvár). Крепостта Карашова е разположена на територията на община Карашова в област Караш-Северин. Построена е на хълма Град, в дефилето на река Караш. През Средновековието е била част от влашкия окръг Карашова, от област Караш.

Крепостта е построена на върха на хълм, представляващ голяма варовикова скала с няколко склона. Първите сигурни сведения за крепостта датират от 1323 г., когато Карашова е била управлявана от господаря Николай, който по същото време е бил и кателан на Вршац.

В резултат на археологическите разкопки е установено, че крепостта има три строителни периода, като с всеки следващ територията ѝ се увеличавала.

В началото, през XIV век, Карашова е построена като малко кралско укрепление. През XV век се превръща във важен център срещу османските нахлувания. През XVI век, в резултат на последователни атаки и разрушения, Карашова има статут на малко гранично укрепление. Според най-новите проучвания през XVI век е била частично разрушена след османско нахлуване, което датира най-вероятно през 1551-1552 г. След средата на XVI век Карашова става османско владение, близо до границата с Княжество Трансилвания, по-точно с югозападната му част, известна като Банството на Лугож и Карансебеш. Към края на същия век (1595 г.) крепостта най-вероятно е напълно разрушена от трансилванците.

Stage of research

A lot of information about the medieval stone fortress of Carașova can be found in the historical and archaeological literature since the 19th century.[1] Unfortunately, until systematic excavations began, the discussion was rather a historical one, even speculative and without a real basis in most cases,[2] and this can be observed even in recent archaeological literature.[3]

Without going into too much detail, since these shortcomings have been expressed on other occasions[4], we would like to point out that it was also considered as an earthen fortress, dated before the Tatar invasion of 1241-1242.[5] Moreover, because of its name (Krassófő vár) it was confused with another fortress, with a similar name (Krassóvár),[6] most likely located not far from the confluence of the Caraș River with the Danube on the territory of Serbia.

[1] Pesty 1882; Pesty 1883; Pesty 1884; Pesty 1885; Szentkláray 1900; Simu 1939, 93, 94; Suciu 1967, 121; Suciu 1968, 313; Trâpcea 1969, 23-82 (see Carașova); Pascu 1971, 134, 154; Pascu 1979, 238, 246, 248, 249; Hațegan 1978, 193; Matei 1979, 260-261; Gheorghiu 1985, 42, 69, 225; Rusu 2005, 508; Matei 1982, 103-123, Gheorghiu 1985, 42, 69, 225; Györffy 1987, 469, 476, 489, 490; Țeicu 1998, 434; Țeicu 2009, 76-78.
[2] See note 1.
[3] Țeicu 2009, 76-78, 89, Pl. 20; 90, Pl. 21.
[4] Oța & Oța 2006, 3-13.
[5] Pascu 1979, 238, 246.
[6] Györffy 1987, 487-490.

Some of the published plans were most likely drawn with a roulette or are simple drawings made according to the skill of the authors.[7] Another plan, somewhat more recent, was most likely made by a topographist, but without a preliminary archaeological research.[8] The result was the invention of a fortress with all of its walls built at only one constructive stage, and unfortunately this plan is still used even today.

Systematic excavations made relatively recent have shown that Carașova is a stone fortress, with three main constructive phases.[9] Two parallel defense ditches dug into the stone can be observed in front of the fortress. Also recently, a new topographic survey was carried out (Pl. 2), analyses of mortars and medieval items were made, and faunal osteological remains were studied.[10] Nine articles[11] dedicated to this medieval fortress and three excavation reports[12] have been published until now.

Location of the fortress

The fortress of Carașova is situated on the territory of Carașova (Pl. 1/1) commune in Caraș-Severin County at approximately ten kilometers south of the modern town of Reșița.[13] It was built on the Grad hill (Pl. 1/2) in the gorges of the Caraș River. From an administrative point of view, in the Middle Ages, it was part of the Wallachian Carașova District, located in Caraș County. In fact, almost the entire hill and mountain area of the modern Caraș-Severin County was organized into Wallachian districts (Mehadia, Sebeș/Caransebeș, Comiat, Bârzava, Almaj, Ilidia, Carașova, Lugoj, etc.).[14] During the Middle Ages, some of them obtained various privileges from the Hungarian royalty[15] as recognition of their struggle against the Ottoman Empire.

[7] See a plan published by Dumitru Țeicu in 1998 and 2009 (Țeicu 1998, 239, fig. 93; Țeicu 2009, 79, Pl. 20).
[8] Țeicu 2009, 66-68.
[9] Oța & Oța 2008, 183-221, with a new topographic elevation (Oța & Oța 2008, 208, Pl. 1).
[10] El Susi 2002-2003 (2004), 285-297.
[11] Oța & Oța 2006, 3-13; Oța & Oța 2008, 183-221; Oța & Oța 2009, 193–201; Oța & Oța 2011a, 109-115; Oța & Oța 2011b, 159-181; Oța & Oța 2012, 47-60; Oța & Oța 2017, 157-170; Oța *et al*. 2011, 83-113.
[12] Oța *et al*. 1999, 22–23; Țeicu *et al*. 2001, 57–59; Țeicu *et al*. 2002, 85–87.
[13] Pascu 1989, 45; Magina 2009, 284.
[14] Pascu 1989, 40-62.
[15] Țeicu 1998, 427-458.

The type of fortification

The fortress was built of stone on the top of a hill (Pl. 1/3-5), basically a large limestone cliff with several slopes, each with different angles and this specific feature excludes the existence of a fortress made of earth, previous to the stone one.

The first defense ditch (about 10 m wide and most likely 3.50 m deep) was dug in the rock, in front of the future fortress, and it was doubled by another one. Inside, a cistern was dug into the rock, lined with limestone (diameter=4.80-5.00 m; depth=3.70-4.00 m). Stone towers were built in the northern and eastern parts of the fortress.

Historical information

The first trustworthy data about the fortress date back to 1323 when Caraşova was ruled by master Nicolae, who was, at the same time, chatelaine of Vršac.[16] At that time, Caraşova belonged to the king of Hungaria, Carol Robert of Anjou (1308-1342).

In 1335, Caraşova had another chatelaine, master Thouka, representative of the archbishop of Kalocsa.[17]

In 1358, the fortress was again a royal property.[18] At the beginning of the 15th century, the documents were signed by Filippo Scolari as chatelaine (1405 and 1406).[19]

The last mention in the documents dates to the 3rd of May 1520, when Ştefan Báthory convicted Orbonás Sofiat to pay a fine (one mark), because he refused to take over the fortress, situated, at that time, on the territory of Timiş County. In the 16th century, Caraşova was in private property.[20]

The military actions involving Caraşova are not so sure between 1520 and 1551. According to the information published until now, a first major destruction is supposed either around 1526, or in 1551. Wolffgang of Bethlen, who wrote *Historia de Rebus Transsylvanicis*, mentioned that Mehmet Beglerbeg conquered a number of fortresses in Banat, including Ilidia (*Illadiam*) and Vršac (*Somlium*) in 1551.[21]

Since 1551, the fortress of Caraşova, though in a relatively high degradation, has been ruled by the Ottoman Empire in Caraşova *nahiye*.

[16] Pesty 1884, 165; see also Györffy 1987, 469, 476, 489.
[17] DIR, C, veacul XIV, III, 361.
[18] DRH, C, veacul XIV, XI, 279, 287.
[19] Pesty 1882, 250-251.
[20] Pesty 1884, 264-265
[21] Bethlen 1783, 497-498.

Probably the last major destruction took place in 1595 when Carașova was conquered by the Transylvanian armies, then probably demolished and never rebuilt.

Archaeological information[22]

At this time, four plans of the fortress were published in the historical and archaeological literature. This paper is based on the last topographic survey, more precisely the one from 2001.

The first phase (Pl. 3/1-10)

Two towers were built in this phase (only fragments of walls without facades have been preserved from them), one to the southeast (Pl. 3/5) and another to the north (Pl. 3/1, 2), with an enclosure wall between them (Pl. 3/3). It must be said that at both towers, one side was part of the enclosure (for no. 1 the wall from the defense ditch, and for no. 2 the wall from the abyss). Inside, another 4.00 m wide wall covered the top of the rock on which the fortress was located (Pl. 3/10).

In front of the fortress, towards the north-west, two parallel ditches were dug in the rock (Pl. 1/5, the first ditch).

The defensive elements consisted in a storehouse of sling balls at the base of the northern enclosure, and a semi-circular opening for the defenders (Pl. 5/4), also at the base of the enclosure.

At the base of the eastern tower there was a trapdoor (Pl. 3/4) with a hole in the enclosure.

A fragment of enclosure wall, blocked by another small wall, was found on the southern side.

The second phase (Pl. 4)

In the second phase of the fortress, another wall was built to the south, in the area between the southern enclosure of the first phase and the edge of the abyss (Pl. 4/1). Thus, the surface of the fortress increased. This new wall, built on a slope both in length and in width, practically blocked the access to the eastern tower. The dimensions of this wall are very different compared to the rest of the walls: 2.80 m wide and preserved height 4.78 m. Currently, the wall is still 19 m long. The end towards the abyss has been broken (Pl. 4/2-4) and we cannot know whether a tower functioned there as well or not. The face of the wall is destroyed, so we cannot estimate if any wall was attached to it.

[22] Oța *et al*. 1999, 22-23; Țeicu *et al*. 2001, 57–59; Țeicu *et al*. 2002, 85-87.

It is possible that this wall constitutes only a stage in the reconstruction of the fortress.

The third phase (Pl. 5/1-11)

This phase is the most important because it restores the old fortification and widens it further to the west and south-west. Practically, another enclosure wall (1.20 wide) was added on the northern side along the entire length of the old one (Pl. 5/1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). To the north-west it is continuous, including another part of the rock (Pl. 5/9), to the end of the first defense ditch (Pl. 5/8, 9). From the western corner of the citadel it turns towards south-east and ends near the extremity of the wall belonging to the second phase of the fortress (Pl. 5/10, 11). Unfortunately, the south-western part of the wall has been almost entirely dismantled, except for a fragment of wall at the extreme western end (Pl. 5/8). Its direction was observed only as a result of archaeological research in sections 7 and 8/2001. On the outer face of the wall from the second phase it can be observed how the wall from the third phase was attached to it (Pl. 5/11). The maximum preserved height of enclosure 3 is approximately 5.00 m.

The old defensive elements (trap and sling shot hole) have been preserved in the third phase, too (Pl. 3/4, Pl. 5/4). The old walls dismantled to tread level were doubled along the same direction (Pl. 5/3, 5).

The towers were rebuilt (Pl. 3/5, Pl. 5/1, 2, 5, 6). For tower 2, it can be seen that it overlapped phase 1 to the east, but its southeast and northeast sides had a different position (Pl. 5/13).

The 4.00 m wide inner wall covering the top of the cliff was preserved, although to the south-west a part of its face was rebuilt.

A water cistern was arranged inside, as well as some hypothetical dwellings (Pl. 5/12). The one investigated south of the cistern was built on limestone slabs, on a slope.

An entrance was identified in the new wall on its south-western side (Pl. 2, near Cas. 6/2001, S. 7 and 8/2001).

Archaeological research led to the discovery of two major phases of the fortress destruction.

The first consisted mainly in its burning (arrowhead from the level of destruction near the entrance from the enclosure 3; Pl. 8/7), and the second ended with the destruction of the walls.

Even after the second destruction, the fortress was used as an observation point. Inside, on the northern side, a cooking oven was

installed (Pl. 7, Pl. 8/9, 10), from where numerous ceramic fragments were recovered.

Artefacts

The objects discovered until now are quite common.

The oldest ceramic fragments indicate a possible start of the construction work towards the end of the 13th century (Pl. 6/A/1-4).

Artefacts made of metal (Pl. 8/2, 5, 7), bone (Pl. 8/6), stone (Pl. 8/4) and pottery fragments, local (Pl. 6/B/1-4) and from Central Europe (Pl. 6/C/1-6, D/1-6) also indicate the use of the fortress during the 16th century,[23] especially the fragments of knife from Styria or their forgeries (Pl. 8/3, 3a-g, 8). The most important items for this dating come from the base of tower 1.

The coins are very few. At this moment we know a silver akçe issued during the reign of Bayezid II in Constantinople and some coins discovered a few decades ago, issued during the reign of the kings Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437). The higher frequence of the coins issued during the reign of king Sigismund of Luxembourg can be connected with the reconstruction of the fortress during the presence of the Teutonic Knights in the Middle Danube region (1429-1435).[24]

Conclusion

At the beginning, during the 14th century, Carașova was built as a small royal fortification. In the 15th century it became an important centre in support of the anti-Ottoman struggle.[25] In the 16th century, as a result of successive attacks and destruction, Carașova had the status of a small border fortification. According to the latest research, in the 16th century it was partially destroyed after an Ottoman attack that can be dated most probably to 1551-1552.

After the middle of the 16th century, Carașova became an Ottoman possession,[26] near the border with the Principality of Transylvania, more precisely with its southwestern part, known as the Banate of Lugoj and Caransebeș.[27]

[23] Oța *et al*. 2011, 93, 99, Pl. II/1-3.

[24] Achim 2013, 177-188; Achim 2014, 37-46; Feneșan 2015; Glück 1992, 783-792; Hațegan 1989, 191-196; Nemoianu 1975, 381-386; Oța 2023, 95-126.

[25] Fügedi 1986, 133, 134, Map. 18; 136, 138, Map. 19.

[26] Engel 1996, 73, and the Map.

[27] Feneșan 1973, 157; Feneșan 1993, 75; Țigău 1998, 225-241; Boldea 2014, 278; Magina 2022, 115.

Towards the end of the same century, the fortress was most probably completely destroyed by the Transylvanians,[28] who attacked the fortresses of Bocșa and Vršac, located relatively close. We must not exclude the possibility that the fortress of Carașova was also destroyed, knowing that it was under the control of the castellan of Vršac for certain periods of time. The second destruction, that of 1595, seems to have been the one that led to its desertion. However, if we take into account the discovered artefacts and the cooking oven installed inside the ruins sometimes after the destruction of the fortress, it is not excluded that an observation point of the region may have functioned here until the beginning of the 17th century.[29]

Its location on a hilltop, the development of firearms and new combat techniques, combined with the fact that Carașova was situated in an area without mineral resources, with little farmland led to its rapid abandonment after 1595. Another fortress with bastions was not built nearby Carașova, unlike Bocșa,[30] Caransebeș[31] or most of the fortresses in the area of mountainous Banat that functioned from 14th until 16th century (Ilidia, Almăj, Bârzava, Svinița, Drencova, Saint Ladislau, Vršac, Jdioara etc.).

The border between the Ottoman Empire and Transylvania was only 10 km away, in the upper basin of the Bârzava and Caraș rivers, near their springs. Since 1658, the Banate of Lugoj-Caransebeș, part of Transylvania until then, was also occupied by the Ottomans for 30 years.[32]

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Pl. 1. 1. The position of the Carașova fortress; 2. Grad Hill; 3. Access to the fortress from the south-west; 4. The fortress seen from the southwest; 5. Part of enclosure 3 seen from the first defense ditch (photos by Silviu Oța).

Pl. 2. The plan of the Carașova citadel with part of the excavations from 1998, 2000 and 2001 (Vidu Micli topographic survey and Silviu Oța additions).

Pl. 3. Wall fragments from phase 1; 1, 2. Fragments from the base of tower 1; 3. Fragment of the northeast enclosure; 4. Trap from enclosure 1 and 3; 5. Fragments from the base of tower 2; 6. Part of the rock on which the

[28] Bethlen 1783, 497-498.
[29] Oța & Oța 2012, 51; Oța & Oța 2008, 192-193, 214, Pl. 7/B.
[30] Sebestyen 1984, 43, 46.
[31] Groza 1993, 96, Fig. 5; 97, Fig. 6.
[32] Feneșan 2019, 255; Magina 2022, 115.

fortress was built, to the southeast; 7. Fragment of enclosure 1 to the south; 8, 9. Fragment from the base of the dismantled inner wall, with a small buttress; 10. Fragment of the inner wall, 4.00 m wide.

Pl. 4. The wall from phase 2; 1.View from the southwest; 2. View from behind the wall; 3. Location of the wall on the rock; 4.The mode of placement of the wall on the rock (photos and draw by Silviu Oța).

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Pl. 7. Arrangement of the oven over the destroyed inner wall.

Pl. 8. 1. Fragment from tower 1; 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Items of bone, stone and metal discovered at the base of tower 1; 7. arrowhead discovered at the base of the entrance on the southwest side, phase 3, probably from the end of the 16th century; 8. Knife fragment of Styria or a fake made after them, discovered between the water cistern and the tower 2; 9. The decorated bone mesh from the oven built after the destruction of the fortress in 1595 (2, 5, 8, 9 drawings by Georgiana Ducman, 3, 4, 6, 7 drawings by Silviu Oța); 10. Oven base after cleaning.

