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## LIMES AND CROSS: THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE SIXTH-CENTURY DANUBE FRONTIER OF THE EARLY BYZANTINE EMPIRE

*Abstract.* – The article considers the ways in which the implementation of Justinian's ecclesial enactments in the Balkans may have influenced the military and political developments on the Lower Danube frontier of the Empire. The specific circumstances in which Justinian's fortification and building program came into being, as well as the sharp decline of the rural population in the Balkans, may explain the striking absence of major monastic sites in the area. Despite the growing power of bishops, there were no missions across the frontier. It is suggested that Christian artifacts and practices were known to barbarians north of the Danube, but on the northern frontier of the empire, no political gains were expected to result from missions of evangelization.

*Keywords.* – Christianity, limes, basilica, baptistery, monasticism, rural settlements, pectoral crosses, Slavs, Avars, mission.

» **W**hen the river Ister gets close to Dacia, for the first time it clearly forms the boundary between the barbarians, who hold its left bank, and the territory of the Romans, which is on the right.«<sup>1</sup> In Procopius' description, the natural and military border complemented each other and formed an intricate matrix of Roman self-definition. »Roman emperors of former times«, in order to prevent the crossing of the Danube by the barbarians living on the other side, had occupied and fortified the northern bank. Only Justinian made the river »the strongest possible line of first defence (πρόβολον ἰσχυρότατον)« in Europe.<sup>2</sup> Procopius was not alone in describing the Danube as a frontier line. Writing in the 630s, Theophylact Simocatta still believed that »the barbarians would not remain quiet unless the Romans kept a very strict guard on the Ister.«<sup>3</sup> For the author of the late sixth- or early seventh-century military treatise known as the *Strategikon*, the lands across the Danube were the territory of the enemy, while those south of the river represented »our own country.«<sup>4</sup> In the late 600s, the Danube was still viewed as separating the Empire from the realm of the Avars.<sup>5</sup>

Modern historians have long treated this evidence as sufficient proof that during all its history as northern frontier of the Empire, the Danube functioned as a »moral barrier«, separating civilization from the savage

<sup>1</sup> Procopius, *Buildings* 4.5., transl. H. B. Dewing (London/New York 1940) 267. Procopius used the plural Δακίᾱς in reference to both Dacia Ripensis and Dacia Mediterranea, none of which was mentioned in the text by its actual name.

<sup>2</sup> Procopius, *Buildings* 4.1, transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 229. Europe itself was fortified so strongly, that it became »inaccessible (ἀπρόσβατον) to the barbarians who lived beyond the Ister river« [transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 223)]. See J.-P. Arrignon and J. F. Du-neau, »La frontière chez deux auteurs byzantins: Procope de Césarée et Constantin Porphyrogénète«, in *Geographica Byzantina*, ed. H. Ahrweiler (Paris 1981) 17–30.

<sup>3</sup> Theophylact Simocatta 6.6.2, transl. M. and M. Whitby (Oxford 1986) 167. For the date of Theophylact's work, see Thérèse Olajos, *Les sources de Théophylacte Simocatta historien* (Leiden 1988) 11; L. M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford 1988) 39. Avars too viewed the Danube as a frontier line. Annoyed by Priscus' operations near Singidunum, the qagan of the Avars declared [7.9.12, tr. Whitby, 193]: »What are you doing, Romans, in the land which is mine? Why have you extended your steps beyond what is proper? The Ister is foreign to you (ξένος ὁ Ἰστρος ὑμῖν), its swell hostile.« For the Danube as the frontier between *ēl* (»the peace zone«), including all territories under the qagan's rule, and *yāgi*, the territory of the enemy, see Hansgerd Göckenjan, »Die Landnahme der Awaren aus historischer Sicht«, in *Ausgewählte Probleme europäischer Landnahme des Früh- und Hochmittelalters*, ed. M. Müller-Wille and R. Schneider (Sigmaringen 1993) 284–285.

<sup>4</sup> *Strategikon* 11.4.32, transl. G. Dennis (Philadelphia 1984) 124.

<sup>5</sup> As evidenced by the episode, narrated in Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, of the Roman captives taken by the Avars into the territories beyond the Danube. The children of these captives would later recross the river in order to return to their homelands

barbarians.<sup>6</sup> Procopius' *Buildings* was taken at its face value, with the archaeological evidence confirming in detail Justinian's record of defense policy. Indeed, there are 600 Balkan forts in the *Buildings*, eight times more than in the entire Asian part of the Empire.<sup>7</sup> A number of innovative and sophisticated building techniques, like the use of hexagonal bastions, so dear to the author of the *De re strategica*, were widely prevalent in the building defenses of the sixth-century Danube *limes*.<sup>8</sup> Some argue that the *limes* was in fact not a barrier, but a buffer zone, specifically designed to divert and to slow down, if not to stop, the invasion of the Slavs.<sup>9</sup> Others believe that the *limes* was not a frontier line, but a deep zone that included the supporting provinces and, in some cases, even the territories across the frontier. The »Danube-as-barrier« concept, as expressed by Procopius, simply served a propaganda purpose, for no linear frontiers existed on which the Romans stood confronting the enemy.<sup>10</sup> Procopius himself described Roman armies operating north of the Danube and mentioned territories and forts on the river's left bank which, some three hundred years after the withdrawal from Dacia, were still regarded as »Roman« and, therefore »entrusted« to barbarian allies.<sup>11</sup> The *Strategikon* contains a large section on Slavic settlements, warfare, and society, which is the kind of information Roman generals needed for successful campaigns across the Danube.<sup>12</sup> To the qagan's insolent claims that the lands north of the river were Avar territory, Priscus responded that they were Roman and temporarily lost to barbarians by virtue of war violence, not by law.<sup>13</sup>

By A.D. 500, however, a different kind of frontier was emerging with increasing force. As Christianity became the religion of the Roman state, the distinctive mark of Roman-ness was membership of the Church and allegiance to the emperor. Similarly, barbarians were now defined primarily as non-Christians, who were not yet subjects to the emperor's law. In theory, at least, the pagan who adopted Christianity ceased to be a barbarian.<sup>14</sup> The expansion of Christianity was thus equated with the expansion of the Empire or, at least, of its political influence.

Despite the interest in the history of the Late Roman and early Byzantine frontier, the relationship between the sixth-century *limes* and the ecclesial organization in the Balkans has never received sufficient attention.<sup>15</sup> Scholars focusing on the military aspects of Justinian's building program often neglected the religious dimension of his political efforts,<sup>16</sup> while approaches rooted in Christian archaeology tend to separate the ecclesial monuments from their archaeolo-

[*Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. P. Lemerle (Paris 1979) 2.5.284 and 288]. See E. Chrysos, »Die Norgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert«, in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. B. Hänsel (Berlin 1987) 37–38. For the date of Book II, see O. V. Ivanova, »Chudesa Sv. Dimitriia Solunskogo«, in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh*, ed. S. A. Ivanov et al. (Moscow 1995) 2.200 and 203.

<sup>6</sup> András Alföldi, »Die ethische Grenzscheide am römischen Limes«, *Schweizer Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte* 8 (1950) 37–50; András Alföldi, »The moral barrier on Rhine and Danube«, in *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, 1949* (Durham 1952) 1–16. See also Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans* (Paris 1981) 2.61 (»frontière théorique de l'empire«); Chrysos (n. 5 above) 34–7.

<sup>7</sup> P. V. Shuvalov, »Severo-vostok Balkanskogo poluostrova v epokhu pozdnei antichnosti (social'no-demograficheskie aspekty politicheskoi istorii)«, in *Iz istorii Vizantii i vizantinovedeniia. Mezhdunarodnyi sbornik*, ed. G. L. Kurbatov (Leningrad 1991) 40. In contrast, though Procopius speaks of fortified *cleisurae*, Justinian's building program in the eastern Black Sea area seems to have been restricted to the coastal road linking Lazike to Trebizond. See V. A. Lekvinadze, »O postroikakh Iustiniana v zapadnom Gruzii«, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 34 (1973) 170–171.