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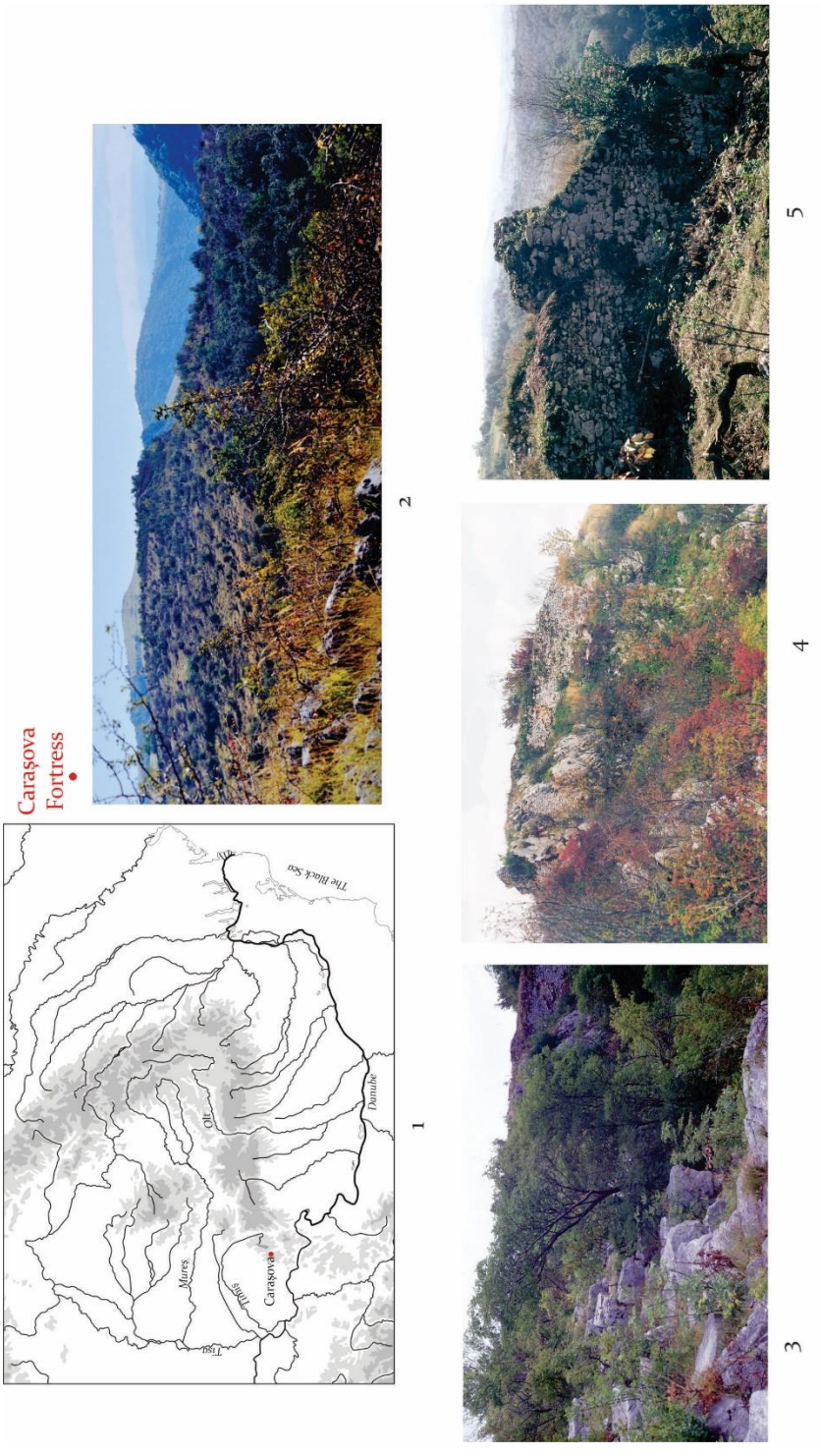
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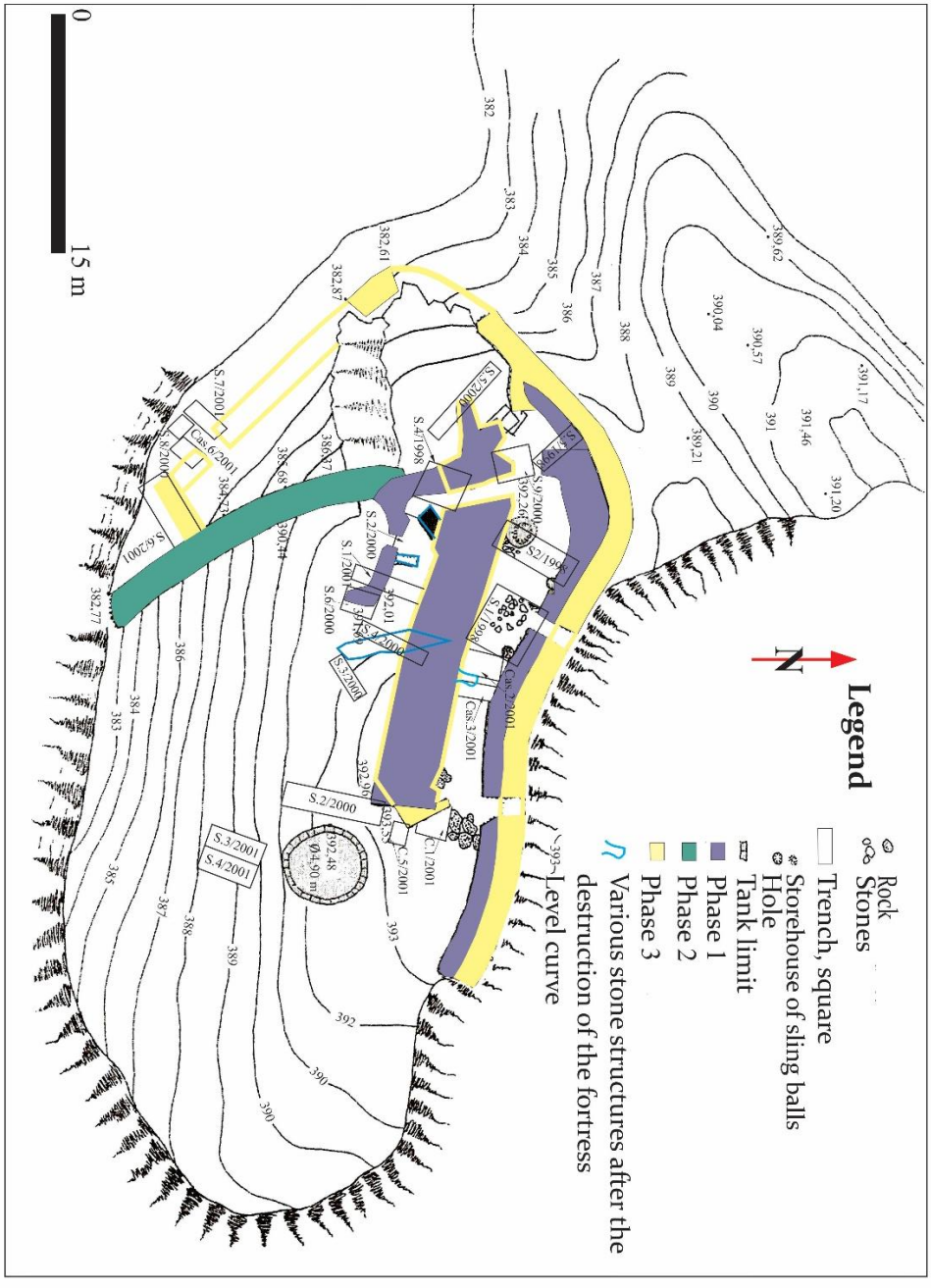
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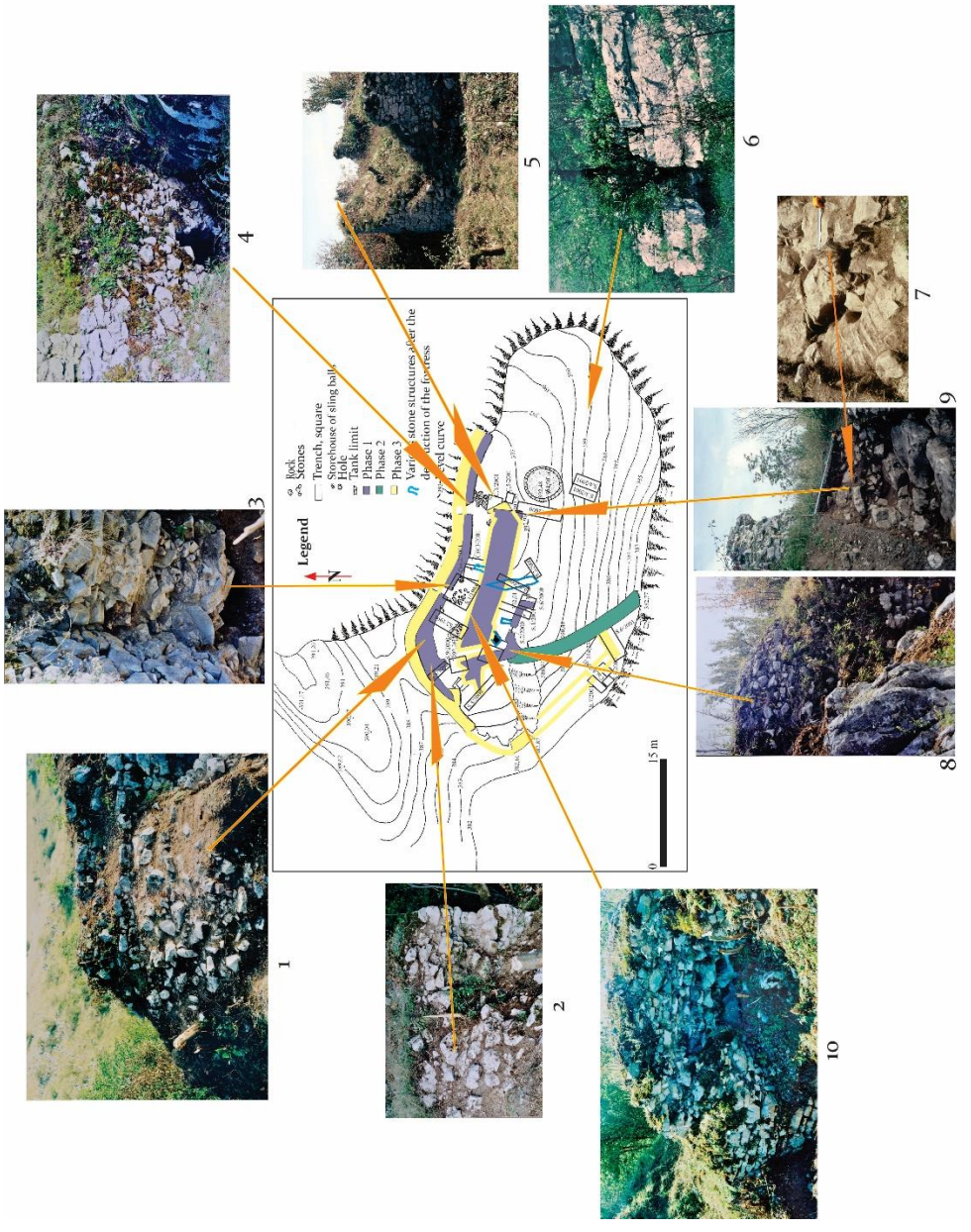
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Caraşova
Fortress
The Black Sea
Danube
Olt
Mureş
Timiş
Caraşova
Teiuş
1
2
3
4
5

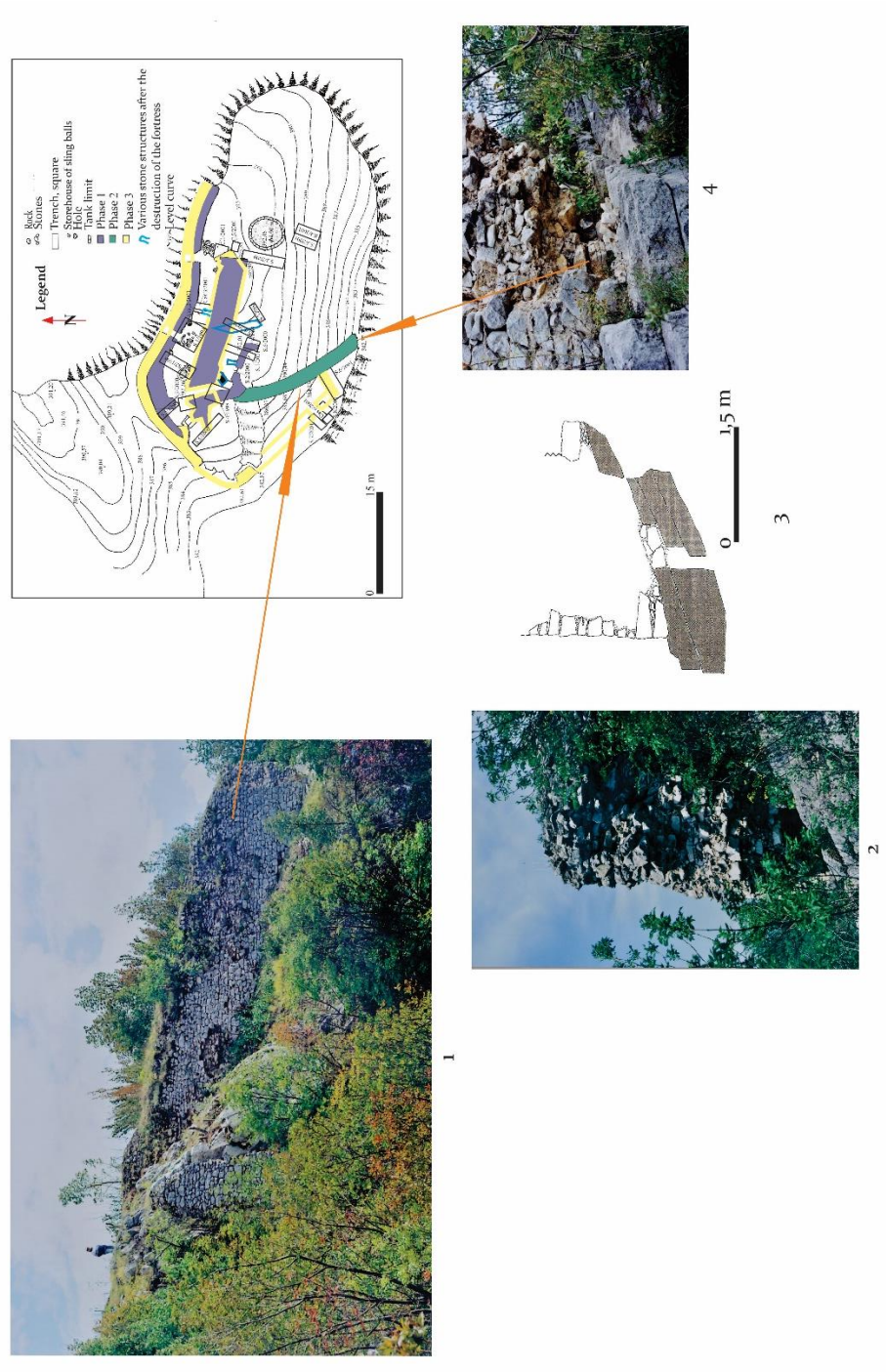
Pl. 1


Legend
Rock
Stones
Trench, square
Storehouse of sling balls
Hole
Tank limit
Phase 1
Phase 2
Phase 3
Various stone structures after the destruction of the fortress
Level curve
N
0
15 m

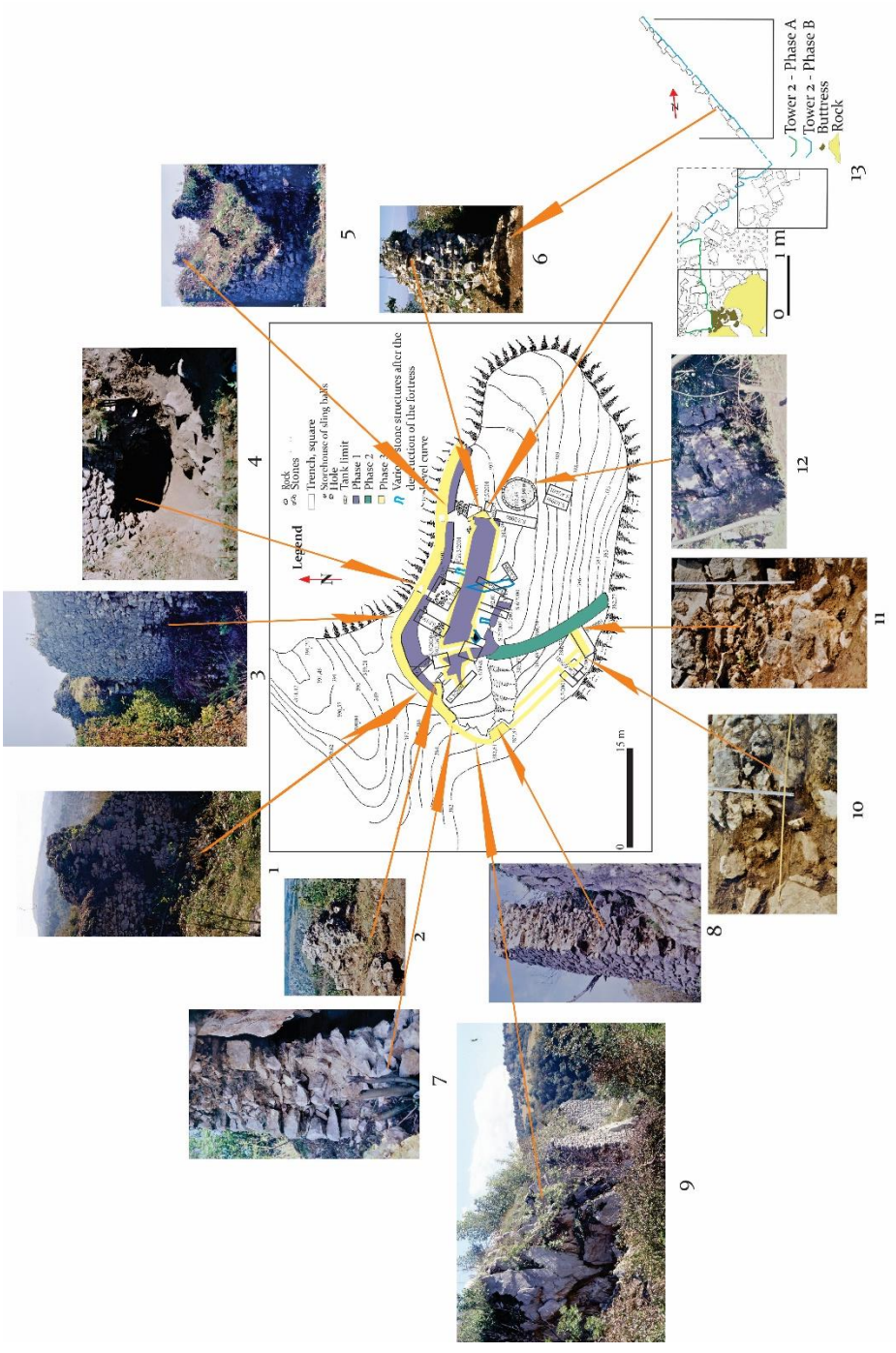
Pl. 2


Legend
Rock
Stones
Trench, square
Storehouse of sling balls
Hole
Tank limit
Phase 1
Phase 2
Phase 3
Various stone structures over the
demolition of the fortress
Level curve
N
15 m
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

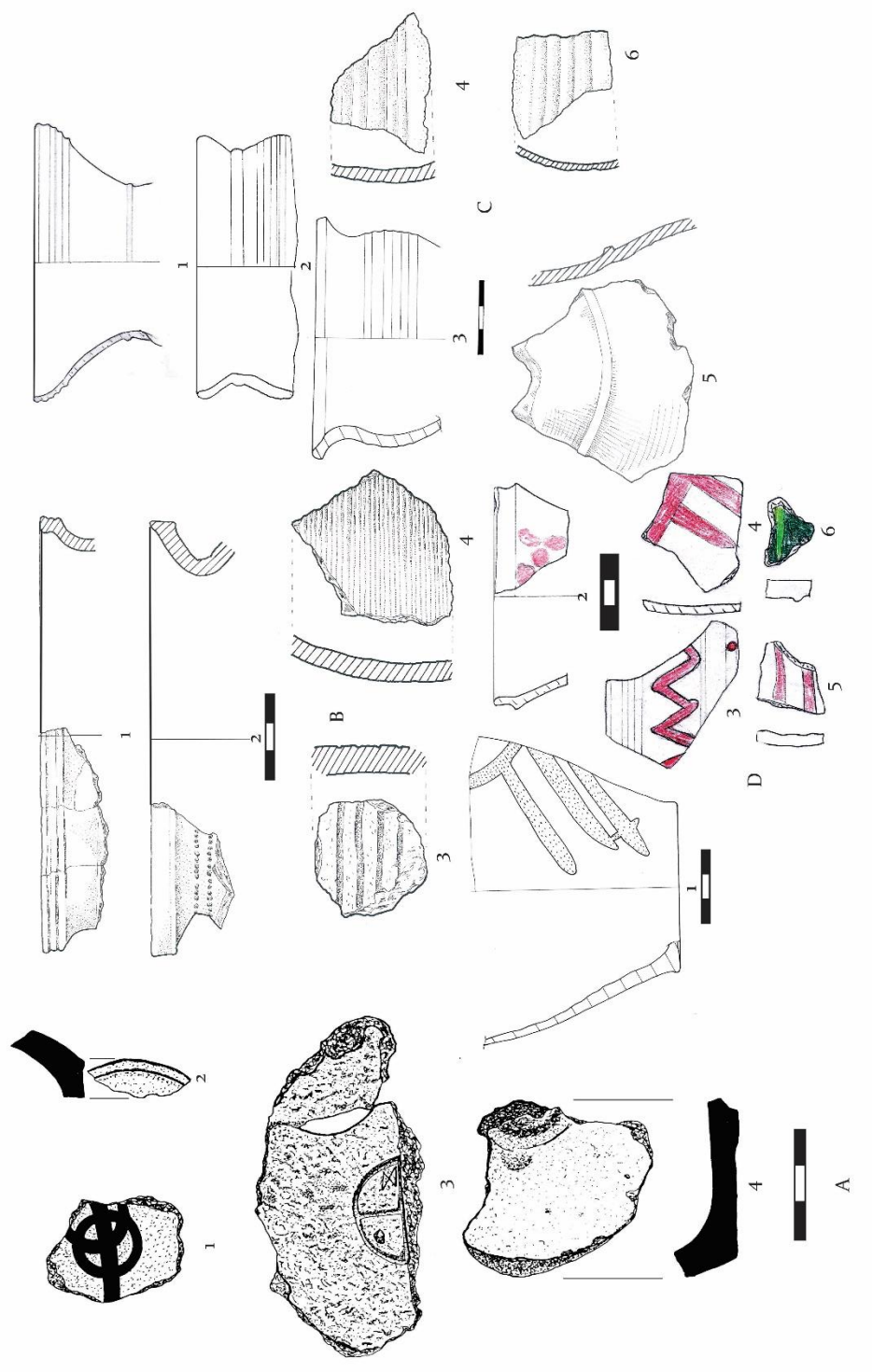
Pl. 3


Legend
Rock
Stones
Trench, square
Storehouse of sling balls
Hole
Tank/ Imit
Phase 1
Phase 2
Phase 3
Various stone structures after the destruction of the fortress
Level curve
N
15 m
0
1
2
3
4
1,5 m
0

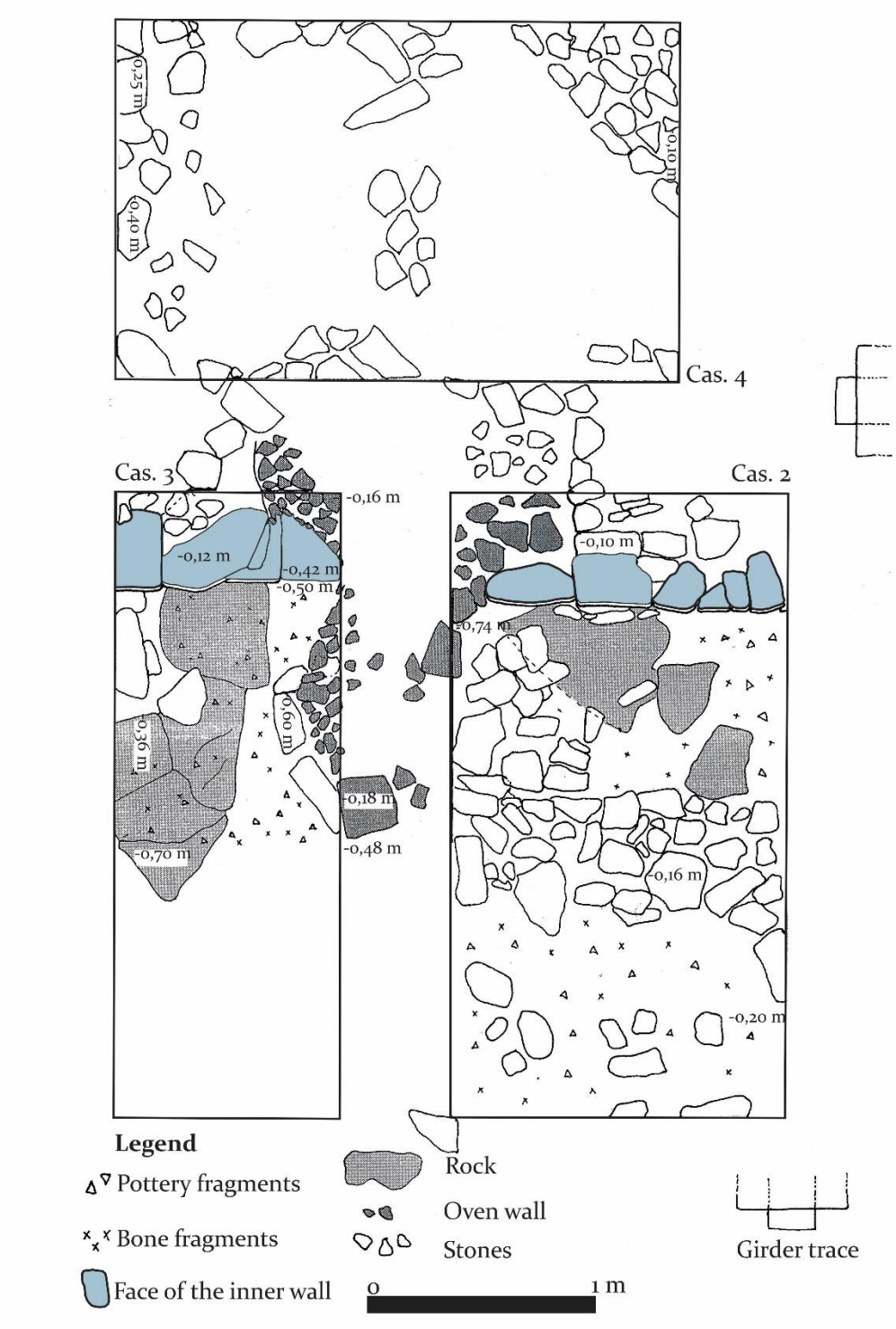
Pl. 4


Legend
Rock
Stones
Trench, square
Storehouse of sling balls
Gate
Town limit
Phase 1
Phase 2
Phase 3
Various stone structures after the destruction of the fortress
Level curve
N
15 m
0
Tower 2 - Phase A
Tower 2 - Phase B
Buttress
Rock
1 m
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13

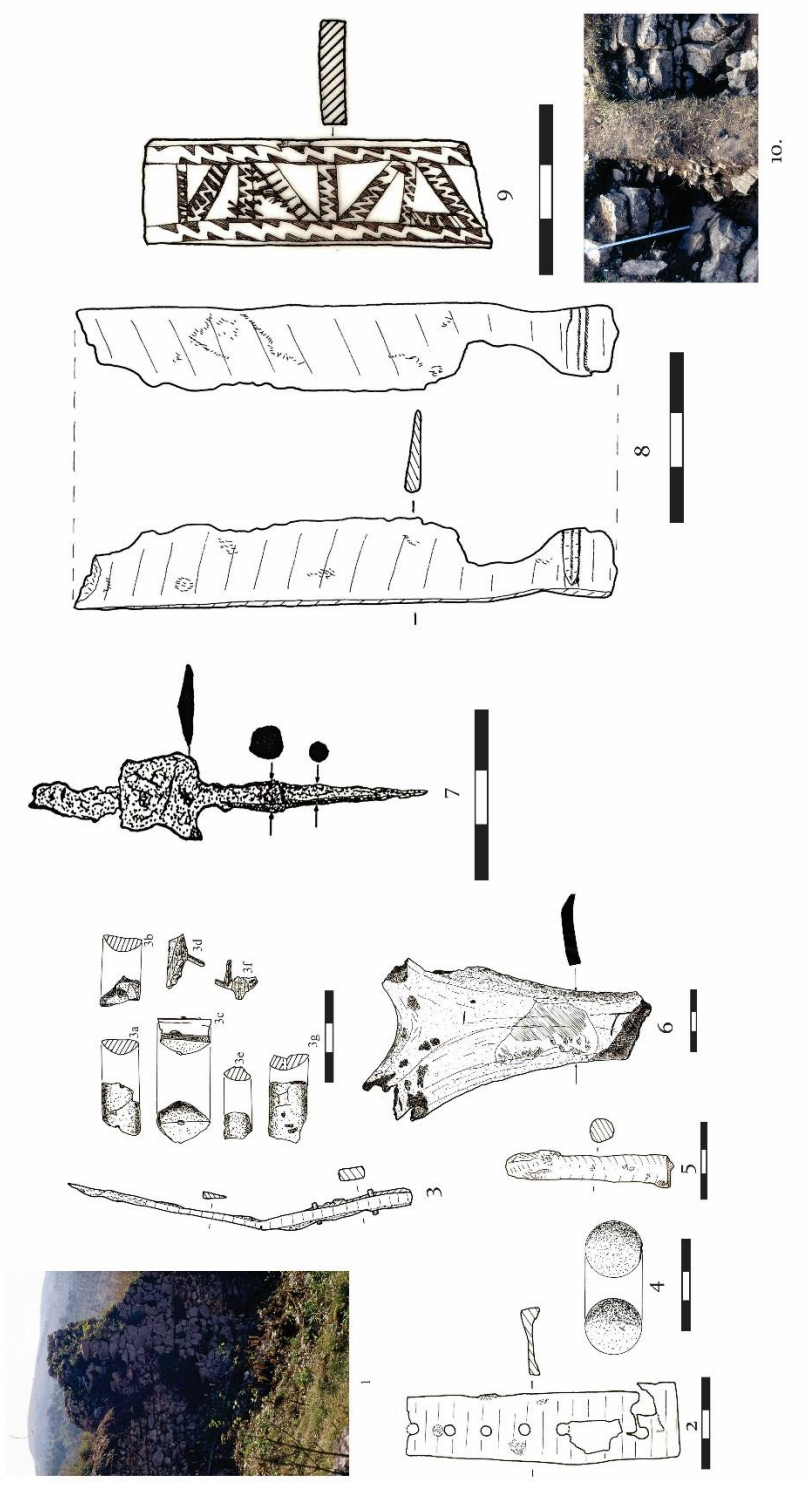
Pl. 5



Pl. 6


-0,25 m
-0,40 m
-0,10 m
Cas. 4
Cas. 3
Cas. 2
-0,16 m
-0,12 m
-0,42 m
-0,50 m
-0,60 m
-0,36 m
-0,18 m
-0,70 m
-0,48 m
-0,10 m
-0,74 m
-0,16 m
-0,20 m
Legend
Pottery fragments
Bone fragments
Face of the inner wall
Rock
Oven wall
Stones
Girder trace
0
1 m

Pl. 7



Pl. 8

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The Bulgars in the Emperor Zeno's diplomacy

Stanislava Tsaneva

Abstract: The article briefly presents the complex combinations made by the emperor Zeno in the struggle with the contenders for the Byzantine crown, a special place being devoted to the relations with the Gothic kings Theodoric Strabo and Theodoric the Amal.The fact that the Bulgars were used to fight precisely against the Ostrogoths has been known for a long time, but without paying in-depth attention to the entire political situation in the empire from the overthrow of the Ardaburii family to the assassination of Odoacer in Italy in 493. In the course of the work, we clarify a number of Bulgarian-Byzantine contacts during the reign of Zeno, and refute the popular thesis of early statehood of the Bulgars in Pannonia or in their main habitats near the Caucasus.

Key words: Emperor Zeno, Byzantine-Gothic conflicts, Bulgarian tribal formations in 5th century

Резюме: Статията представя накратко сложните комбинации на император Зенон в борбата с претендентите за византийската корона, като специално място е отделено на отношенията с готските крале Теодорих Страбон и Теодорих Амал. Фактът, че българите са използвани да воюват именно срещу остготите, е известен отдавна, но без да се обръща задълбочено внимание на цялата политическа ситуация в империята от свалянето на фамилията Ардабурии до убийството на Одоакър в Италия през 493 г. В хода на работата е изяснен броят на българо-византийските контакти по време на царуването на Зенон и е опровергана популярната теза за ранна държавност на българите в Панония или в техните основни местообитания в близост до Кавказ.

The beginning of Bulgarian-Byzantine relations is traditionally placed in 480, and despite some minor disputes about the exact year[1]

[1] Burmov 1968, 56; Angelov 1976, 121, note 26.

it must certainly be related to the turbulent events that marked the entire reign of emperor Zeno (474 – 491). Incorporated into the family of his predecessor Leon (Leo) I Bess (457 – 474) to stop the aspirations of the Ardaburii family to the throne,[2] he never managed to win the sympathy of the capital population and of a large part of the Byzantine elite. The reason for this is well known – Zeno, born under the name of Tarasikodissa, belonged to the specific regional group of the Isaurians, often defined as "internal barbarians" in relation to the Roman Empire.[3]

The enthronement and strengthening of Zeno at the head of the state was accompanied by numerous troubles. Although the old view that he was a converted pagan[4] has already been refuted,[5] he was in a vulnerable position, and his enemies were both members of the imperial family and prominent military commanders of Gothic and later even Isaurian origin. His first rule, which occurred immediately after the death of his minor son Leon II,[6] lasted only a few months (until January 9, 475), and his return was only due to the conflicts between the recent conspirators and the boycott of the Constantinople patriarch Acacius (471 – 489), who did not support the religious views of the new emperor Basilisk and practically put the capital under his control.[7] Years followed in which Zeno slowly and patiently removed all his enemies: his mother-in-law Augusta Verina, her nephew Armatus, the other son-in-law of Leon I Marcian (Marcianus) the Younger, the brothers Illus and Trocundes and the Gothic kings Theodoric Strabo and Theodoric the Amal. He managed to remove some of them physically, others were monasticized or redirected to new lands,[8] but the fight against the Goths turned out to be the longest and to some extent futile.

Their influence on Byzantium had a long history and reached its climax in the second half of the 5th century, when magister Aspar, son of Ardaburius, controlled state affairs almost single-handedly. Indeed, towards the end of his reign, Leon I managed to emancipate himself

[2] Crawford 2019, 48-49, 55-56.
[3] Crawford 2019, 18-20.
[4] Tapkova-Zaimova *et al*. 1993, 88-89; Bozhilov *et al*. 1997, 96.
[5] Crawford 2019, 25-26, 30-32, 52-55.
[6] For the discussion about the enthronement and the age of Leon II, see Kosiński 2010, 70-71; Crawford 2019, 98-99.
[7] Kosiński 2010, 82-97; Crawford 2019, 112-113, 122-123.
[8] Details in Tsaneva 2022, 118-126.

and liquidate his former custodian along with two of his sons, but this act, as well as the partial replacement of Gothic military units with Isaurian ones[9] did not weaken so seriously the positions of the Germanic mercenaries. Although driven from the capital, they were still within its reach in Thrace, and a leading role among the federates continued to be played by a person directly related to the Ardaburii. This was Theodoric Strabo, son of Triarius, who was Aspar's brother-in-law, and craved for his position.[10]

The strained relations between Zeno and the leader of the Thracian Goths probably date back to the end of the 60s of the 5th century, but became especially acute after the assassination of Armatus, who was the first eliminated rival of the emperor. Taking advantage of the turmoil in the ruling family, Theodoric Strabo demanded to receive the military rank of the murdered general. This is far from unfounded, as the king was appointed magister militum praesentalis as early as the emperor Leon I and enjoyed the respect of the entire tribal community.[11] The federates near Constantinople, however, were a fragment of a larger Germanic array based in Pannonia, ruled successively by the brothers Valamir (420 – 469) and Theodemir (469 – 476) of the family of the Amals. Subsequently, the latter was succeeded by his son Theodoric, the future Theodoric the Great (476 – 526), who spent ten years as a hostage in the Roman capital by order of his uncle and was even adopted by Zeno according to the Gothic custom (so-*called adoptio per arma*).[12] It was he who was chosen to bring about dissension among his countrymen and to oust Strabo, but the emperor's plans soon suffered a complete failure.

As Theodoric the Amal was still young and in a relatively weak position, Byzantine diplomacy decided to force a change in the leadership of the Thracian Goths and soon crossed the lines of good tone. After attempts to force Strabo to give his son as a hostage failed, gross provocations began on the part of the government and the senate – the king was declared an enemy and stripped of all military ranks, and his supporters in Constantinople were sentenced to flogging and exile.[13]

[9] Tsaneva 2022, 115-117.
[10] Crawford 2019, 34, 88.
[11] Gordon 1961, 159-160.
[12] Gordon 1961, 175; Kosiński 2010, 101-102.
[13] Gordon 1961, 162-164; Kosiński 2010, 102.

The result was a war in which, to the unpleasant surprise of the emperor, the two namesakes came to an agreement, united their troops and advanced against Byzantium with redoubled forces.[14] The year (478) was aptly chosen, for Zeno was still fighting several rebellious generals, and could not oppose the Goths, who had fresh reinforcements in Pannonia. Moreover, the situation was so bad that he was forced a second time after the usurpation of Basilisk to flee to Chalcedon and to give Verina as a hostage to his most dangerous rival Illus in return for a military aid. The following year, a riot broke out by Marcian and his brothers, who declared themselves the defenders of the captive Augusta, and although another family feud, supported by Strabo, ended with the victory of the legitimate ruler,[15] this in no way undermines the positions of the two Germanic kings.

And yet despite the temporary truce, the Gothic chieftains had different priorities. While for Theodoric the Amal the main task was to find fertile land for his subjects and to prevent the outflow of population to Strabo,[16] the latter continued to strive to take possession of the leading positions in Constantinople.[17] These circumstances, combined with incessant rivalry for the resources and the prestigious titles of the empire, quickly led to decentralization in Gothic command and eventually to the formation of two completely independent armies, oriented respectively towards the Adriatic coast and Asia Minor.

Even in this tense situation, Zeno does not give up the double game. After sacrificing the lands of Macedonia, Thessaly, and Epirus and allowing Theodoric the Amal to capture Epidamnus (modern Durres) in the summer of 479, he began fictitious negotiations with him, enabling Sabinian, magister milium per Illyricum (or perhaps per Thracians), to strike a blow at the Gothic supply train and at least for a time deter this Germanic group from active hostilities.[18] However, Zeno's forces were fragmented and insufficient for an independent

[14] The reason for this was his apparent attempt to trick Theodoric the Amal into a doomed battle by depriving him of funds and reinforcements and sending him on a rough and rugged road straight against Strabo's army (Gordon 1961, 164-168; Crawford 2019, 128-129).
[15] Gordon 1961, 143, 148-150; Kosiński 2010,103-106; Crawford 2019, 132-135.
[16] Crawford 2019, 128.
[17] Uspenski 2001, 286-287.
[18] Gordon 1961, 168-178; Crawford 2019, 131-132.

resistance, so he sought the support of a hitherto unused ally – the Bulgars.

The only information about the first Bulgarian-Byzantine contact is contained in the fragmentarily preserved work of John of Antioch. The notice is very short and summarizes events that took place within nearly two years, which requires some details to be filled in hypothetically. Faithful to the traditions of deliberate archaization, the chronicler used the terms Bulgars and Huns as synonyms and thus deprived us of the opportunity to determine exactly which Bulgarian group he had in mind.

The formations capable of replying to the emperor's call are at least three, if one does not count the people of the independent chief Hormidac,[19] among whom there may also have been Bulgars. The first of these included the remnants of the horde of Dengizich – second son of Attila (434 – 453), killed in 468 or 469 at the suggestion of Byzantine diplomacy.[20] They are P. Crawford's preferred choice, although the author is not definitive and suggests that they could even be "*Kutrigur Huns or proto-Avars*", without justifying the reasons for these identifications.[21] From a geographical point of view, the assumption is good because this group is located closest to Constantinople, but after the death of its leader it did not represent a significant force[22] and it is possible that in the following years it merged completely or partially with the subjects of Attila's youngest son Hernach, who could also move relatively quickly to the battlefield.

V. Beshevliev is inclined to accept Zeno's actions as part of a wider coalition that also included the Gepid king Trapstila.[23] The territory of the Bulgarian group, traditionally associated with the Gepids, was located in the area between the Tisza, Danube and Sava rivers.[24] This would in principle give it the opportunity to weaken the Ostrogothic forces by cutting off the flow of new fighters from Pannonia, but given that the bulk of Theodoric the Amal's men were already in the southern parts of the peninsula, the effectiveness of such a move is questionable. For this reason, it is more likely that the

[19] More on him in Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 72; Crawford 2019, 58-61.
[20] Tsaneva 2022, 107.
[21] Crawford 2019, 136.
[22] Beshevliev 1984, 11.
[23] Although this is the preferred form in Bulgarian historiography, the more accurate transcription is Traustila.
[24] Beshevliev 1984, 11-12.

first attack of the Bulgars was aimed at the Thracian Goths and came from the east.

The course of events is well known. In 480, Bulgarian troops invaded Thrace and tried to defeat the troops of Theodoric Strabo. However, he clearly had more numerous and better trained soldiers at his disposal, because he managed to repel them with ease and continued his way to Constantinople. There was a panic in the city, but thanks to Illus the danger was averted, and a year later Strabo himself died under unclear circumstances.[25]

After his death, the threat of an attack on the capital decreased significantly, and still Zeno could not afford to leave the other Gothic leader, Theodoric the Amal, unattended. Intense diplomatic negotiations began, aimed at removing the Germanic people from Macedonia and Epirus and making them semi-dependent settlers of the province of Dardania, but Theodoric was adamant. The removal of his main rival, the weakness of the new Thracian king Recitach, and above all the death of Sabinian, which suspiciously coincided with that of Strabo, enabled him to insist on a new agreement and, after armed pressure on parts of Macedonia and Thessaly, to negotiate some seemingly important concessions. In addition to retaining his long-standing patrician title, in the winter of 482/483 he was granted lands in the provinces of Lower Moesia and coastal Dacia. He was declared senior magister militum praesentalis and in the following 484 received a consular appointment[26] – an honor that had not been bestowed to a leader of a foreign contingent since the time of emperor Gallienus (260 – 268).