<sup>8</sup> *De re strategica* 12, ed. G. Dennis (Washington 1985) 35. Justinian's reign coincided with the generalization of *proteichismata*. Some walls were thickened and elevated and triangular or pentangular bastions were retained. Bastions were also blocked and converted into bastides. See Dimităr Ovcharov, »Proteikhizmata v sistemata na rannovizantiiskite ukreplenii po nashite zemi«, *Arheologitii* 15 (1973) 11–23; Malgorzata Biernacka-Lubanska, *The Roman and Early Byzantine Fortifications of Lower Moesia and Northern Thrace* (Warsaw 1982) 219–20.

<sup>9</sup> Enrico Zanini, »Confine e frontiera: il limes danubiano nel VI secolo«, in *MILION. Studi e ricerche d'arte bizantina* (Rome 1988) 268.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin H. Isaac, *The Limits of the Empire. The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford 1992); C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire. A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore 1994); D. H. Miller, »Frontier societies and the transition between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages«, in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (Aldershot 1996) 162. For the meaning of the term *limes*, see Benjamin H. Isaac, »The meaning of the terms *limes* and *limitanei*«, *Journal of Roman Studies* 17 (1988) 125–147.

<sup>11</sup> For Chilbudius' campaigns in the early 530s, see Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.4–6. For the episode of Turrus, »an ancient city, situated to the north of the river Ister«, which had been founded by Trajan, see *Wars* 7.14.32–33, transl. H. B. Dewing (London/New York 1924) 273.

<sup>12</sup> V. V. Kuchma, »Slaviane kak veroiatnyi protivnik Vizantiiskoi imperii po dannym dvukh voennykh traktatov«, in *Khoziaistvo i obshchestvo na Balkanakh v srednie veka*, ed. M. M. Freidenberg (Kalinin 1978) 11; Ch. C. Petersen, »The *Strategikon*. A forgotten classic«, *Military Review* 72 (1992), no. 8, 75.

<sup>13</sup> Theophylact Simocatta 7.7.5.

<sup>14</sup> Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (New York/Washington 1971) 274. See also Johannes Koder, »Byzanz, die Griechen und die Romaioisyné – eine Ethnogenese der Römer?«, in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, ed. H. Wolfram and W. Pohl (Vienna 1990) 1.103–111. According to John of Nikiu [*Chronicle*, transl. R. H. Charles (London/Oxford 1916) 90], a group of Lazi demanded from Justinian to make them »Christian like thyself, and we should then be subjects of the Roman empire.«

gical and urbanistic context.<sup>17</sup> More often than not, attention is paid to ecclesial issues in relation to the end of Byzantine power in the Balkans.<sup>18</sup> In this paper, I intend to explore some of the issues raised by the peculiar association between the *limes*, as a political and military structure, and the ecclesial infrastructure of the frontier. First, I will examine the implementation in the Balkans of some of Justinian's ecclesial enactments, with special emphasis on monasticism. Second, in the context of missionary activity in the area close to the northern frontier of the empire, I will bring into the argument the archaeological evidence north of the Danube and attempt to elucidate the question of the spread of Christianity beyond the Empire's frontiers, in *barbaricum*. My purpose is to demonstrate that the early 500s, particularly the opening years of Justinian's reign, were a time of extraordinary initiatives in administration, economy, and religious organization. The emperor's impressive building program in the Balkans was indeed realized in practice in the form described by Procopius. Despite lack of any evidence in Procopius' work, this program might have included not only forts and city fortifications, but also churches, in conjunction with contemporary changes in the administrative role of bishops. The specific circumstances in which this program came into being, and especially the sharp decline of the rural population in the Balkans, may explain the striking absence of major monastic sites in the Balkans. This may in turn explain the lack of information about missions across the frontier, despite the growing role of local bishops. The archaeological and historical evidence suggests, however, that Christian artifacts and practices were known to barbarians north of the Danube. On the other hand, missions in the sixth century often operated under the aegis of the state, for they were harnessed for the political purposes of the empire. That no evidence exists for missionary enterprises across the sixth-century Danube frontier, which could be compared with the process of conversion elsewhere, may indicate that on the northern frontier no political gains were expected to result from missions of evangelization.