But the glow of these achievements was false. Theodoric's consulship was entirely honorary, giving him no opportunity to influence the overall policy of the empire, and the post of magister was only a temporary appointment that could be revoked at any convenient moment. The premium in kind that the Goths acquired in exchange for their support was not profitable either, because Lower Moesia and Dacia were materially inferior to Italy and Thrace.[27]

In fact, Zeno's agreeableness was the result of his desire to remove several dangerous figures at once. The first victim of the next plot was Strabo's son Recitach, killed during a probable diplomatic

[25] The probability of an accident, claimed by some authors (Crawford 2019, 137), is extremely doubtful. Ioan. Ant. Exc. de ins. 96; Gordon 1961, 168-178.
[26] Crawford 2019, 137-138.
[27] Uspenski 2001, 288; Beshevliev 1984, 12.

visit to Constantinople,[28] but the main target was the increasingly inconvenient magister Illus.[29] The impossibility of the emperor to deal with him was mostly due to the specifics of the Isaurian society itself. The still existing tribal fragmentation did not allow a single leadership over the entire community, and even the ruler of the entire Byzantine Empire was forced to content himself with the position of "first among equals", the status quo being maintained until the extermination of the local elite in the early 90s of 5th century.[30]

But on the other hand, the same traditions prevented Illus from consolidating sufficiently large forces to dethrone Zeno. This was the reason why each of the two looked for support among the disgruntled relatives and close associates of their rival and expanded the boundaries of the conflict as much as possible. Thus, the emperor was forced to rely on the Isaurians Conon (a person who was apparently forcibly ordained as bishop of Apamea) and Lilingis (Illus' half-brother), while the latter involved the monasticized Marcian in his cause. Outside the circle of courtiers, in the struggle were included also the Persian shahanshah Peroz (Firuz) I (457 – 484), the governor of Byzantine Armenia, the real ruler of Italy Odoacer (476 – 493), as well as the high clergy.[31]

Zeno's most visible measures were in the sphere of religion. In 482, he rejected the local Chalcedonian candidate for the See of Alexandria, John Talaia, and concluded an agreement with the deposed Monophysite patriarch Peter III Mong (477).[32] A material expression of this compromise was the so-called Henotikon – a statement of faith by the emperor, which in its promulgation had a rather wishful character and aimed to detach the moderate anti-Chalcedonians in Egypt from the influence of Illus.[33] The task was eventually accomplished, but at the cost of the anathema and excommunication of Patriarch Acacius by the Pope (July 28, 484).

In addition to the work on the spiritual front, the emperor used his entire diplomatic arsenal to deprive the adversary of external support. The relations with the Sassanids remained good, at the expense of some renunciation of influence in the Caucasian region,

[28] Gordon 1961, 181.
[29] Crawford 2019, 138-139.
[30] Crawford 2019, 24-25, 27.
[31] Gordon 1961, 152; Kosiński 2010, 125-128, 147-149.
[32] Kosiński 2010, 128-133; Crawford 2019, 169-173.
[33] Kosiński 2010, 137-145.

shaken by decades of strife between Zoroastrians and Christians, and Theodoric's rise had a restraining effect on the remaining Germanic chieftains in Italy and the Balkans. By the way, the concessions towards the Armenians did not last long. As soon as the risk to his crown was gone, Zeno replaced all but one of the provincial governors in the Byzantine part and changed the rules for selecting candidates to weaken local self-government.[34]

His opponent's actions turned out to be less effective. Despite repeated attempts, he never gained Odoacer's support, and the Persian *shahanshah*, who had long-standing problems on the eastern frontier and did not hesitate to seek financial aid from Zeno against the common Hunnic enemy, fell victim to the Hephthalites.[35] The governor of Armenia also gave up the campaign, the planned coalition failed, and in the end the leader of the uprising that broke out had to rely on only a few provinces in Asia Minor,[36] with the greatest support received from the citizens of Antioch and part of Isauria.[37]

Interestingly, Illus repeated the path of Aspar, and instead of proclaiming himself the head of state, he placed as nominal emperor his protégé Leontius, who, despite his young age, was already a patrician, an honorary consul and a former magister militum per Thracias. On 19 July 484 Verina, probably under pressure, declared him the legitimate ruler, and a week later issued a proclamation calling on the Romans to recognize his election. In reality, however, his popularity did not go beyond the territories ruled by Illus, Trocundes and their closest commanders. The uprising retained its local character and was finally suppressed in 488, when the last stronghold of the rebels, the city of Papirion, fell. There, according to John of Antioch, on the ninth day of the four-year blockade, Zeno's mother-in-law also met her death.[38]

Even before the conclusion of decisive combat operations in Asia Minor, a new cooling of Byzantine-Gothic relations occurred. In September 484, Theodoric the Amal was recalled from Isauria, and his army was replaced by detachments of the Germanic tribe Rugii, led by

[34] Crawford 2019, 144-161, 201.
[35] Gordon 1961, 13-14; Crawford 2019, 154, 159.
[36] The big Syrian cities of Chalcis and Edessa refused to support him (Crawford 2019, 196).
[37] Kosiński 2010, 147-148.
[38] Gordon 1961, 153-155; Kosiński 2010, 148-150; Crawford 2019, 196-202.

Aspar's son Hermenerich.[39] However, until 486 he did not show open hostility. In the said year, the Goths rebelled again under the pretext that food supplies were reduced, Theodoric defiantly left the imperial court and began to prepare for an attack on Constantinople.[40]

This is the moment when, according to some Bulgarian historians, Zeno sought the help of the Bulgars for the second time. The events are dated to 486[41] and are based entirely on the panegyric of Bishop Enodius.[42] However, the content of the excerpt shows that no such battle actually took place and that everything referred to in the text concerns the battle of 488. The only reason for distinguishing two separate events is based on the discrepancies between the accounts of Enodius and Paul the Deacon.[43] According to the first, Theodoric spared and released from captivity an unnamed Bulgarian chieftain,[44] while the second speaks of the murder of a Bulgarian king named Buzan[45] during the battle between the Goths and the Gepids.[46] It is quite possible that Paul the Deacon, who was not a contemporary of the events, used another source, the author of which embellished the deeds of Theodoric, attributing to him another murder of a dangerous enemy. If this is indeed the case, it must be assumed that there was no attempt by the emperor to stop the Goths by armed force. He was probably certain that a diplomatic settlement would be reached, and the events of the following months proved him right.

In 487, Theodoric reached Constantinople, destroyed one of its aqueducts to cause a water crisis, and encamped near the city. However, his behavior was more of a military display than a preparation for an attack. The conversation between him and his sister, the envoy and lady-in-waiting of the Augusta Ariadne,[47] was

[39] Gordon 1961, 181; Kosiński 2010, 149, n. 12.
[40] Kosiński 2010, 177.
[41] Burmov 1968, 56-57; Petrov 1981, 102-103.
[42] Ennod. Paneg. V.
[43] This was noticed even by the German scholar L. Schmidt, who, due to his extreme skepticism, completely rejected the idea of the intervention of the Bulgars in the Gothic-Gepid relations (Schmidt 1969, 294, note 7).Criticism of his position in Burmov 1968, 57-58.
[44] Ennod. Paneg. V.
[45] V. Beshevliev suggested that this is a distorted transcription of the name Bayan (Beshevliev 1984, 12-13), but the connection with Iranian names such as Mihrbozan (Frye 2002, 274) cannot be rejected.
[46] Paul. Diac. Hist. Rom. XV.11.
[47] Gordon 1961, 182.

apparently only a pretext to start a new round of negotiations with the emperor, this time ending in a mutually beneficial agreement. According to the new arrangement, Theodoric was to go to Italy, depose Odoacer and take his place, but with extremely limited powers: without permission to publish new laws, appoint Goths as officials, and challenge the rights of the Catholic Church.[48]

The proposal is a logical conclusion to the strained relationship between Zeno and Odoacer, who, while not siding with Illus, continues to pursue a completely independent policy. Just in the course of hostilities between Theodoric and Byzantium, he made a pre-emptive strike on the Rugian tribe in the province of Noricum (located on the upper reaches of the Danube and Drava rivers) and forced Frederic, son of the executed king Feletheus (Feva), to flee to the Ostrogoths.[49]

Probably Odoacer's idea was not so much to protect his rear as to induce the Constantinople government to maintain the status quo, but the result was not in his favour. Indeed, the emperor did not show his irritation and accepted the gifts from the campaign against the Rugians, but he did not stop the parallel diplomacy. The Ostrogothic king had long proved an unreliable ally, and his aiming at autonomous Italy provided a good opportunity to clear the Balkan provinces of the Germanic invaders without the Roman army taking part in a combat.[50]

In fact, it is not completely clear whether Zeno really wanted to get rid of Odoacer or simply aimed to trap the Goths. The similarities with the campaign of 478 are very noticeable. Although he promised support to Theodoric, there are well-founded doubts that it was he who incited Trapstila to attack the tribe retreating to Italy. Of course, it is possible that the Gepids felt alarmed by the presence of the Goths and attacked them at their own discretion.[51]

The decisive battle took place in the autumn of 488 at the river Ulka (perhaps the Sava)[52] and ended in another brilliant victory for Theodoric. The Gepids, who for years controlled the fortress of Sirmium (now Sremska Mitrovica) and the Danube roads, relied

[48] Haarer 2006, 78, note 26; Kosiński 2010, 178, note 10.
[49] Kosiński 2010, 177; Crawford 2019, 212-213.
[50] Uspenski 2001, 288-289; Tapkova-Zaimova *et al*. 1993, 89; Kosiński 2010, 177-178.
[51] Crawford 2019, 214.
[52] Beshevliev 1984, 12. Objections in Petrov 1981, 114, note 43, who accepts V. Zlatarski's opinion that the battle took place somewhere near Sirmium (Zlatarski 2007, 43).

heavily on the support of their allies, but remained bitterly disappointed. The Gepid army and the Bulgarian cavalry were routed, Trapstila was killed,[53] and his supporter Buzan was most likely released[54] on the promise not to disturb the settlers any more. It is not known whether the pardon was connected with any additional guarantees such as the exchange of hostages, which are practically mandatory in such cases, but it is a fact that the Bulgars did not enter into conflicts with the Goths until the first decade of the 6th century.

After the defeat of the Bulgarian-Gepid coalition, Theodoric began systematically to conquer the Italian lands. The long and bloody battle did not end until 5 March 493 with the capitulation of Ravenna and the assassination of Odoacer a few days later.[55] F. Uspenski's opinion that the Apennine Peninsula left the political reach of Constantinople for decades,[56] however, is exaggerated,[57] as well as the assessment of complete Bulgarian dominance in the Balkans. Although in recent times there have been tendencies to perceive the relations between the Bulgars and Zeno as an official union between equal partners, there is not a single evidence of the existence of a powerful and influential Bulgarian state before the last decades of the 6th or the beginning of the 7th century.

Undoubtedly, there was a sufficiently large Bulgarian community in the East, which periodically sent military contingents to Central Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, but politically it hardly differed significantly from the other nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples who inhabited the Caucasus and the adjacent steppes during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Otherwise, its activity would necessarily be reflected in the works, if not of Byzantine, then at least of Armenian writers, who had already begun to create rich literature in their mother tongue.

Even less could it be assumed that the Pannonian Bulgars had statehood. The claim that in 480 an international treaty of mutual aid was concluded between the Byzantine emperor Zeno and the

[53] Paul. Diac. Hist. Rom. XV.11.
[54] Ennod. Paneg. V.
[55] Uspenski 2001, 289-291; Gordon 1961, 182-183; Crawford 2019, 214-218.
[56] Uspenski 2001, 307-320.
[57] For the efforts of Anastasius I (491 – 518) to maintain at least a semblance of his sovereignty over Italy, see Haarer 2006, 85-88.

Bulgarian king Bozhan (Buzes)[58] is nothing more than a patriotic fiction that found a place in educational institutions for populist reasons. Bishop Enodius, a contemporary of the events, claims that Theodoric defeated not a hostile "rex" (king), but a mere "ductor" (leader, chief) – a term often used to denote military commanders of relative low rank, and only Paul the Deacon or his unknown primary source "promoted" Buzan to the rank of ruler. There is no doubt that the Bulgarian diaspora in Pannonia had already existed for at least several decades, but just as one of the small tribal communities located in the "no man's land" between Byzantium and the nascent Ostrogothic kingdom. In terms of potential, the Bulgars were probably inferior even to the Gepids, with whom they maintained close ties until the resettlement of 568, and their activity on the Balkan Peninsula towards the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century was invariably connected with the state of the Roman Empire and its rivals in the East and in the West. Indeed, the frequent crises of the time of Anastasius I provided opportunities for military actions, but even against this background, the Bulgarian political formations still remained a factor of secondary importance.

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Crises of supreme power in pagan Bulgaria

Zhenya Dobreva

Abstract: All authors dealing with the ruling institution in early medieval Bulgaria start from the fact that the power of the Bulgarian ruler was hereditary, passed down within the family and the principle of majority was valid - the first-born son of the ruler had the right to inherit the throne, at least as long as this was objectively possible. Regarding the dynastic principle, most examples from our early medieval history indicate that it was followed. As for the primogeniture, however, as a right of succession to the throne, in our history until the conversion we have mostly exceptions to it. The aim of the present work is, by tracking the exceptions to the rule of succession - peculiar crises of power, to look for their common and different features, as well as similarity in the reasons that gave rise to them. Although in some of the cases the information about the kinship ties and relationships in the Bulgarian ruling family from this period is extremely scarce and/or divergent in order to cotribute to the drawing of definite conclusions, they are included here because of the existing discussion on them in the Bulgarian and foreign historiography.

Key words: crisis, supreme power, pagan period, throne succession

Резюме: Всички автори, занимаващи се с владетелската институция в ранносредновековна България, изхождат от предпоставката, че властта на българския владетел е наследствена, предава се в семейството и е валиден принципът на мнозинството – първородният син на владетеля има право да наследи престола, поне докато това е обективно възможно. По отношение на династическия принцип повечето примери от нашата ранносредновековна история сочат, че той е бил следван. Що се отнася обаче до първородството, като право на наследяване на престола, в нашата история до покръстването имаме предимно изключения от него. Целта на настоящата работа е чрез проследяване на изключенията от правилото за приемственост – своеобразни кризи на властта, да се потърсят техните общи и различни черти, както и сходство в причините, които са ги породили. Въпреки че в някои от случаите информацията за родствените връзки и отношения в българското владетелско семейство от този период е изключително оскъдна и/или разнопосочна, за да допринесе за

направата на категорични изводи, те са включени тук поради съществуващата дискусия в българската и чуждестранната историография.

All authors dealing with the ruling institution in early medieval Bulgaria start from the fact that the power of the Bulgarian ruler was hereditary, passed down within the family and the principle of majority was valid - the first-born son of the ruler had the right to inherit the throne, at least as long as this was objectively possible. The dynastic principle is convincingly proven by The Namelist of the Bulgarian rulers, and the primogeniture, according to the information of Konstantin Bagrenorodni in his work "On Ceremonies",[1] which mentions the title of the Bulgarian heir to the throne – "Kanartikin",[2] read as "tomorrow's khan and first-born son". We also have the information of John the Exarch in "Shestodnev", according to which "the Bulgarians, from the beginning, the princes were [placed] by inheritance - the son in the place of the father and the brother in the place of the brother. We learn that it was the same with the Khazars."[3] Some authors accept this information with no doubts, as determining the principle of succession to the throne for the entire period of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, while others consider it as a combination between the inheritance law of the Bulgarians and the specific political situation at the time of the origin of the source - the end of the 9th century[4] and the legitimization of Simeon as the successor of his brother, Vladimir-Rasate. Regarding the dynastic principle, most examples from our early medieval history indicate that it was followed. As for the primogeniture, however, as a right of succession to the throne, in our history during the pagan period we have mostly exceptions to it. The aim of the present article is, by tracking the exceptions to the rule of succession to the throne - peculiar crises of supreme power, to look for their common and different features, as well as similarity in the reasons that gave rise to them. Although in some of the cases the information about the kinship ties and relationships in the Bulgarian ruling family from this period is extremely scarce and/or divergent to cotribute to the drawing of definite conclusions, they are

[1] GIBI 5, 222.

[2] In addition to the Byzantine source, the title is also attested in domestic sphragistic monuments from the end of the 9th to the beginning of the 10th century, but there can hardly be any doubt that it was also used before that time. The issue is analyzed in details by P. Georgiev, see Georgiev 1992, 5.

[3] Petrov & Gjuzelev 1978, 153.

[4] Todorov 2000, 202–207.

included here because of the existing discussion on them in Bulgarian and foreign historiography .

The crisis of supreme power in the middle of the 8th century

The information in the sources[5] about the internal political crisis from the middle of the 8th century is often contradictory, but their diverse origin makes it possible to look at the events from different points of view, from the positions of the parties directly involved in them - Bulgarian and Byzantine, as well as from that of those distant from events in space and time Latin sources. None of them can be used independently, therefore, synthesizing and using the information from all available sources in a complex manner, the historical reconstruction of our past in the second half of the 8th century is as follows:

After the reign of Tervel, the Namelist of the Bulgarian Khans testifies to one or two successors of him, but the information is extremely insufficient for them to be even partially restored. The name of the third one is Sevar, who was of the Dulo family and ruled for 15 years. The next message is about Kormisosh, who changed Dulo. He belonged to the Vokil family and after 17 years of rule in peace with Byzantium, in 754[6] he was succeeded by Vinekh of the same family. These events from the internal political life of Bulgaria remained out of sight of the Byzantine chroniclers, probably because of the tranquility along their common border. Leo III the Syrian (717-741), busy with his internal and external affairs, strictly observed peaceful relations with Bulgaria, according to the treaty concluded in 716. Things changed radically under his son, Constantine V Copronymus. In addition to being an iconoclast, Constantine V was a spokesman for that part of Byzantine society that believed that Bulgaria illegally possessed ancient Roman lands, and that these lands should once again return to the confines of the empire.[7] He took his first actions in Thrace - challenged the Bulgarians, strengthening border fortresses and resettling Syrians and Armenians in

[5] Namelist of the Bulgarian khans (Petrov & Gjuzelev 1978, 87), Madara inscriptions (Beshevliev 1979, 68), "Chronography" of Theophanes the Confessor (GIBI 3, 269), "Short History" of Patriarch Nicephorus (GIBI 3, 301), Tripertita Chronicle of Anastasius the Librarian (LIBI 2, 222), Chronicle of Sigebert (LIBI 3, 40), Chronicle of the Monk Alberich (LIBI 4, 179), Seal of Telerig (Yordanov 2016, 35- 36).

[6] The chronology of the rulers according to the Namelist of the Bulgarian Khans has been repeatedly examined by Bulgarian and foreign researchers, therefore it will not be a subject of the present study, we will stick to that suggested by Moskov (Moskov 1988).

[7] Rashev 2001, 85.

them, because of which the Bulgarians, ruled then by Khan Vinekh (754-760), demanded a tribute, which not only they did not receive, but their envoy was not honored by the emperor. In response to this contemptuous attitude, which definitely pointed to the end of the almost 40-year-long peacefull period, the Bulgarians went on a march, reaching as far as the Long Wall. Although without definite success, these military actions marked the beginning of a 20-year war that almost led to the liquidation of the khanate. The first of the nine anti-Bulgarian campaigns, organized by land and sea, although with variable success, ultimately gave the Bulgarians the upper hand. Although khan Vinekh had a reason to build on his success and continue the pursuit, for some reasons he did not, and perhaps this, interpreted as weakness or betrayal, predetermined his fate.[8] The Byzantine chroniclers tell us about the first (known to them) coup d'état of the Bulgarian throne, and their stories are identical: the Bulgarians, after agreeing among themselves, rose up and killed their masters from the old khans' family and placed Telesius at the head. The Namelist indicates that Telesius ruled for 3 years, belonged to the Ugain family,[9] as well as the additional information "And this one instead of another".[10] In order to justify the expectations for tougher position towards Byzantium, Telesius attacked "the closer Roman settlements and fortresses", to which the emperor responded with a new campaign, organized by land and water.[11] The chroniclers are unanimous about the course and outcome of the conflict, on June 30, 763 a bloody battle took place in the field of Anchialo, in which the Byzantines prevailed.

The defeat was not forgiven to Telesius, a new coup followed, the Bulgarians killed the ruler and his associates, and put "one of their leaders" on the throne - Sabin, "son-in-law of their former master Kormesius".[12] The reign of Sabin is also confirmed in Latin sources,[13] but his name is missing from our khan's chronicle, in which, after the message about Telesius, that of Umor is placed. Based on the dating of

[8] Rashev 2001, 86–87.

[9] The information about him is supplemented by Sigebert, according to whom in 760 Telesius reigned over the Bulgarians (LIBI 3, 43).

[10] See M. Moskov's (Moskov 1988, 310–311) interpretation of the expression, which we also adopt here.

[11] GIBI 3, 303. Only Nicephorus reported the attack on Telesius. According to Theophanes, the initiative for the next clash belonged to Constantine V, GIBI 3, 271.

[12] GIBI 3, 271.

[13] LIBI 2, 259; LIBI 3, 43; LIBI 4, 180.

the end of the reign of Telesiuus and the beginning of that of Umor, it is clear that the Sabin's place as a reign period is indirectly preserved and lasts approximately 2 years.[14] The reason for his exclusion from the Namelist (from the beginning or subsequently) probably lies in his actions. As soon as he took power, Sabin, unlike Telesius, decided to maintain peaceful relations with Byzantium and sent envoys to the emperor, but apparently without the consent of the influential notables. They convened a council and opposed the actions of their ruler with the words: "Bulgaria will be enslaved by the Romans because of you".[15] A revolt ensued, and Sabin would probably have shared the fate of his predecessor Telesius, but managed to escape to Constantinople, where he was warmly received by the emperor. The opinion of almost all researchers is that it was probably the reason his name not to appear in the Namelist, or for the same reason it was subsequently deleted in the translations of the source. There are, of course, scientists who add other reasons to the obvious. Zlatarski, for example, explains his absence from the list by his Slavic origin.[16] Feher, on the other hand, believes that Sabin took the throne as the deputy of the under-age Umor, and as such did not find a place in the Namelist.[17] His passive conciliatory politics is the likely reason for his removal from the throne after a national assembly, but not for his non-inclusion in the ruler's chronicle. The politics of Vinekh at the end of his reign was passive as well, the fleeting reign of Umor also did not show achievements and success against Byzantium, but the names of both are inscribed among the rulers of Bulgaria. In connection with the personality of Sabin, one more fact is striking: while our domestic source does not mention him at all, the Byzantine chroniclers are surprisingly detailed about him. Theophanes mentions his name 5 times, and in the chronicle of Nicephorus it occurs 6 times. The accounts of both are almost identical, probably having been informed by Sabin personally after his escape to Constantinople. Yordan Andreev was the first to come to this assumption, in connection with the information about the national assembly against Sabin. It is designated in the Byzantine chronicles with the correct Byzantine term *komventon*, since the chroniclers had a clear idea of the course of events in the Bulgarian state.[18]

[14] Moskov 1988, 318–319.
[15] GIBI 3, 271.
[16] Zlatarski 2007, 216, n. 1.
[17] Feher 1922/1925, 274–275.
[18] Andreev 1971, 98.

According to Theophanes, after Sabin, the Bulgarians made Pagan their master, Anastasius the Librarian and Sigebert claimed the same. A completely different succession of rulers is presented to us by patriarch Nicephorus, which, although not confirmed by other sources, is adopted by a number of scholars.[19] Before fleeing, Sabin handed over the power to Umar of the Vokil clan, who ruled for only 40 days. This is the last ruler that the Namelist informs us about.[20] As already stated, here we adhere to the chronology of M. Moskov, according to which his rule of only 40 days refers to the months of April-May 765. The Bulgarians overthrew him and proclaimed Toktu. His rule was short as well, but marked by one of the most dangerous and spectacular campaigns of Constantine V against Bulgaria,[21] undertaken as a reaction against the overthrow of Umor, Sabin's deputy. Synthesized, the information of the two Byzantine chroniclers reconstructs the past events as follows: In June 765 the emperor headed a land force, which was encamped at Veregava, and the fleet, numbering 2,600 helandias, had to land an additional army in the region of Mesemvria and Anchialo. At the sight of the huge army, the Bulgarians asked for peace, but it seems that the emperor confidently rejected the offer, convinced of his complete success. However, a sudden strong wind pushed the ships to shore and wrecked them. Despite the happy outcome, or because, just like Vinekh, he did not take advantage of it, Toktu failed to hold on to power, was forced to flee and was killed. It was only then that Pagan came to power. The chroniclers' accounts of his reign are almost identical, except a laconic announcement by Nicephorus about the death of "one of their chiefs called Campagan".[22] Apparently a supporter of the policy of peace towards Byzantium, at the very beginning of his reign he sent envoys to the emperor, but his proposal was rejected. Constantine V undertook his next campaign, but soon encountered the well-fortified mountain passes, and changed his mind. The ensuing negotiations were attended by Pagan and his boyars, and by Constantine V, accompanied

[19] Moskov 1988, 327; Zlatarski 2007, 219–221; Primov & Tsankova-Petkova 1981, 124–125.
[20] Petrov & Gjuzelev 1978, 87.
[21] Some authors date this march at the end of the reign of Sabin, see Zlatarski 2007, 216–217; Rashev 2001, 87–88; Primov & Tsankova 1981, 124. However, this contradicts the sources that place the march after Sabin's flight. As stated above, the Byzantine chroniclers were well acquainted with the events at the Bulgarian court during the time of Sabin himself, and if the campaign had taken place then, they would undoubtedly have explicitly noted it.
[22] This account of Nicephorus is the basis for Beshevliev's theory of co-rule, which we will discuss below.

by the fugitive Sabin. The emperor reprimanded the Bulgarians for the disorder in their country and made a seeming peace. Constantine V skilfully took advantage of it, preparing his future actions against Bulgaria. A detachment was sent to the border region, which captured Slavun, prince of the severi tribe and Hristian, the leader of the skamars, and thus, together with the dulled vigilance of the Bulgarians because of the peace concluded, the obstacles to the unimpeded passage of the montain passes were removed. For the first time the Byzantines managed to penetrate north of Stara Planina, reaching Chika, the emperor "burned the auls he found and returned with fear without doing anything valiant".[23] The blame for this was laid on Pagan, who, guessing the fate that awaited him, fled to Varna "and seemed to have saved himself, but was killed by his own slaves".[24]

For the next 5-6 years, the sources do not contain any data concerning Bulgaria, which suggests an interruption of hostilities, although the two countries remained in a state of war. With this peaceful period in the relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium, the rule of Telerig began, unfortunately any data about the circumstances under which he took power are missing, as well as about the family to which he belonged. Apparently, he did not respond to the last action of Constantine V with military action, preferring, it seems, to establish order in his country first. Considering the subsequent events, we can assume that a slow but relatively sustainable process of stabilization of the central government and strengthening of the state's military resources began in Bulgaria. Regarding the reasons for the interruption of the Byzantine offensives, several possible ones are found in the scientific literature. One of them was probably the disaster that befell the Byzantine fleet in the ill-fated campaign against the Bulgarians. This was the largest military expedition on land and sea, which was supposed to lead, if not to the planned capture of Bulgaria, at least to a decisive turning point in the war.[25] Beshevliev found the reason in Constantine V's belief that Bulgaria no longer posed a serious military threat and its final subjugation was postponed to a later stage.[26] The lull lasted until 773, when another large-scale attack by Byzantium began. This time the ships numbered 2,000 and headed towards the Danube, and the cavalry was positioned at the foot of Stara planina and its passes. Reaching

[23] GIBI 2, 272.
[24] GIBI 2, 305.
[25] Rashev 1999, 81.
[26] Beshevliev 1981, 96.

Varna, "the emperor was frightened and thought of turning back".[27] The Bulgarians also did not feel confident in their own strength or simply needed a long period of calm to stabilize their country and sent envoys with a peace proposal. The sources mention one clause of the concluded treaty – "neither the Bulgarians should go against Romania, nor the emperor should seek to invade Bulgaria". Learned from the unfortunate experience of his predecessor, this time Telerig took advantage of this non-aggression treaty. He sent his attendants to Constantinople, probably to divert the emperor's attention, and proceeded to realize his real intentions: 12,000 troops and boils (bolyars) were sent to resettle in Bulgaria the Berziti tribe.[28] However, from his informers in Bulgaria, Constantine V found out about the planned campaign and his retaliatory strike was not long in coming: with an 80,000-strong army, he surprised the Bulgarians in Lithosoria (unlocalized) and defeated them. The war was officially resumed, Byzantium organized a new campaign by land and sea against Bulgaria, but at Messemvria again a strong storm forced the emperor to end it.

The foiling of Telerig's plans made him realize that his intentions, like those of his predecessors, were quickly reaching the Emperor through his spies in the khan's court. Using typical Byzantine methods, Telerig assured Constantine V that he intended to flee to Byzantium and demanded to know who his trusted men in Bulgaria were whom he could rely on. Not doubting his words, the emperor betrayed them, they were captured and killed. This failure was followed by Constantine V's last campaign against Bulgaria, during which he fell seriously ill and died. Theophanes informs us that two years later, in 777, Telerig actually sought refuge in Byzantium and was warmly welcomed by the new emperor Leo IV, baptized and accepted into the ruling family, marrying a cousin of the empress. The reasons for this unexpected outcome remain unknown to us; most likely with his actions to eliminate the Byzantine spies he had affected the interests of a certain circle of boils,

[27] V. Beshevliev is probably right in his assumption that Constantine V was convinced on the spot of the increased military power of his opponent, seeing the built anti-landing ramparts in the Varna area, and this changed his decision to attack (Beshevliev 1981, 96–97).

[28] It is generally accepted that the area of Berzitia was located around Prilep, Veles, Bitola, Lake Ohrid, Western Macedonia, see Bozhilov & Gyuzelev 1999, 130; GIBI 3, 274, note 4. However, Mutafchiev located it in the Western Rhodopes or near Sofia, and the purpose of the campaign was not their forced accession, but approchement and cooperation with the Slavic tribes outside Bulgaria, see Mutafchiev 1943, 126.

and, like Sabin, had to save his life. His life in Byzantium is evidenced by his lead seal with the inscription: "Christ, help the patrician Telerig-Theophylact".[29]

Meanwhile, the successor of Constantine Kopronim - Leo IV, during his short reign (775-780) did not continue his father's anti-Bulgarian politics. His grandson, embroiled in grueling struggles for the throne with his mother, made several unsuccessful attempts to demonstrate his superiority over his northern neighbour, but the conditions had already changed radically.

The first information in the sources about the next Bulgarian ruler, Kardam, dates from 791. The lack of other information leads most researchers to believe that he inherited Telerig immediately after his escape, with no details of his parentage or kinship between them. His name is mentioned in connection with a military battle that took place at the Provat fortress, which ended ingloriously for both sides.[30] The following year, 792, a new, this time bloody battle took place between them at Markeli, which ended in defeat for Byzantium. For the third time, Constantine VI went on a campaign against the Bulgarians in 796, when, because of an unpaid tax, Kardam issued an ultimatum, threatening the capital Constantinople. The troops met at Versinikia, waited for 17 days without either side daring to attack, and returned to their lands. This is the last information in the sources about khan Kardam. It appears that the last years of his reign were spent in peace both with Byzantium and within the state, and that he was the only ruler of the second half of the 8th century who remained on the throne until old age and died of natural death.

As it became clear from the course of the crisis traced according to the data from the sources, white spots abound. One of the most important questions related to the problem under consideration is that of the descent from the political scene of the dynastic family of Dulo and the rise of Vokil, and the disputes in the scientific circles concern the way in which this happened. On this occasion, the Namelist informs us that "This prince changed the family of Dulo, namely Vikhtun". Discussions about the second part of this account will not be taken up here, our

[29] Yordanov 2016, 35–36.

[30] Rashev locates the area of Provat near Adrianople and assumes that the initiative for the military actions was of the Bulgarians. This leads the scholar to think about a possible Bulgarian intervention, in the spirit of Tervel's politics, in the struggles for the Byzantine throne that broke out at that time between Constantine VI and his mother Irina. See Rashev 2001, 93.

interest will be in the "change", was it peaceful or violent, and if it was the latter, what were the reasons for it?

According to Pavlov,[31] it is possible that Sevar, the last ruler of the Dulo family, had no direct male heirs and this led to the election of a ruler from another family, who was most likely related to the dynasty of the old Bulgarian khans.[32] The author finds the reason for the existence of another view on the issue in the spirit of imposed retrospection, given what we know about the sharp inter-personal struggles in the Bulgarian state during the turbulent years. The prevailing tradition in the barbarian world is Gyuzelev's argument, claiming that the members of the Dulo family were exterminated by the Vokil family, which won the dispute over the khan's power.[33]

Regarding the genesis and causes of the political crisis in the middle of the 8th century, there are several hypotheses, here we will focus on the most popular ones. The one about the confrontation between Bulgarians and Slavs, underlying the crisis, was put forward by Alexander Hilferding as early as 1868,[34] but its full development is due to V. Zlatarski. According to him, from the time of Kormisosh in Bulgaria, "two parties were formed between the Hunno-Bulgarians themselves, which, although they arose on a purely political basis, have an ethnic character - Bulgarian and Slavic", and in the struggle between them had to be decided which of the two ethnic elements would take precedence in the formation of the Bulgarian nationality.[35] The representatives of the Slavic party were supporters of the peaceful politics towards Byzantium, believing that only in this way they would be able to preserve their identity and force the empire to come to terms with the ceding of its former lands to the Bulgarian state. Kormisosh relied on this party when he usurped the power and changed the Dulo family. So was his successor. The representatives of the Bulgarian party, on the other hand, believed that only with warlike politics and intransigence would preserve the independence of the state. After a coup, their representative came to

[31] Pavlov 2015, 114.

[32] To search for such a connection, we will use a late source, Mihail Psel, who, reporting on the rebellion of Petar Delyan, claims that "the Bulgarians have a custom of placing men of royal descent at the head of the people", see GIBI 4, 95. With great probability, this statement can also be attributed to the barbarian era.

[33] Gyuzelev 1999, 113. Such is the position of Bakalov as well, without providing additional arguments, see Bakalov 2003, 194.

[34] Gilyferding 1868, 29–36.

[35] Zlatarski 2007, 210–212.

power - Telesius from the Ugain family. The escape of "many Slavs" to the side of the emperor mentioned along with Telesius' rule[36] gives Zlatarski an occasion to further develop his theory. In the subsequent murder of Telesius together with his associates, Zlatarski sees a counter-coup on the part of the Slavic party, the rise of Sabin - son-in-law of Kormisos and the Vokil family, which is already known to follow the politics of reconciliation.[37]

Petar Mutafchiev offers his view on the matter, which is largely covered by some of Zlatarski's statements. He also talks about two currents among the Bulgarians, the distinction between which can be found in the attitude towards Byzantium, therefore they are conventionally called Byzantine and Anti-Byzantine,[38] but he categorically rejects the ethnic element in their formation. The Byzantine one, like Zlatarski's Slavic party, believed that a reconciliation with Byzantium should be sought, to which they were ready with humiliating compromises. Their opponents saw that no concessions would satisfy the empire in its attempts to restore the status quo and regain the lands taken from it by the Bulgarians, therefore they were in favor of uncompromising actions and active self-defense. The struggle between them to place their representative on the throne led to the bloody crisis and to the weakening of the supreme power and the ruling institution in general. The role of the Slavs, however, according to this theory and to the sources was not only on the side of the anti-Byzantine group, but they were its most stable support, forming the first and main barrier to the Romans in the mountain passes.

There are not a few authors[39] who discover the reasons for the crisis in the struggle for power between the Protobulgarian clans. The main premise of this theory is that at the beginning of the 8th century, the sources focused their attention only on the figure of the supreme ruler, whose power was considered unlimited, and the presence of any of his assistants in the administration was not reflected.[40] The information gradually changed from the middle of the 8th century, when they increasingly referred to boils participating in negotiations or commanding armies. Representatives of various Protobulgarian clans, they fall into the whirlwind of a struggle for power among themselves,

[36] GIBI 3, 271.
[37] Zlatarski 2007, 215.
[38] Mutafchiev 1943, 116–132.
[39] See Shepard 2007, 28–30; Slavova 2010, 15–19; Primov 1978, 7-40.
[40] Zhekov 2007, 233.

expressed in a frequent change of rulers and weakening of the central authority. It loses its legitimacy and authority, dominated by the decisions of the boils. G. Bakalov claims that the warring clans were not driven by a clear political orientation "for" or "against" Byzantium.[41] This opinion is also supported by other authors, pointing the economic interest and political privileges as a leading motive for the clan feuds.[42] The hypothesis of a clash between the Bulgarian aristocratic clans for supremacy in the management of the state is also adopted by V. Gjuzelev, who pays serious attention to the reasons that initially led to this clash and finds them to a large extent in factors outside the human one.[43]

Scholars linking it to the practice of sacral regicide[44] bring an interesting nuance to the causes of tribal anarchy. It was believed that the ruler possessed a supernatural, God-given power that raised him above the common people and while he used it, he could perform his functions. In case of misfortune - famine, disaster, military defeat, or the appearance of a personal infirmity - blindness or serious illness, it was believed that the deity withdrew its favor from the ruler, he was killed, often with his entire family, and replaced by another. Referring to information about its application among the Khazars, as well as information from Synaxar of the Constantinople Church about the murder of one of the alleged Krum heirs, the authors assume that this practice was repeatedly applied during the period of tribal anarchy.

Hristo Matanov offers a broader view of the causes of the crisis, seeing in the frequent change of rulers a crisis of the original state structure.[45] The model of separate existence of Slavs and Protobulgarians, applicable at the time of the formation of the state, subsequently turned out to be inadequate and led to a crisis in supreme power. The way out was in removing internal borders and centralization.[46]

[41] Bakalov 2003, 199–200.
[42] Burmov 1954, 92–93.
[43] Bozhilov & Gjuzelev 1999, 113–114.
[44] Beshevliev 1981, 68–69; Stepanov 1999, 141–142.
[45] A similar opinion is shared by R. Komsalova, considering that the crisis is an expression of the transformation of the political elite, which, from sharply differentiated to nomadic and settled, must integrate and "fit" the essentially new socio-political system, see Komsalova 2014, 104.
[46] Matanov 2014, 77–81.

Khan Krum and his heirs

In the scientific community it is generally accepted that Krum came to power after Kardam,[47] the last information about whom, as already stated, is from 796.[48] The fact that raises doubts is that Krum is mentioned in the sources much later. Having in mind his great fame in Byzantium, especially if he had already ruled Bulgaria for a decade, this "silence" seems illogical. It is quite possible that another monarch ruled before him. In this regard, Pl. Pavlov cites as an argument a letter of the monk Theodore Studit,[49] from which we understand that a prominent Bulgarian lived in Constantinople - the patrician Theodore, who had escaped "from polytheism and Bulgarian idolatry", whom Studit addresses as "master".[50] Except the salutation, usually used to refer to rulers, a reason for assuming that master Theodore was a former Bulgarian ruler is the title patrician, given to foreign rulers (the example of Telerig, as testified by Teophan the Confessor).[51] Although for now it is completely in the realm of the hypothetical, due to a lack of sufficient evidence, from such an assumption it can be concluded that the internal political turmoil and power struggles continued even after Kardam's rule, and the high-ranking Bulgarians who sought refuge in the empire were with one more. An argument in this favor could be Krum's demand for the mutual return of political fugitives, offering Byzantium to renew the treaty of 716, a condition that Byzantium did not accept. However, there is also an argument against the possibility of this hypothesis, namely - the imperial chroniclers do not report anything about another high-ranking fugitive from Bulgaria, a fact that otherwise they would not have missed.