## THE LIMES AND THE CHURCH

There is still a tendency among scholars to downplay the significance of Justinian's building program or to treat Procopius' evidence with extreme suspicion.<sup>19</sup> Part of an imperial propaganda effort,<sup>20</sup> all that Procopius described in his *Buildings* is attributed to Justinian

alone, as though the emperor had personally initiated and carried it through.<sup>21</sup> The overall impression one gets from the *Buildings* is that a sudden and overwhelming effect was brought about by Justinian's building policies.<sup>22</sup> Procopius' narrative is set in a timeless atmosphere, which may have been intended to suggest the permanence of the emperor's achievements.<sup>23</sup> That the *Buildings* was meant to be a panegyric is shown by a comparison of Procopius' portrait of Justinian with contemporary propaganda media. For Procopius, Justinian was »the founder of the civilized world (ὁ τῆς οἰκουμένης οἰκίστης)«, a builder *par excellence*.<sup>24</sup> The latter is the epithet attached to the emperor's name in an inscription from Mangalia/Callatis and on brick stamps from Nesebăr/Mesembria.<sup>25</sup> Was then the *Buildings* just a rhetorical exercise? Some have argued that Procopius' work is not a factual record, despite its appearance of documentary authenticity.<sup>26</sup> Others

<sup>15</sup> For an excellent analysis of this relationship on the eastern frontier, see Susan A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis. John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley 1990) 94–100.

<sup>16</sup> For the problems of early Christianity in the northern Balkans, Jacques Zeiller's monograph [*Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'Empire romain* (Paris 1918)] remains unrivaled.

<sup>17</sup> See the general remarks of Archibald Dunn, »The transition from polis to kastron in the Balkans (III–VII cc.): general and regional perspectives«, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 18 (1994) 67–70.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Lothar Waldmüller, *Die ersten Begegnungen der Slawen mit dem Christentum und den christlichen Völkern vom VI. bis VIII. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam 1976).

<sup>19</sup> For the eastern frontier, see B. Croke and J. Crow, »Procopius and Dara«, *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983) 143–159. For a more balanced approach, see M. Whitby, »Procopius' description of Dara (*Buildings* II 1–3)«, in *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East. Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the University of Sheffield in April 1986*, ed. Ph. Freeman and D. Kennedy (Oxford 1986) 2.737–783.

<sup>20</sup> J. A. S. Evans, »Justinian and the historian Procopius«, *Greece and Rome* 17 (1970) 223.

<sup>21</sup> Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1985) 86–87.

<sup>22</sup> Cameron (n. 21 above) 109.

<sup>23</sup> L. M. Whitby, »Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius and the date of Procopius' *De aedificiis*«, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985) 141.

<sup>24</sup> Procopius, *Buildings* 4.1.17, transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 225.

<sup>25</sup> Emilian Popescu, »Die spätgriechischen Inschriften aus Klein-Skythien«, *Dacia* 11 (1967) 170; L. Ognenova-Marinova, »Les briques à estampilles de Nessèbre«, *Nessèbre*, ed. T. Ivanov (Sofia 1969) 1.109 and 111. Both call Justinian φιλοκτίστης.

<sup>26</sup> Cameron (n. 21 above) 110. Skepticism toward Procopius' *Buildings* goes back to Edward Gibbon, who surmised that most of the forts mentioned by Procopius were no more than solitary towers surrounded by moats. See J. A. S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian. The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London/New York 1996) 222–223.