Another generally accepted fact is that Krum was the founder of a new dynasty, the representatives of which ruled Bulgaria not only until the end of the pagan period, but until it fell under Byzantine rule at the beginning of the 11th century.[52] The question of his successor after his

[47] Bozhilov & Gjuzelev 1999, 126; Zlatarski 2007, 247.
[48] GIBI 3, 277.
[49] GIBI 4, 33.
[50] Pavlov 2022, 18–19.
[51] GIBI 3, 275.
[52] There are various hypotheses about the origin of the ruler, trying to answer the question of whether Krum is the founder of a new or a continuation of the legendary Dulo dynasty. Here we will adopt the opinion of V. Sukarev, according to whom "Khan Krum is the first, categorically attested representative of a dynastic line that stood at the head of the country at least until 971, while questions related to his origin are still in the realm of conjecture", see Sukarev 2007, 136–137.

unexpected death has long been debated in historiography, opinions are divided into two poles, namely after the death of Krum, Bulgaria was briefly ruled by two, even three rulers before the ascension of Omurtag, or Omurtag was the immediate successor of Krum and there were no intermediate reigns between them. The reason for the existence of such a case study is the contradictory data in the written sources,[53] the different approach of the researchers to their credibility and interpretation. Among the defenders of the first thesis are K. Irechek and Alexander Burmov.[54] Its most persistent and consistent defender, however, is V. Beshevliev, who argued about it in several of his studies.[55] The researchers found grounds for their claims in two Byzantine monuments of a hagiographic nature and their Slavic translations - Synaxar of the Church of Constantinople and Menologia of Basil II, with particular importance being attached to the Synaxar as more detailed. Based on the information from these sources, the events in the months after Krum's death are reconstructed in the following way: according to the Sinaxar, after Krum's death, Dukum took power, but because of his premature death, Ditsevg – "cruel and inhuman", took the throne. The source informs us about the torture to which Ditsevg subjected the bishop of Edirne, Manuel, and his execution. A few months later he went blind and was killed by his cronies, and only then did Omurtag take power.[56] In the same direction, but in a different way, the narrative about the Byzantine martyrs, included in the Menology, conveys the events. According to it, the execution of Bishop Manuel was carried out by Krum, who "went blind because of his sin, hated by his people and strangled by them with ropes".[57] Then the power passed into the hands of Tsok. It is noteworthy that there are significant similarities between the two texts, probably because, as Beshevliev suggests, they used a

[53] Information about Krum's successors is contained in the Synaxar of the Constantinople Church (GIBI 5, 280), Menology of Emperor Basil II (GIBI 5, 55), Martyrdom of the 15 Martyrs of Tiveriupolis (GIBI 9/2, 63), Small Catechism of Theodore the Studite (GIBI 4, 28-34), The Continuer of Theophanes (GIBI 5, 107-139), Malamir's inscription (Beshevliev 1979,127), the Chronicle of Joseph Genesius (GIBI 4, 321) and Skilitsa-Kedrin (GIBI 6, 228).

[54] Irechek 1978, 163; Burmov 1961, 81.

[55] Beshevliev 1936, 1–19; 2008, 177–182. His theses are fully adopted by G. Ostrogorsky in "History of the Byzantine State", see Ostrogorskij 1996, 273.

[56] GIBI 5, 288.

[57] GIBI 6, 55.

common primary source.[58] The differences are due to the shortenings of the text of the Menology, the entire passage about Dukum and Ditsevg is omitted, which is why the violence against the Byzantine Christians, the blinding and strangulation are attributed to Krum. In order to smooth out the contradictions in the sources, the authors, led by Beshevliev, assume that Dukum and Tsok from the two narratives are one and the same person, identical both to the ichirgu boil Tuk mentioned in the Hambarlii inscription[59] and to Tuk, mentioned in one of the contractual Omurtag inscriptions.[60] Their rule was short-lived, Dukum stayed on the throne for only a month, and Ditsevg - a few months, after which the power passed to Omurtag. Regarding their kinship with Krum, in the first of his publications, Beshevliev considered Dukum and Ditsevg as his sons,[61] and later as his brothers.[62] Beshevliev discovered that such inheritance is possible and legitimate in the information of the already mentioned "Six Days" of John the Exarch. Another defender of this opinion is J. Bury,[63] who, however, identifies Ditsevg and Tsok as one and the same person. Due to the information from another available source,[64] Bury also speaks about the relationship between Omurtag and Krum, accepting that he is his son, but does not rule out the possibility that he is also his son-in-law.

Along with its supporters, this opinion, even after its formulation, met with the criticism of another group of authors who believed that Omurtag was the immediate successor of Krum and that there were no intermediate rulers between them two. In defense of their hypotheses, they use the information from the inscription of Malamir and the narrative for the life of the 15 Tiveriupol Martyrs.[65] The beginning was

[58] Beshevliev 1936, 12. Beshevliev believes that the common primary source is the more extensive life of Bishop Manuel of Edirne, or, more likely, a detailed description of the martyrdom of Christians who died during the considered period.
[59] Beshevliev 1979, 108.
[60] Petrov & Gjuzelev 1978, 106.
[61] Beshevliev 1936, 18.
[62] Beshevliev 2008, 177.
[63] Bury 1912, 359–360.
[64] Mainly referring to Malamir's chronicle, in which Malamir calls Krum his grandfather.
[65] The other two sources, Theophanes' Continuer and Skilitsa-Kedrin's chronicle, are inapplicable, since in them Omurtag is mentioned by name only in connection with the suppression of Thomas the Slav, until then he was called "the ruler of the Bulgarians".

made by the Russian byzantologist Hr. Loparev,[66] whose main argument is the unreliability of the sources on the basis of which the opposite hypothesis is built. According to him, both hagiographical texts are too distant from the era they tell about - they were created approximately a century later, and "bear the stamp of too obvious religious zeal in explaining the historical facts".[67] His arguments were also adopted by Zlatarski, who, although agreeing with some of Beshevliev's assumptions, namely the identification of Dukum and Tsok, rejects the theory in its essential part. According to him, Dukum and Ditsevg were not related to Krum and are not his heirs to the throne. They were Bulgarian boils, governors of those regions beyond the Danube, in which compact masses of Byzantine population were settled,[68] resettled by Krum after his campaign in Thrace. As such, they took the most active part in the persecution of Christians during the reign of Omurtag, acting on behalf of the ruler. This is probably the reason why their names have been preserved in the legends about the martyrs who suffered in Bulgaria, as well as the perception of them as representatives of the supreme power. At a later stage, Beshevliev's opinion was also criticized by Vasil Gjuzelev, who unconditionally gave his trust to the Malamir inscription as the most reliable source for the problem under consideration.[69] Güzelev's objections are in several factual points: the identification of Dukum with Tsok, Tuk, Tsuk (as well as Dicevg) is unacceptable if it is true that Dukum (and Ditsevg) died shortly after his accession, since Tsuk was mentioned as the main actor in the events of 819-820;[70] no direct indication that Dukum was Krum's brother; from the second Hambarlian inscription it is clear that Krum's brother and ichirgu boil Tuk are two different persons, since they are implicated by name in the same event; and last but not least, history does not have data on a single case in which ichirgu boil became a Bulgarian ruler. The opinion of Beshevliev and his predecessors has also been criticized by Ivan Bozhilov.[71] His objections are connected again firstly with the belonging of the cited sources to a typological group of texts, which contain unreliable historical information in terms of genre. The second point is that the information from them not only does not find support

[66] Loparev 1888, 341.
[67] Loparev 1888, 353.
[68] Zlatarski 2007, 424.
[69] Gjuzelev 2007, 199–203.
[70] Petrov & Gjuzelev 1978, 106.
[71] Bozhilov 2017, 303–305, 324–328.

in other groups of sources - Byzantine chronicles and domestic inscriptions, but also completely diverges from them, which is why the latter are ignored by those defending this hypothesis.

Although at present the opinion of intermediate rulers between Krum and Omurtag is considered disproved and it is accepted that Krum's direct successor is his son Omurtag, in a number of nowadays studies by indisputably authoritative scholars in our country, the assumption of internal strife after Krum's reign is creeping in again. In one of his articles, R. Rashev notes the infighting that broke out after Krum's sudden death, the successive rise of Dukum and Ditsevg, emphasizing their kinship with Krum, as well as the rise of "the legitimate heir Omurtag, which ended the crisis in power".[72] In his studies[73] Pl. Pavlov accepts that, although relatively late, the hagiographic sources telling about Krum's successors sound credible and are connected to official institutions - the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Imperial Chancellery.[74] The author does not object to the indisputable primary importance of Malamir's inscription for clarifying the issue, but he admits that the ruler does not make a historical overview in it, tracing the sequence of all those who ruled before him, but in a purely genealogical spirit leaves a memory of his father and grandfather, or led by other reasons, he points out his genealogy.

Pavel Georgiev also takes a stance on the issue of Krum's immediate successor. By re-reading parts of domestic and foreign sources, the scientist accepts that Omurtag is his direct successor, but identifies him with Krum's brother, who is repeatedly mentioned in the sources. By analyzing the names with which Omurtag is found in historical sources of different types and origin, Georgiev comes to the conclusion that Dukum and Dicevg are his nicknames at different stages of his participation in the management of the state.[75]

Information about Khan Krum's brother can be found in various sources, which emphasize his merits mainly as the first military assistant of the Khan and testify to the important place he occupied in the command of the army and the management of the state, namely the two Hambarli inscriptions,[76] the earlier inscription from Silistra,[77] the

[72] Rashev 2001, 110–111.
[73] Pavlov 2000, 11.
[74] Pavlov 2022, 62.
[75] Georgiev 2011, 144–160.
[76] Beshevliev 1979, 108.
[77] Beshevliev 1979, 116.

chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor.[78] His name is absent from all of them, which, together with the use of the noun in singular, suggests that Krum had a brother and that he was a famous person. In this line of thought, Pavlov accepted his identification with Dukum mentioned in the texts, as well as the possibility that he had succeeded Krum after his unexpected death, possibly when Omurtag was still a minor at the time. So far, the author does not see any reason to define the changes at the top of the power as a crisis. Things change with Ditsevg's reign. Hypothetically, without the presence of any data in the sources, Pavlov assumes that he is either an older brother of Omurtag or a son of Krum's deceased brother Dukum, who succeeded his father. If this is the case, then the adult Ditsevg dethroned the minor legal heir Omurtag, especially if Dukum was his guardian. If it is true that a few months after the death of Krum the throne was occupied by Ditsevg, then the events of the summer of 814, the military offensive of Leo V and the invasion of Byzantine troops on Bulgarian territory, described by Theophanes' Continuatus, are connected precisely with him as the "ruler of the Bulgarians"[79] at that time. Pavlov believes that the severe defeat suffered provoked him to start anti-Christian repressions against the Byzantine captives described in the Synaxar. The same then informs us that Ditsevg "being afflicted with blindness, was killed by his own people and Mortagon took power".[80] The Menology, in turn, claims that "...he became blind because of sin. He was hated by his people and strangled by them with ropes",[81] a fate attributed to Krum. In science, however, it is believed that Krum died of natural death,[82] therefore Beshevliev is probably right in claiming that the information in the Synaxar and the Monthly Dictionary is identical, but in the latter the passage with the names of Dukum and Ditsevg is omitted. Some authors see in the murder of Ditsevg an example of sacral regicide - a practice known among some eastern nations, attributed to the Protobulgarian

[78] GIBI 3, 287.
[79] GIBI 5, 111–112. The name of Omurtag as the ruler of the Bulgarians at that time is not mentioned in the text of the source, but in note 2 (GIBI 5, 111), inserted by his translator Ivan Duychev.
[80] GIBI 5, 288.
[81] GIBI 6, 55.
[82] According to Gjuzelev, because of the information from the Scriptor Incerttus (GIBI 4, 24), Krum died suddenly of an illness causing a massive hemorrhage (Bozhilov &Gjuzelev 1999, 138).

heritage.[83] Assuming that Ditsevg was strangled, Pavlov developed the hypothetical situation with the possibility that a new coup d'état by Omurtag and his supporters had taken place in Pliska, ending with Ditsevg's murder. He was probably provoked by a number of circumstances that gave rise to serious dissatisfaction: the failure in the war with Leo V, the admission of a Byzantine army to the Bulgarian territory after Krum's brilliant victories.[84] To these we can add the repressions against Christians, including those against Byzantine officers, until recently tolerated by Krum, the execution of high-ranking priests, which presuppose new dramatic confrontations with the empire, as well as the possible displacement of Omurtag. All these make the hypothesis increasingly plausible. An interesting nuance in this connection is the reasoning of Zlatarski. Although he denies the participation of Dukum, Ditsevg and Tsok in the management of the state as rulers and believes that Omurtag - son of Krum is his immediate successor, the scientist remains faithful to his theory of the existence of Slavic and Bulgarian parties that direct the rulers in the internal and external politics they follow and sees their role in the events that took place. According to him, the boils from the Bulgarian party, the most influential among whom was Ditsevg, in their intention to regain their lost positions as a factor in the state after the measures taken by Krum to centralize power and align them with the Slavic leaders, started the mass persecutions against the Christians. The basis of these cruel persecutions were not so much religious, but political motives, since they were rather a means of eliminating both the influence of the Slavs acquired under Krum and their political enemies among the boils who sympathized with the Slavs, thus trying to deprive the khan of any opportunity to oppose them. Zlatarski goes even further, claiming that perhaps during Krum's lifetime, the boils "managed to fanaticize Omurtag, so that when he ascended the throne, they already had him firmly in their hands and directed the domestic politics."[85] Following the words of our distinguished scientist, whichever of the two opinions about Krum's successor we adopt, lead us to the conclusion that the transfer of power did not go smoothly and without problems at all.

[83] This practice has already been mentioned above as one of the possible reasons for the crackdown with some of the rulers during the crisis of the mid-8th century.
[84] Pavlov 2022, 59–63.
[85] Zlatarski 2007, 296–297.

The heirs of κhan Omurtag

Another case of deviation from the theoretical formulation on which the inheritance law of the Bulgarians was based is from the 30s of the 9th century, related to the heirs of Omurtag. The starting point for our examination will be the information from the repeatedly mentioned Malamir's inscription and "Martyrdom of the 15 Tiveriupolis Martyrs" - sources of different origin and type (domestic and Byzantine, secular and hagiographic), which in this case find confirmation in each other. Our data is enriched by two more inscriptions of Malamir, testifying to the great role of Kavkhan Isbul in the administration of the state,[86] the inscription of Presian from Philippi,[87] as well as the chronicle of Constantine Bagrenorodni "On Management". An additional nuance on the discussed issues is provided by two Latin sources: the Chronicle of Einhard[88] and the Saxon Annalist.[89]

According to Theophylact of Ohrid, Omurtag was succeeded by his third, probably youngest son, Malamir.[90] The majority principle was violated, and regarding the reason for this, several versions are spread in the scientific community.The most popular is the explanation of Zlatarski, according to whom the change in the succession to the throne was carried out by Omurtag, who removed Enravota from the right to succeed him, because of his sympathies for Christianity.[91] Omurtag, however, did not take this decision independently and single-handedly: after Enravota's affinity for Christianity, the boils from the Bulgarian party, dissatisfied with their shaky position at the top of power and the supremacy that the Slavic party was gradually gaining, forced Omurtag to deprive Enravota of his succession to the throne[92] and chose as his successor his youngest son Malamir, "...whom, as their deputy, the boils took well in their hands and made him their instrument",[93] thus guaranteeing themselves the same direction of foreign policy, as under Omurtag.[94] As stated above, there is probably a basis for the claim that

[86] Beshevliev 1979, 125.
[87] Beshevliev 1979,132–133.
[88] LIBI 2, 37.
[89] LIBI 3, 142.
[90] GIBI 9/2, 64–65.
[91] Zlatarski 2007, 332.
[92] There is no information about Zvinitsa in the sources, but according to Zlatarski, if he was alive at that time, he was probably removed from the government for the same reason, see Zlatarski 2007, 334, n.2.
[93] Zlatarski 2007, 334.
[94] For more details on this opinion, see Zlatarski 1896, 760.

political motives, and not purely religious ones, underlie the anti-Christian actions of those in power since the end of the pagan period.[95]

Runciman puts forward a second version as a reason for the change in succession after Omurtag, linking the neglect of his older sons and the elevation of Malamir to their father's personal preferences,[96] which is, however, not supported by any source arguments. The Polish historian Vasilevski, using data from Latin sources - the Chronicle of Einhard,[97] also offers his own version of the possible development of events in the khan's court, namely - a coup d'état by the optimas and his associates, which led to the murder of Omurtag, the removal of the heir to the throne Enravota, as well as the second son of Omurtag, Zvinitsa, and purposeful promotion of the minor Malamir. All power was concentrated in the hands of Kavkhan Isbul as his regent,[98] and the young ruler was merely a figurehead on the throne.[99] Vasilevski places these events, according to the sources, in 826, although the information from them is rather vague. In addition, it contradicts a message from another Latin source - the Saxon Annalist,[100] which tells us that in 832 Bulgarian envoys appeared with gifts in front of Ludovic the Pious. Zlatarski hypothesizes that the purpose of the embassy was to inform about the change of ruler in Pliska after the death of Omurtag.[101] It is quite possible that the events in the khan's court took place later than 826, including 831. Evidence in the sources for the suspected political assassination is not available, but such internal struggles and contradictions are undoubtedly present.

The first and the last theories have points of contact, the most essential of which is that after the bloody conflicts in the middle of the 8th century and the uncompromising rule of khan Krum, the Bulgarian aristocracy once again got the opportunity to interfere in the

[95] This opinion is also found in Rashev, see Rashev 1996, 39-44

[96] The claim is that Malamir was the son of Omurtag's beloved wife, see Runciman 1993, 90.

[97] In his Chronicles, under the year 826 Einhardt reported a widespread rumor that the Bulgarian ruler (Omurtag) had been dethroned or killed by his bolyar (LIBI 2, 37).

[98] It was he, according to Vasilevski, who organized the removal of Omurtag.

[99] Vasilevski 1997, 13–19.

[100] LIBI 3, 142.

[101] Zlatarski 2007, 316. Gjuzelev interprets this information as probable evidence that a peace treaty was concluded between Bulgarians and Franks in the period 830-832, see Bozhilov & Gjuzelev 1999, 153.

management of the state by placing their cronies on the throne.[102] There is also one difference that is essential: in one case, the change of the inheritance law took place with the sanction of the ruler Omurtag, and in the second - without it, after his murder, which made his successor illegitimate. As T. Todorov rightly pointed out, the direction for solving this dilemma can be Malamir's inscription, in which Malamir, in addition to his title "ruler from God", legitimizes his positions, recalling his origin as well.[103]

A discussion in historiography also exists on the occasion of Malamir's nonage. This issue is extensively discussed by P. Nikov,[104] according to whom this is the only logical explanation for the mentioning of Kavkhan Isbul in three early Bulgarian inscriptions on an equal footing with the ruler, since ".. it is known about the khan's institution in ancient Bulgaria that the khans did not share power with a second person, in the sense of a co-ruler who had the same power and honors as the khan". Kavhan Isbul was Malamir's regent, chosen as such by Khan Omurtag, because of the shared anti-Christian state tendencies and understandings similar to those of Omurtag. Gyuzelev is on the opposite opinion, according to whom Omurtag left three adult sons, and defines Isbul's functions as co-ruling.[105] The reason for this situation at the time under consideration, Gyuzelev sees both in the strong personality of Kavkhan Isbul, and in the reaction of the boils against the

[102] This dependence of the khan's institution on the favor and support of the noble boils is typical not only of the pagan period, but also of our entire medieval history. Their actions were a kind of corrective to the sole rule of the Bulgarian khans, and in periods of weak khan power or profound changes, they were not slow to manifest themselves, often costing not only the power, but also the ruler's life, see Iliev 2002, 5–23.

[103] Todorov 2000, 202–207.

[104] Nikov 1925, 195–228; 1929, 1–55.

[105] Bozhilov & Gjuzelev 1999, 157. In Bulgarian historiography, V. Beshevliev developed the theory of the "dual kingship" in early medieval Bulgaria, according to which there was functioning a co-rulership, in which the supreme power was represented by the khan, and his co-ruler (kavkhan) was charged with military command and, when necessary, with diplomatic functions. It finds more and more adherents because it satisfactorily clears up some of the contradictions existing in the sources available for our early medieval history, relating to the succession and chronology of our first rulers. It was in the power struggles between ruler and co-ruler that Beshevliev saw the causes of the crisis from the middle of the 8th century, Beshevliev 2008, 275–292. One of the nowadays supporters of this theory is G. Nikolov, who in a number of his studies highlights its statements and discovers in them the reasons for the internal political crisis of power in the middle of the 8th century. See Nikolov 2002, 38–46; 2005, 71–77.

increased monarchism and autocracy, typical for the reign of Omurtag.[106]

V. Sukarev's research on the supposed age of some of the actors in the present work makes a significant contribution here. Comparing the information available in the sources and making some logical assumptions, the author rejects the idea that Malamir and Presiyan were minors when inheriting the power.[107]

The situation with Malamir's successor is not clarified, on the contrary, it raises more questions. According to Malamir's inscription, Krum is Malamir's grandfather and Omurtag is his father.[108] The text of Theophylact of Ohrid lets us understand the same thing by supplementing the ruling family with more of its members: "when he was no longer among people, he [Omurtag] ended his life with three sons, the eldest of whom was named Enravota, the other Zvinitsa and the last Malamir. The latter inherited his father's power..." Then the source, in a typical for hagiographical texts style tells about Enravota's sympathies towards Christianity, about Malamir's fratricide as a result of them, about ... "the life of Malamir, which lasted three years, and was reaped untimely by the sickle of God's justice and the Bulgarian power was succeeded by his nephew, son of Zvinitsa..."[109] If the source ended there, there would be almost no basis for the existing scientific discussion on the issue of Malamir's successor. However, it continues as follows: "...when the mentioned wonderful Boris inherited power, a cloud of Franks covered all Bulgaria"[110], from which follows the conclusion that Boris is the son of Zvinitsa and the successor of Malamir. This hypothesis has been introduced in the scientific literature since the beginning of the 20th century in studies by J. Bury.[111] His idea was followed by Runciman, who gave Malamir a 21-year reign and rejected an interim rule between him and Boris.[112]

Quite a few scientists are against such absolutization of the data from the source.[113] Their remarks are mainly related to the hagiographic nature of Theophylact Ohridski's work, considering that he was guided

[106]Bozhilov & Gjuzelev 1999, 158.
[107] Sukarev 2007, 151–153.
[108] Beshevliev 1979, 127.
[109] GIBI 9/2, 63.
[110] GIBI 9/2, 63.
[111] Bury 1912, 481.
[112] Runciman 1993, 90.
[113] Nikov 1925, 217; Zlatarski 2007, 450.

solely by the idea of praising Christianity and its martyrdom, to highlight its celebration and consolidation in Bulgaria. Only those facts of Bulgarian history and the reigns of those rulers that have any relation to the achievement of these goals are touched upon, the rest are deliberately omitted.[114] Following the text of Theophylact, Nikov suggests that a paragraph in his original source, talking about the rule of Zvinitsa's son as an introduction of Boris into the narrative, was deliberately omitted in the text. In the next paragraph, Boris, who is already known to the reader, falls into the phrase "the already mentioned wonderful Boris" and leads to wrong conclusions. In support, the information of Konstantin Bagrenorodny, who explicitly mentions Presian and then Boris as his son,[115] is cited. Zlatarski used exactly these arguments to refute the opinion of his opponent Bury on the identification of Malamir and Presian and on the absence of another ruler before Boris,[116] adding one more of extreme importance: the inscription from Philippi, which dates to the first half of the 9th century and contains the name of Malamir's successor – Presiyan.[117] To the reasonable question about the causes for the presence of different names in inscriptions about the same ruler, Bury answers that his Bulgarian name is Presiyan, and Malamir - the Slavic one, which he appropriated at a later stage, when he expanded his power over the Western Slavs.[118]

In recent times, Pl. Pavlov has also been included in the discussion. The sources indicate that within half a century 4 generations of rulers occupied the throne - Krum, his son Omurtag, his son Malamir and his brother's son - Presiyan, and such a "compression" of generations is impossible, no matter how young they married in those times.[119] For this reason the scholar is inclined to accept that Presiyan is the brother of Malamir and the son of Omurtag, and that Presiyan and Zvinitsa are one and the same person,[120] and like other personalities and rulers, he had two names. The acceptance of this thesis, on the one hand, smooths out the contradictions in the existing sources, according to Theophylact

[114] Nikov 1925, 208–209.
[115] GIBI 5, 209.
[116] Such was the opinion of Hilferding as far back as 1868, see Gilyferding 1868, 52.
[117] Indirect evidence in favor of the statement that Presiyan is Malamir's successor on the throne is the presence in the same inscription of the name of kavkhan Isbul, who clearly retained his important role in the administration under the new ruler as well, see Bozhilov 2017, 337.
[118] Zlatarski 2007, 459.
[119] Pavlov 2015, 211.
[120] The hypothesis was launched earlier by T. Vasilevski, see Vasilevski 1997, 16.

Boris is the son and heir of Zvinitsa, and according to Konstantin Bagrenorodny - of Presiyan. On the other hand, however, it also points to a change in the order of Omurtag's sons. As Pavlov notes, Malamir is perceived as his third, youngest son, because of their order in Theophylact's text, but it is possible that the indication in it is not based on age, but on the peculiarities of narrative. In this regard, it is not excluded that the order of Omurtag's sons is Enravota, Malamir, Zvinitsa-Presiyan, which in no way contradicts the birthright in the succession of power.

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The Namelist of Bulgarian Khans reports that Kormisosh changed the Dulo family. The decline of the dynastic family that ruled until then marked the beginning of fierce power struggles that lasted several decades in the second half of the 8th century. Data from the sources speak of a forcible change of Vinekh (Vokil), Telesius (Ugain), Sabin (Vokil), Umor (Vokil), Toktu, Pagan and Telerig (of unknown origin), five of them were killed, two saved their lives, fleeing to Byzantium. Presented in this way, the events clearly show the line of confrontation with the rulers during the crisis of supreme power in the middle of the 8th century. Historical logic suggests the conclusion, and we have no data to refute it, that such was the fate of Sevar, the last ruler of the Dulo clan before its power was usurped by Vokil. Probably, this change at the top of the power ignited the aspiration of many noble families to the throne. Our Byzantine sources mention nothing about this first interdynastic coup, because they did not know about it, or did not consider it important. Only at a later stage, when in the subsequent coups the empire saw an opportunity to interfere in the internal Bulgarian affairs and benefit from them, they found place in their writings. Byzantium, namely Constantine V Kopronim, undertook a massive attempt to liquidate the Bulgarian state and restore the status quo from before 681. The well-organized military campaigns and the defeats suffered by the Bulgarians, aggravated further by the consequences of the natural disasters that flooded the Balkans during the period in question, exacerbated the crisis to an extreme degree. Started as a struggle for power between influential Protobulgarian clans in search of economic interest and political positions, it grew into a struggle for survival. Only then, against the background of increased external pressure, the politics followed by the rulers towards the empire - anti-Byzantine or pro-Byzantine - come to the fore. The initial stage of

overcoming the crisis can be seen when the part of the Bulgarian society that agreed with Byzantium temporarily gave way, in the name of the future of the state. The rulers of the following decades, turning their attention to the Slavs outside its borders, as well as to changes in its structure, not only ensured the future of pagan Bulgaria, but also achieved its greatest development. However, the success of their foreign politics, probably because of the reforms they undertook, were also accompanied by quite a few cases of struggle for power, but already of an intra-dynastic nature. A number of such examples can also be found in the Christian period of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, therefore we can reasonably claim that feuds, first between clans, and then within them - often bloody and not infriquentelly fratricidal, have inextricably accompanied our early medieval history. There are many attempts to explain the reasons for them in the historiography, they are probably complex, but the thin red line that shines through in all cases considered is the achievement of power at any cost and by any means.

The Bulgarian practice in pagan Bulgaria confirms what was written by John the Exarch, that power can be passed from father to son, and from brother to brother. However, he says nothing about primogeniture as a right to inherit the throne, and the facts of the traced events not only do not speak in favor of such right, but quite the opposite: in fact, we do have not even one definite information about the transfer of power to the first-born son in pagan Bulgaria. Most probably, if there was any tradition regarding primogeniture and the inheritance of supreme power, it was very fragile and was not observed. Our medieval rulers tried in every way to circumvent it and succeeded.

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Khan Telets' reign (761? – 764?) based on astronomical phenomena data

Aneliya Markova

Abstract: In Bulgarian historiography even to this day there are controversial discussions and debates to which it is still quite difficult to give an unambiguous answer. One of them is the debate about establishing the years when Telets was the Khan of Bulgaria. The difficulty of accurately dating the period of Khan Telets' reign is due to the lack of sufficient information in the main sources, the manuscripts "Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans" and "The Chronicle" of Theophanes Confessor (759–817), who was a clergyman and chronicler in the Byzantine Empire.

In attempting to answer the question that inspires our research we come across interesting astronomical data in the manuscript "Chronicle", which could complement existing statements on this subject and help find a conclusion to this long-standing debate.

Key words: Khan Telets, solar eclipse, Byzantine Empire

Резюме: И до днес в българската историография се срещат дискусионни въпроси, на които е трудно да се даде еднозначен отговор. Един от тях се отнася до установяване на годините, през които Телец е бил български хан . Трудността за точното датиране на неговото управление произлиза от липсата на достатъчно информация в основните източници за събитията - „Именника на българските ханове" и „Хронография" на Теофан Изповедник (759–817).

В настоящото изследване са разгледни интересни астрономически данни, описани в „Хронография" на Теофан Изповедник, които биха могли да хвърлят допълнителна светлина в опита да се намери решение на този дългогодишен дискусионен проблем.

In Bulgarian historiography even to this day there are controversial discussions to which it is still quite difficult to give an unambiguous answer. One of them is the debate about establishing the years when Telets was the Khan of Bulgaria. It is widely believed that

Telets reigned in the years from 760 to 763.[1] There are also various statements pointing to the years from 762 to 765.[2] However, the most correct chronological arrangement has long been indicated by the outstanding Bulgarian medievalist Vasil Zlatarski, according to whom Khan Telets ascended the throne in 761.[3]

The difficulty of accurately dating the period of Khan Telets' reign is due to the lack of sufficient information and the complexity of the main sources, the manuscripts "Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans" and "The Chronicle" of Theophanes Confessor (759 – 817), who was a clergyman and chronicler in the Byzantine Empire.

Hundreds of pages have been written about the manuscript "Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans" and many formulations have been created based on its interpretation. It is still difficult to indicate any book title in which we could find certain answers about the ambiguities presented in this important source on Bulgarian medieval history. The main issue for the medievalists, working with this manuscript is related to the Bulgarian calendar system and terminology, citied as the reason for the complex construction of the chronology of the thirteen Bulgarian rulers mentioned in it and the periods of their reign.

In this endeavor, we are far from the idea of conducting a new analysis of the manuscript "Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans", but rather using only the information that is recognized as reliable in the studies of Bulgarian medievalism. We assume that this is a notice according to which Telets was Bulgarian Khan for a period of three years. The manuscript says that this happened in the year known as „соморъ алтемь" (Somor Altem).[4] In historiography, there are different interpretations of its equivalent in the modern system of chronology. However, there is still no consensus on this matter, so statements on the matter of establishing the correct years when Telets took control of the Khanate are contradictory. Therefore, information related to the duration of his reign is more significant and reliable for us. This allows us to set a chronological framework that needs to be synchronized with the information found in the other main source of events, i.e. "The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor".

In this historical manuscript of Theophanes the Confessor, the description of the events that took place during the time of Khan Telets

[1] Moskov 1988, 308 – 314; Pritsak 1955, 77.
[2] Andreev *et al*. 1994, 360.
[3] Zlatarski 2007, 208 – 209.
[4] Duychev 1943, 2 – 3.

has rather concise character, but researchers should consider the composition with special attention due to its tendency. At its essence, the "Chronicle" is a continuation of the "Chronicle of George Syncellus" (? – 810), ending with the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284 – 305). It is assumed that Theophanes the Confessor compiled the "Chronicle" around 813 – 814. His manuscript lacks originality, since it covers events of more than five centuries, and to present them the author had to use older sources and to rewrite the information discovered in them. In all probability the Byzantine chronicler (Theophanes the Confessor) inherited some of the books or manuscripts of George Syncellus, and the position in the church hierarchy gave him access to important sources, some of which may have belonged to the Patriarchal archive.

For our research, it is really important to consider that, in his "Chronicle" Theophanes presented the events in a completely different manner compared to George Syncellus. However, George Syncellus' main goal had been to establish a correct chronological sequence. To do this he filled his manuscript with lists of rulers, bishops and discussions on the issues regarding the chronology. The chronological sequence is also present in Theophanes' manuscript, but the dating accuracy is insufficient and therefore it is very difficult for researchers nowadays to build a convincing chronological order relying exceptionally on the manuscript "Chronicle" as a main source of information. Even today, there is still some debate as to whether the dates presented are part of the original text of the Byzantine cleric or whether these dates were added at later stage.[5]

Theophanes the Confessor adopts the Alexandrian system of chronology, according to which the Incarnation of God was dated to 5492 BC, March 25th. However, most of the primary sources he used preferred the so-called Byzantine system of chronology in which the starting date is September 1st, 5509 BC. This actually is one of the main difficulties Theophanes the Confessor had to face - to equate the two systems of chronology. For this reason and for greater accuracy, he often used the indictions as dating markers for certain events.

In addition to the older Byzantine sources, the so-called "Μέγας χρονόγραφος" (Megas Chronographus), Theophanes gathered information also from some eastern chronicles, which he integrated into the chronological framework of his text. Therefore, in the chronology he built there are discrepancies of one year, mainly for the

[5] Nevile 2018, 61.

period of the 7th and 8th centuries.[6] Nevertheless, the significant and voluminous information he provided about the Arab conquests of the 7th century and the state structure of the Caliphate is impressive.[7] The details that are present in the descriptions of some historical events related to the Arabs suggest that the Byzantine chronicler was extracting information precisely from the Muslim chronicles.[8] In any case, for the period from 602 to 813, his Chronography is the primary source for the events, because the data he had used to write it is almost or completely lost.[9]

Our observations are that Theophanes the Confessor paid relatively less attention to the issues concerning the Balkans, including the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations. The records about them are mostly short, fragmentary and do not have in-depth information. For the period from the mid - 8th century onwards, he focused his attention on some of the main matters then dominant in Byzantine society. These are the iconoclastic disputes, the Arab threat and the power struggle for the throne of Constantinople.

In attempting to answer the question that inspires our research, namely When the Bulgarian Khan Telets actually came to power, we come across interesting astronomical data in the manuscript "Chronicle", which could complement the existing statements on this subject and help find a conclusion to this long-standing debate. In order to conduct our own and reliable analysis of these data, we distance ourselves from the existing ideas and opinions of individual authors on the problem and try to establish it based on the data of astronomical phenomena, and how actually Theophanes dated the events.

Records containing information about astronomical phenomena, must be perceived as significant and reliable. Since ancient times, long before telescopes were invented and used, these phenomena have impressed immensely people, but only those phenomena which are visible to the naked eye – like great comets and eclipses – the appearance of which has been observed and described. Our ancestors did not pay much attention to ordinary natural phenomena, but described and recorded those that they considered impressive and significant. Such were the solar eclipses and comets, which were remembered for a long time. The memory and the effect of their

[6] Jankowiak 2015, 70 – 72.
[7] Nevile 2018, 62.
[8] Theophanes Confessor 1997, lii.
[9] Theophanes Confessor 1997, V.

appearance were long present in the minds of observers. Comets surprised and affected with their sudden appearance in the night sky and caused fear in those watching them because of the strong light they emitted. They were considered an ominous sign and harbingers of wars and famine, the dethronement of monarchs and the collapse of empires.[10] That's why they occupied a specific place in the chronicles and were of particular importance to the authors of historical-apocalyptic literature.

During the historical period described by the Byzantine chronicler researched and studied by us, we discovered information about several astronomical phenomena. The script says that on August 15, 760, at 10 a.m., a solar eclipse occurred in Africa (fig. 1). A few lines before announcing the appearance of this phenomenon, Theophanes describes in details the appearance of Halley's comet in May-June 760, and in 762 he also describes the passage of another comet.[11] Upon seeking reference information in the Solar Eclipses Catalogs provided by NASA, one will find that the phenomenon in question is accurately represented relative to the date and time it was observed. The indicated location, i.e., in Africa, is puzzling. Provided that Theophanes had been an eyewitness to this phenomenon, he would have described it with different geographical coordinates, taking into account his biography. The latter gives a reason to believe that he was not an actual eyewitness of the phenomenon in question, but rather the data was initially acquired and then introduced into his text. The presence of these data and the skills of their description give us grounds to support the assertion that some of the information is indeed borrowed from Arabic sources. Even the researchers of Theophanes the Confessor himself are not entirely sure whether he had an education good enough to write the texts of the "Chronicle", much less to describe such astronomical phenomena with such accuracy and clarity.[12]

We pay special attention to the mentioned phenomena, since they are described as phenomena occurring during the period in which Theophanes the Confessor describes the historical events in Bulgaria during the same time period. The excerpt containing the narrative about the coup in the Bulgarian state and the proclamation of the 30-year-old Telets as ruler begins with information about the appearance

[10] Chambers 1909, 1 – 3.
[11] Theophanes Confessor 1997, 597 – 599.
[12] Senina 2014, 7.

of a comet and the death of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (718/719 – 762) in December 762.[13] After this announcement, the Byzantine chronicler reports on the campaign undertaken by Emperor Constantine V Kopronymus (741 – 775) against the Bulgarians on June 16, 763. On June 30, the two armies clashed near Anchialus. The battle of Anchialus proved disastrous for the Bulgarians. Khan Telets and his army were defeated. Dissatisfied with the rule of their Khan, the Bulgarians rebelled once again and elected Sabin (765? – 766) as their new ruler, who hastened to send envoys to make peace with the Byzantines. His actions were decried and he was assassinated, and then Pagan was the next who ascended the throne (767 – 768).

It is historically unreliable to lump all these events together and claim that they all happened within just one year. It is also a topic of discussion when the uprising that brought Khan Telets to the Bulgarian throne actually took place. From the "Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans" we know that the Bulgarian Khan ruled for three years, and in the excerpt itself, dating back to 762, there is information about the battle of Anchialus, dated according to the indicated indictment in the following year 763.[14] In order to try to determine the correct chronological framework of events in Theophanes' manuscript, we need to check once again the reliability of his information regarding the described astronomical phenomena in the period 760 – 762.

The contemporary astronomical science has a multi-volume catalogs of the appearance of comets from antiquity to the present day, but they explain the appearance of only periodic comets. According to their database, in 760 a comet appeared, which can certainly be identified as Halley's Comet. In European and also in Chinese historiography, it is described as a bright shining ray that appeared first in the east and then in the west, which continued to be visible for almost two months.[15]

However, Muslim chronicles also noted the passage of Halley's Comet in this same year. Some modern researchers are of the opinion that it is necessary to compare the Arabic chronicle with The Chronicle

[13] Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (570 – 632) born by his daughter Fatima (605? – 632) and a representative of the Umayyad dynasty. In 762, in Medina, he raised a revolt against the second Abbasid caliph al-Mansur (754 – 775). He was killed on December 6th of this year by the Abbasid soldiers who manage to break through the city's defenses.

[14] Theophanes Confessor 1997, 598 – 599.

[15] Chambers 1909, 120.

of Theophanes the Confessor in order to clarify the year in which the comet in question was observed. Having researched and studied both texts, they concluded that only one comet had been witnessed, and that was Halley's Comet, as it appeared in the month of Muharram (April-May) in 145 AH (=762 CE).[16] It was observed appearing from the East and could still be observed until the end of Muharram, then it was visible after sunset, in the twilight between northern and western latitudes for two to three months and then disappeared for two to three years, after which it appeared again.[17] Thus, they come to the conclusion that in fact, Theophanes' manuscript mentions only one comet - Halley's comet of 760, and information about the second comet of 762 associated with the revolt of Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiyya is erroneous. The author of the Byzantine chronicle mistook the year 145 of the Hijra as 143 (=760 BC), since according to the records the comet appeared in the summer months, and the Revolt in Medina led by Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya was in October-November. Another possibility, according to this theory, is that Theophanes saw the same comet twice. The first time in 760, and the second time in 762, as recorded in his "Chronicle".