believe that the *Buildings* were undervalued as a work of strategic insight and point to many links between Book IV and the renaissance of military treatises in the sixth century, from Anonymus Byzantinus to the author of the *Strategikon*.<sup>27</sup> An inscription found at Byllis, in Albania, corroborates Book IV. The inscription indicates that the forts in Moesia, Scythia minor, Illyricum, and Thrace were built for Justinian by his architect, Viktorinos.<sup>28</sup> The evidence of this inscription suggests that Procopius should be given some credit for veracity. He saw the Danube as the boundary between barbarians and Romans.<sup>29</sup> His emphasis on the Danube is meant to explain that the entire strategy underlying the building program in the Balkans was centered upon the Danube *limes*.<sup>30</sup> According to Procopius, the forts built by Justinian were a response to a particular kind of warfare, namely sudden attacks from the north.<sup>31</sup> We have all reasons to believe that Justinian's strategy was realized in practice and that Procopius' description of it is, in its essentials, sound. Despite claims to the contrary, the *Buildings* provides solid evidence that in the mid-500s, the Danube frontier together with the provinces in the interior received a level of fortification the Balkans had never witnessed before.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, the building program had already begun under Emperor Anastasius<sup>33</sup> or, possibly, Justin I. On many Balkan sites, however, coin series for the early Byzantine period indicate that the main sixth-century occupation phase began under Justinian.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, during the sixth century the administration of the urban centers was gradually shifting from decurions, a social group on the verge of disappearing, to a clique of notables headed by the local bishop.<sup>35</sup> Emperor Anastasius had already given to committees of local landowners and bishops the task of purchasing grain for cities.<sup>36</sup> But an even clearer picture is given by Justinian's legislation. Novel 8 of 535 prevented provincial governors from appointing their representatives in cities and novel 128 of 545 gave the final blow to traditional city councils by granting bishops the right to assume the fiscal, as well as other, responsibilities of the decurions. During the first half of the sixth century, bishops replaced the moribund town councils, their power expanded beyond the limits of the episcopate.

Novel 11 of 535 is perhaps the best example of Justinian's program of linking the higher church dignitaries with the hierarchy of the secular administration. As with Carthage, the creation of an archbishopric of Justiniana Prima brought about a re-grouping of ecclesial jurisdictions and the implementation of new hierarchical

<sup>27</sup> Katherine Adshead, »Procopius' poliorcetica: continuities and discontinuities«, in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. G. Clark et al. (Rushcutters Bay 1990) 107 and 113.

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Feissel, »L'architecte Viktorinos et les fortifications de Justinien dans les provinces balkaniques«, *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* 1988, 136–146.

<sup>29</sup> *Buildings* 4.5.

<sup>30</sup> *Buildings* 4.1, transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 221. The terms used by Procopius to indicate that Chilbudius, in the early 530s, stopped barbarians to cross the Danube, but permitted Romans to cross over the opposite side show that the Lower Danube was viewed as a barrier for barbarian action against the Empire, but not for Roman action against barbarians. See Chrysos (n. 5 above) 27–28; Isaac (n. 10 above, 1988); Isaac (n. 10 above, 1992) 417–418. A law issued by Justinian in 538 [Edict 13, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. R. Schoell and W. Kroll (Berlin 1954) 2.785] and dealing with tax collection in Egypt, inflicted punishment on those military units, whose officers refused to assist *augustales* in collecting taxes, by transferring them to the region north of the river Danube, »to watch at the frontier in that place.« The Danube was still a boundary, not a frontier, in 598, as Avars and Romans concluded the peace. The river, according to Theophylact Simocatta, was agreed upon not as a frontier, but as an intermedium (μεσίτης) between Romans and Avars, for »there was provision for crossing the river (by Romans) against Sclavenes« [7.15.14, transl. Whitby (n. 3 above) 201]. That these were not mere intentions, is shown by the fact that as late as 602, Roman troops were still operating north of the Danube river [8.5.12, transl. Whitby (n. 3 above) 217].

<sup>31</sup> *Buildings* 4.1, transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 221 and 223. See also S. A. Ivanov, »Oborona balkanskikh provincii Vizantii i proniknovenie 'varvarov' na Balkany v pervoi polovine VI v.«, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 45 (1984) 36.

<sup>32</sup> Velizar Velkov, »Der Donaulimes in Bulgarien und das Vordringen der Slawen«, in *Völker* (n. 5 above) 155.

<sup>33</sup> Histria: Ioan Barnea and Radu Vulpe, *Romanii la Dundera de Jos* (Bucharest 1968) 411. Dyrrachium: K. Zheku, »Zbulime epigrafike në muret rrethuese të Kalasë së Durrësit«, *Monumentet* 3 (1972) 35–46. Vavovo Kale (Bulgaria): V. Velkov and S. Lisicov, »An early Byzantine and medieval fort in the Haemus with an inscription and graffiti of Emperor Anastasius«, *Sbornik v chest na akad. Dimităr Angelov*, ed. V. Velkov et al. (Sofia 1994) 263.

<sup>34</sup> Vladimir Kondić, »Les formes de fortifications protobyzantines dans la région des Portes de Fer«, in *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Ecole française de Rome, Rome, 12–14 mai 1982* (Rome 1984) 134. Sadovsko Kale (Bulgaria): Syna Uenze, »Die Ausgrabungen 1934–1937: Beschreibung der Baufunde und Versuch einer Interpretation anhand der Grabungsdokumentation«, in *Die spätantiken Befestigungen von Sadovec. Ergebnisse der deutsch-bulgarisch-österreichischen Ausgrabungen 1934–1937*, ed. S. Uenze (Munich 1992) 127. Hajdučka Vodenica: Aleksandar Jovanović, »Hajdučka Vodenica, kasnoantičko i ranovizantijsko utvrđenje«, *Starinar* 32–33 (1982–1983) 328 and 330; Vladimir Kondić, »Le trésor de monnaies d'or de Hajdučka Vodenica (limes danubien)«, in *Caričin Grad I. Les basiliques B et J de Caričin Grad, quatre objets remarquables de Caričin Grad, le trésor de Hajdučka Vodenica*, ed. N. Duval and V. Popović (Belgrade/Rome 1984) 179–88. Prahovo: Vladislav Popović, »Petits trésors et trésors démembrés de monnaie de bronze protobyzantines de Serbie«, *Numizmatičar* 7 (1984) 58. Riakhovec (Bulgaria): I. Băchvarov, »Kolektivni monetni nakhodki ot krepostta Riakhovec pri Gorna Oriakhovica«, *Numizmatika* 24 (1990), no. 3, 32–43. For hoards of the Justinianic period, see Florin Curta, »Invasion or inflation?

structures.<sup>37</sup> According to Justinian's novel, the archbishop of Justiniana Prima was now expected to extend his authority over most of the Illyrian prefecture, as well as over territories that Justinian gullibly proclaimed to have been reconquered under his rule.

As our state was enlarged in the presence of God Creator, so that both banks of the Danube were crowded with our cities, and Viminacium, as well as Recidiva and Litterata, which are located across the Danube, were again subdued to our power, we considered it necessary to establish the most glorious prefecture which had been formed in Pannonia in our most fortunate homeland [Justiniana Prima], in close proximity to Pannonia.<sup>38</sup>

It is unlikely that the see of the Illyrian prefecture was ever transferred to Justiniana Prima.<sup>39</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that the jurisdiction of the archbishop extended as far as the left bank of the Danube. As Roman authority was re-established, following Theodoric's departure for Italy in 488/9, an ecclesial rearrangement of the northern Balkans became imperiously necessary. Justinian's novel, while projecting current political goals into the recent past, redefined the *limes* in terms of faith. The bishop of Aquis, a city on the Danube frontier, was now given authority over the city and the neighboring forts (*castella*), as he was expected to »repel the calamity of the Bonosian [heretics] (*Bonosiacorum scelus*) from that city and from the earth or [otherwise] turn them [back] to the orthodox faith.«<sup>40</sup> Bonosus of Serdica was a late fourth-century follower of Photinus of Sirmium, who believed that, since Jesus had been no more than a human being, Christ was not the true Son of God, but only His »adoptive« son. In the mid-500s, Pope Vigilius had Bonosus on a list of renowned heretics, along with Paul of Samosata and Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>41</sup> Emperor Justinian, in his *Confessio rectae fidei*, associated Bonosus' name with that of Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose writings were at the center of the Three Chapters controversy.<sup>42</sup> By the time Justinian has assigned the bishop of Aquis the task of eliminating this heresy, Bonosus' ideas were widely spread in Gaul and Spain.<sup>43</sup>

Dogmatic controversies, however, rarely influence the ritual of service, and heresies are therefore often archaeologically invisible.<sup>44</sup> By contrast, the measures Justinian took to secure the religious uniformity of the Balkan provinces, including the eradication of paganism, may have found an architectural echo. It has long been noticed that starting with Justinian's reign, there is an increasing number of baptisteries, often built next to