Such statements sound confusing, vague and full of inaccuracies. There is no reason to call the report of the comet of 762 erroneous, since there was a gap of several months between the appearance and the Revolt led by Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, since it is unclear whether Theophanes is talking about the same comet in 762. The Byzantine chronicler describes the comet of May-July 760, then describes the solar eclipse of August of the same year. The references to phenomena in the catalogs are reliable and the information reported by Theophanes about these phenomena is beyond doubt. It is certain that the Byzantine chronicler did not see Halley's Comet again after two years, since as a periodic comet it appears at precisely defined periods of time - only once every 76 years.[18] In all likelihood, the Byzantine author witnessed another comet, which is not periodic and cannot be calculated today by modern science. There is no clearly defined and written rule according to which a phenomenon considered to be a harbinger of an important event, as in the case of the Revolt led by Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, must occur immediately before it. More importantly, the omen is

[16] Nu'aym b. Hammad al-Marwazi 2017, 120.
[17] Cook 1999, 136.
[18] Jankowiak 2015, 70 – 72.

indicated in a year in which important events of the Caliphate also occur.

In the attempt to introduce some chronological order to the dating of events through information about astronomical phenomena, we reached the following conclusions. The year 760 seems to be the moment in time, when it is necessary to eliminate discrepancies in the chronology between the primary sources used by Theophanes the Confessor, for these phenomena are recorded not only in Arab primary sources, but also in Chinese, which indicates that they actually happened precisely in those years and time, indicated in the "Chronicle" of Theophanes the Confessor himself.

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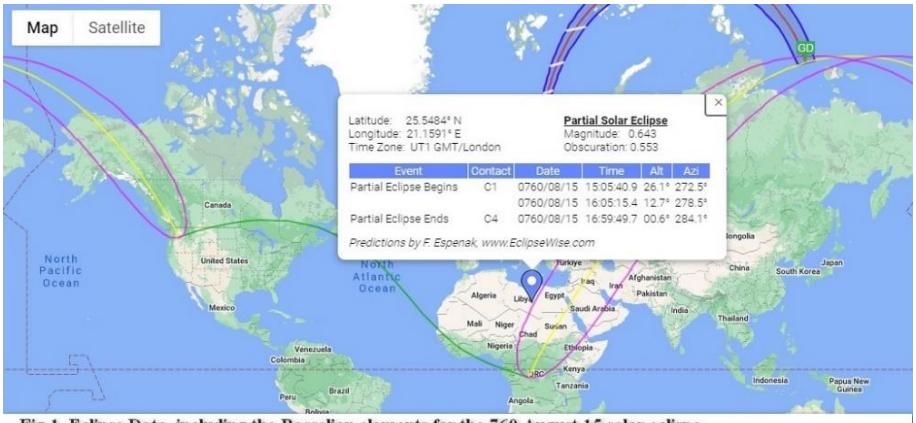


Fig.1. Eclipse Data, including the Basselian elements for the 760 August 15 solar eclipse

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Peace in the chronicles of Nicetas Choniates, Geoffrey de Villehardouin, Robert de Clary, and Henri de Valenciennes

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Abstract: The article examines and analyzes the information about peace agreements, peace treaties and other manifestations of peace in the chronicles of four chroniclers, related to events from the end of the 12th to the beginning of the 13th century in the Balkans, and especially the Fourth Crusade and its consequences. Analysis of these, albeit not so numerous, accounts allows for the differentiation of three forms of peace: 1) peace as a temporary agreement or truce, 2) peace as a legitimate agreement of non-violence and peaceful relations, and 3) peace as the absence of military action and lack of enemy invasions - peace as a form of well-being. The author also examines and analyzes Bulgarian-Latin relations in the studied period, emphasizing that the periods of peace prevailed over the periods of war.

Key words: medieval peace, the Fourth Crusade, Bulgarian-Latin relations

Резюме: Статията разглежда и анализира информацията за мирни споразумения, мирни договори и други прояви на мира в хрониките на четирима летописци, свързани със събитията от края на XII до началото на XIII век на Балканите и по-специално с Четвъртия кръстоносен поход и неговите последствия. Анализът на тези, макар и не толкова многобройни разкази позволява разграничаването на три форми на мир: 1) мир като временно споразумение или примирие, 2) мир като легитимно споразумение за ненасилие и мирни отношения и 3) мир с липсата на военни действия и вражески нашествия – мирът като форма на благоденствие. Авторът разглежда и анализира и българо-латинските отношения през изследвания период, като подчертава, че периодите на мир преобладават над периодите на война.

Scholars of medieval history often turn their gaze to wars and their manifestations, while peace is often left out of medievalists'

analysis. The ideas of peace that developed in Christian Europe during the Early and High Middle Ages reflected the social and cultural forces active during these periods. Peace during this period always meant more than just an end of war. For the early Middle Ages, this meant restoring the proper harmony of God's creation. To varying degrees, this conception of peace was based on a moral order reflecting the justice of heaven. As a result, there appeared the idea of monastic and episcopal peace, of God's peace and God's truce, but the actual expressions of peace in the written sources show mostly its negative definition as the absence of violence or the absence of certain types of violence. However, defining peace as the absence of violence is only one possible formulation of the medieval concept of peace.

In the Middle Ages, peace had many meanings and manifestations. The complex set of traditions that create these layered meanings do not allow for a universal understanding of peace and peacemaking. Peace (*pax*) can be negatively defined as the absence of violence, but more often the usage of its derivatives is varied and quite different from modern understandings of peace. A clear example of this are the historical writings of Nicetas Choniates, Geoffrey de Villehardouin, Robert de Clary, and Henri de Valenciennes, who describe events leading up to and during the Fourth Crusade of 1202-1204. Usually, the view of their writings is directed towards military-political events, but although rarely, these chroniclers also note the manifestations of peace. An analysis of the few mentions of peace in the pages of these four works leads to the formulation of several categories of peace: 1) peace as a temporary agreement or truce, 2) peace in its classical manifestation as a legitimate and documented agreement of non-violence and peaceful relations, and 3) peace as the absence of hostilities and deprivation, as concord and prosperity.

In his chronicle entitled The Conquest of Constantinople, Geoffrey de Villehardouin describes a similar agreement at the siege of Zara by the Crusaders in 1202. According to the author, when the Crusaders began to undermine one of the towers, the citizens proposed an agreement similar to the one rejected by the council to those who wanted to divide the army.[1] No doubt it was an agreement for the cessation of hostilities and for peace between the two parties, which was soon concluded.

[1] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 53.

Also, Villehardouin testified to the confirmation and fulfillment of a preliminary agreement for the restoration of the blinded Isaac II Angel to the throne in Constantinople in 1203. According to the chronicle, before recognizing the return of the blind Isaac II Angel to the throne, the Crusaders asked him to confirm the terms of the agreement between them and his son Alexius, concluded in Zara. The confirmation took place behind closed doors, in the presence of only the emperor, the empress, an interpreter, and four of the highest-ranking representatives from the Latin country. The preliminary contract and agreement with Alexius were confirmed by his father Isaac by an oath and the documents were sealed with a golden seal. [2]

Information about peace agreements can also be found in the works of Nicetas Choniates. The same testified that after the unsuccessful siege of Dobromir Chrysos in the Prosek fortress in 1189, Emperor Alexius III began negotiations for an agreement. Nicetas Choniates also notes the conditions for the conclusion of this peace agreement: "*In this way, the emperor, seeing that he would not achieve his goal, and, not intending to linger there anyway, was inclined to negotiate an agreement. He conceded to Chrysos Prosek, Strumica, and the surrounding settlements and promised to arrange a marriage between him and one of his relatives, although he had a wife*." [3]

In addition, Choniates reports negotiations for an agreement between Emperor Alexius III and Ivanko. The chronicler notes that the emperor sent his closest secretaries to Ivanko to persuade him to accept an agreement. "*And the separatist was by no means willing to go to the emperor, nor was he inclined to make a treaty in any other way, unless the emperor gave him in writing the lands and cities which he had conquered, and sent him with royal honors Theodora, who was betrothed to him. When at last the oaths and treaties were accepted, as Alexius desired them, the emperor started devising a plot, I do not know whether suitable for a general and an emperor, who must above all else respect the fidelity of oaths*."[4] As it turns out, this preliminary agreement, although bound by oaths and possibly a written document, was not respected and did not develop into a peace treaty. Again Choniates provides indirect information about preliminary negotiations for a peace agreement between the Bulgarian ruler Kaloyan and the Latins of the Fourth

[2] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 72-73.
[3] Nicetae Choniatae 1983, 60.
[4] Nicetae Choniatae 1983, 65.

Crusade. According to the chronicler: "*Ioan suspected the arrogance of the Latins, and feared their spear as a fiery sword, for when he had also sent ambassadors of friendship, he was answered to treat them in his letters not as a king with friends, but as a servant with masters.*" [5] Apparently, the chronicler implies that the Bulgarian ruler proposed a peace agreement with the Crusaders, which was categorically rejected.

Regarding another type of agreement related to the cessation of hostilities, Nicetas Choniates offers a description of the siege of the Latins in the citadel of Seres by the troops of the Bulgarian ruler Kaloyan in 1205. "*But as they saw that John had surrounded the fortress with a ring of fire with his whole army and had cut off all exits so that no one could even sneak up to the Marquis on foot, they insisted to hand over the fortress to him if he would promise to let them withdraw unharmed with their weapons and horses. But as he would not even hear of such a treaty, they asked to be sent to their lands with attendants to the Pannonian border. The sworn treaty was concluded on these terms, and he received the fortress, and they a free exit*."[6] Here the chronicler emphasizes that the preconditions of the Latin garrison were not accepted by the Bulgarian ruler. Most probably these preliminary conditions were that the Latins should be given free passage with arms and horses to join their fellow tribesmen in Constantinople or Thessalonica, but it is probable that Kaloyan was willing to agree on only one condition, that those who came out of the fortress should be escorted to the Hungarian border, where they would cross into Hungarian territory. As in the above-described case of a preliminary agreement between Ivanko and Emperor Alexius III, the agreement was not respected and after three days the Bulgarian ruler captured the abovementioned Latins, killing some of them and sending another part to the Bulgarian-Hungarian border.

This first category of peace agreements found in the discussed written sources could also cover the armistice. Marshal Geoffrey de Villehardouin describes a similar truce between the Marquis Boniface de Montferrat and Emperor Baldwin I, mediated by the barons and Doge of Venice Enrico Dandolo in 1204.[7] Also, Villehardouin notes a truce concluded between Emperor Theodore I Lascaris and Emperor

[5] Nicetae Choniatae 1983, 73.
[6] Nicetae Choniatae 1983, 78.
[7] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 93: "*Thus the siege of Adrianople was raised, and the Marquis returned with his men to Dymot, where the Empress, his wife, was at that time*".

Henry I of 1206, which was not well observed and violated by the Nicaean side, according to the chronicler.[8] The Marshal of Champagne notes in his chronicle that a two-year truce between Theodore I Lascaris and the Latin emperor Henry I was concluded in 1207. The truce was signed after a council was called by Emperor Henry, at which the barons decided that they could not pay wages for two wars at the same time, i.e., fight both against Kaloyan and the ruler of Nicaea.[9]

The second category that stands out clearly in the studied texts is peace in its classical manifestation as a legitimate and documented agreement. Sometimes we find evidence of preliminary negotiations for such a peace treaty. Nicetas Choniates testifies that Emperor Alexius III "*most of all tried somehow to make peace with the Vlachs and sent envoys to Peter and Assen. But he did not quite succeed in the matter of peace and treaty, because these people gave haughty answers and proposed such terms for peace as were, of course, unacceptable and dishonorable to the Romans*". [10]

We find information about establishing peace in the description of the movement of the Crusader fleet towards Constantinople in 1203, given by Geoffrey de Villehardouin in his chronicle. According to the marshal, the inhabitants of the island of Andros in the Ionian Sea made peace with Alexius Angelus and the Crusaders: "*The people of the country surrendered to the son of the emperor of Constantinople and gave him so much of their own that they made peace with him*." In the same chronicle, we also find information about peace established between Emperor Baldwin I and the Thessalonica ruler Boniface de Montferra with the mediation of Marshal Geoffrey de Villehardouin in 1204.[11]

Next, Marshal Geoffrey de Villehardouin notes that peace was restored to a parliament. "*And then they assembled [the marquis and the barons, in Constantinople] in parliament. And the agreement between the Emperor Baudouin and Marquis Boniface was recalled, and Thessalonica*

[8] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 124: "*At this time Theodore I Lascaris, who held the land on the other side of the strait, had a truce with Emperor Henry, and had not kept it well, but had violated and broken it*".

[9] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 130-131: "*And during this time Toldr Lascar summoned his messengers and conducted them to him, and made a proposition to him that he would accept a truce for two years, on condition that the emperor would let him destroy Eciz and the fortress near the church of Hagia Sophia, and he would restore all prisoners who were taken in this battle and elsewhere*."

[10] Nicetae Choniatae 1983, 47.

[11] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 96.

was restored [to Boniface] with its land in such a manner that he would deliver into the hands of Geoffrey, the marshal of Champagne, Dimothe, which he had conquered. And Geoffrey gave him assurances that he would keep him in his hands until he receives from him a trusted messenger or letters with seals that he, the marquis, had taken to Thessalonica. And then he would return it to the emperor and at his disposal. And the peace between the emperor and the marquis was established as you have heard. And this caused great rejoicing in the army because it was a thing from which great misfortune could happen."[12]

Henri de Valenciennes also testified to peace treaties. First of all, he records the peace treaty between the Latin emperor Henry I and the Melnyk ruler Alexius Slav of 1208. According to the chronicler, Alexius Slav entered the emperor's tent, surrounded by the barons, kissed the feet and hand of Henry I. Thus, Alexius became a vassal of the emperor, swearing fealty and devotion, and the emperor gave him his daughter as his wife.[13] Valenciennes also describes the conclusion of a peace treaty between the Latin emperor Henry I and Epirus' ruler Michael I Angelus Duka in 1210. According to the chronicler, the two met at a previously specified place near Thessalonica.

The Latin emperor declared that he would make peace only on the condition that Michael would recognize himself as his vassal. Michael listened to the emperor's messengers and set his conditions - a marriage between his daughter and the emperor's brother, promising to give at the marriage with his daughter 1/3 of all his possessions as a fief.[14] Valenciennes also testifies to the restoration of peace between the Lombards and Emperor Henry I in 1210. According to the chronicler, the Lombards proposed as a first step the election of two wise men from each side, as a second option presented the dispute and enmity to the Roman Curia and to the French royal court, and as a third -independent restoration of peace.

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[12] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 118: "*And they besought Verna to procure the mercy of Henry, the brother of the emperor Baudouin, and of the Venetians, so as to make peace with them, and to give him Andrianople and Dymot; and the Greeks would all turn to him, and so the Greeks and the Franks would be able to be united. To this end a council was formed… and to Verna and his wife the empress, who was the sister of Philip, king of France, Andrianople and Dymothe were ceded, together with the rest of the lands, and Verna would serve the emperor and the empire. Thus was the agreement concluded and peace established between the Greeks and the Franks*."

[13] Anri dyo Valansien 2009, 40.

[14] Anri dyo Valansien 2009, 80.

Events show that both sides preferred the first or the third option, i.e. not to resort to the mediation of Rome or the French royal court.[15] The chronicler also testifies that the count of the Lombards appeared before the Latin emperor, who kissed him and forgave him all the evil he had done, after which they both swore to respect the rights of the widow of the Marquis Boniface de Montferrat and her minor son.[16] In this case, we find an important ceremony for the conclusion and restoration of peace – the kiss of peace. But as the peace between Emperor Henry I and the Lombards proved short-lived, Valenciennes describes new negotiations between the two sides, which failed. Later the emperor sent two envoys with new peace terms.[17]

Next, Robert de Clary describes the establishment of peace between the Marquis Boniface and Emperor Henry, the peace being concluded at the price of the cession of the Kingdom of Thessalonica to Boniface de Montferrat. [18] We find other information about the conclusion of a new peace agreement again in the chronicle of Robert de Clary, who notes the establishment of peace with a dynastic marriage between the Bulgarian ruler Boril and the Latin emperor Henry I in 1213.[19]

The third category of peace that we find in the studied texts is peace as a state of concord and prosperity. We find three testimonies to this in the chronicle of Geoffrey de Villehardouin. Describing the beginning of the crusade and the great fight between the Venetians and the French in the conquered Zara, which ended in casualties on both sides, the chronicler notes that peace was restored to the army after great efforts on the part of the Doge of Venice and the barons for a

[15] Anri dyo Valansien 2009, 50.
[16] Anri dyo Valansien 2009, 54.
[17] Anri dyo Valansien 2009, 68, 69: "*The Lombards sent the emperor a peace proposal, which included the release of the emperor of Count de Blanc-Dra and the return to his hands of the regency of the kingdom of Thessalonica. The emperor refused and threatened with war*."
[18] Rober dyo Klari 2007, 157: "*After the lands had been divided in the manner I have related to you, it came to pass that peace was established between the Marquis and the Emperor, [but in such a way that] he was reproached for not summoning even all his noble barons. The Marquis at once asked for the kingdom of Thessalonica, and at once obtained it, the emperor gave it to him*."
[19] Rober dyo Klari 2007, 163: "*Then it so happened that the emperor ... took counsel with his barons as to what he could do with these Vlachs and these Cumans ... and the barons advised him to send envoys to this Boril ... and to demand that he be given his daughter as a wife.*"

week.[20] Next, Villehardouin notes that after the accession of Alexius IV Angelus and his father Isaac II Angelus, the Crusaders dwelt on the other side of the harbor "*in peace and at rest and in great abundance of good food*".[21]

The third example is again related to the chronicle of Villehardouin and concerns unity and relations in the crusading army. After the first capture of Constantinople in 1203 and the accession of Isaac II and his son Alexius IV to the throne, the unity of the army was once again threatened by bitter disputes over whether to proceed immediately to Syria or to winter on the outskirts of the Byzantine capital. After disputes, internal peace was restored, "*and the pilgrims, on their part, swore to the Venetians to continue the alliance as they had once done, for the same term. And thus concord and peace were restored to the army.*"[22]

In conclusion, I would like to note another interesting and, I think, indicative aspect of the dimensions of peace in the context of the above-mentioned events of the course and consequences of the Fourth Crusade and the creation of the Latin Empire. It is related to observations and analysis of the military and peaceful periods in Bulgarian-Latin relations in the period 1204-1261. A careful look at the events in question shows that the sources testify to several military conflicts of varying intensity, and the exact chronology of the last one, which took place during the reign of the Bulgarian ruler Michael II Assen (1246-1256), is quite complicated to clarify.

Focusing on the number of Bulgarian-Latin military conflicts, I would note the following. Without a doubt, the first war can be clearly defined in the period 1205-1213, beginning with the entry of Tsar Kaloyan into the Greco-Latin conflict in the early spring of 1205 and ending with the Bulgarian-Latin treaty under the reign of Tsar Boril and the Latin emperor Henry in 1213. The next Bulgarian-Latin war was fought in the period 1235-1237. It began with the active military actions of Tsar John II Assen in alliance with the Nicaeans against the Latins in Eastern Thrace and Constantinople and ended with the renewal of peaceful relations between the two countries in 1237.

Another military conflict between the Bulgarians and the Latins broke out in 1247, when, as a result of the Bulgarian-Nicaean Treaty of

[20] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 54.
[21] Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, 73-74.
[22] Rober dyo Klari 2007, 157.

the previous year 1246, Tsar Michael II Assen broke the peace with the Latin Empire and took part in the campaign of the Nicaean ruler John III Duka Vatasi against the Latins in Eastern Thrace.[23] The date and year of the end of this Bulgarian-Latin conflict remain unknown, but we can assume that on the eve of the Bulgarian-Nicaean War of 1254, peace with the Latins in Constantinople had already been restored. After 1247, there are no written records of military actions between Bulgaria and the Latin Empire, and this gives reason to conclude that a total of three wars were fought between the two countries. Quantitative analysis of the ratio of periods of peace to war in Bulgarian-Latin relations for the period 1204-1261 shows that hostilities spanned eleven years, while the two countries were in peaceful relations for almost forty-six years. This shows unequivocally that despite the descriptions of bloody and violent clashes in some written sources, peace dominated the relations between the Bulgarians and the Latins.

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