Sixth- to seventh-century Byzantine coin hoards in Eastern and South-eastern Europe«, *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 43 (1996) 99–102. On several sites in Serbia (Momčilov grad, Svetinja), Bulgaria (Dyadovo), and Macedonia (Markovi Kuli), the earliest occupation phase is dated, in well stratified contexts, by coins minted for Justinian. See M. Brmbolić, »Rannovizantijsko utvrđenje na Juhoru«, *Zbornik Narodnog Muzeja* 12 (1986) 207; M. Popović, »Svetinja, novi podaci o ranovizantijskom Viminacijumu«, *Stari nar* 38 (1987) 10; J. G. de Boer, »An early Byzantine fortress on the tell of Dyadovo«, *Talanta* 20–21 (1988–1989) 91; I. Mikulčić and N. Nikuljska, »Ranovizantijski grad Markovi Kuli na Vodno«, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 4 (1978) 141. A date within Justinian's reign should not be *a priori* excluded for sites on which the coin series begin with Anastasius or Justin I. It is known that coins struck under Anastasius and Justin I were still in circulation in the late 500s.

<sup>35</sup> Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton 1987) 72–75.

<sup>36</sup> Cod. Just. 1.4.17, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 2.41.

<sup>37</sup> R. A. Markus, »Carthage-Prima Justiniana-Ravenna: an aspect of Justinian's *Kirchenpolitik*«, *Byzantion* 49 (1979) 301. The practice of upgrading the status of major bishoprics was not new. In Thrace, as well as in Moesia, autocephalous archbishoprics existed since the early 400s. See Bistra Nicolova, »Division ecclésiastique en Thrace, en Mésie et en Illyricum oriental du IV-e au VIII-e siècle«, *Bulgarian Historical Review* 21 (1993), no. 1, 27–28.

<sup>38</sup> *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3.94.

<sup>39</sup> L. Maksimović, »L'administration de l'Illyricum septentrional à l'époque de Justinien«, in *Philadelphie et autres études*, ed. H. Ahrweiler (Paris 1984) 149.

<sup>40</sup> *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3.94. For Justinian's concept of heresy, see A. Gerostergios, *The Religious Policy of Justinian I and His Religious Beliefs*, Ph.D. diss. (Boston University 1974) 161. For his religious policies, see also W. S. Thurman, »How Justinian I sought to handle the problem of religious dissent«, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 13 (1968) 15–40; Johannes Irmscher, »Non-christians and sectarians under Justinian. The fate of the inculpated«, in *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque*, ed. M.-M. Mactoux and E. Geny (Paris 1988) 1.165–167.

<sup>41</sup> Vigilius, Ep. encyl. of February 5, 552, ed. E. Schwartz (Munich 1940) 27–29; *Collectio avellana* 83.228, ed. O. Guenther (Vienna 1895) 295.

<sup>42</sup> Eduard Schwartz, *Drei dogmatische Schriften Iustinians* (Munich 1939) 102. For the identity of Bonosus, as well as for the subsequent development of the Bonosian heresy in the West, see Knut Schäferdieck, »Bonosus von Naissus, Bonosus von Serdika und die Bonosianer«, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 96 (1985) 162–178.

<sup>43</sup> Zeiller (n. 16 above) 345–346 and 350.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (London/New York 1986) 96. Đurđe Janković [*Podunavski deo oblasti Akvisa u VI početkom VII veka* (Belgrade 1981) 229] associated the Bonosian heresy with hair- or dress-pins with pigeon-shaped heads, which are remarkably frequent in the northern Balkans. But as Joachim Werner has shown, this typically female dress accessory should rather be interpreted as status symbol; see Joachim Werner, »Golemanovo Kale und Sadovsko Kale: Kritische Zusammenhang der Grabungsergebnisse«, in *Die spätantiken Befestigungen* (n. 34) 412. In any case, such artifacts were associated with sixth-century military sites on the Danube frontier. See Zdenko Vinski, »Arheološki spomenici velike seobe naroda u Srijemu«, *Situla* 2 (1957) 50.

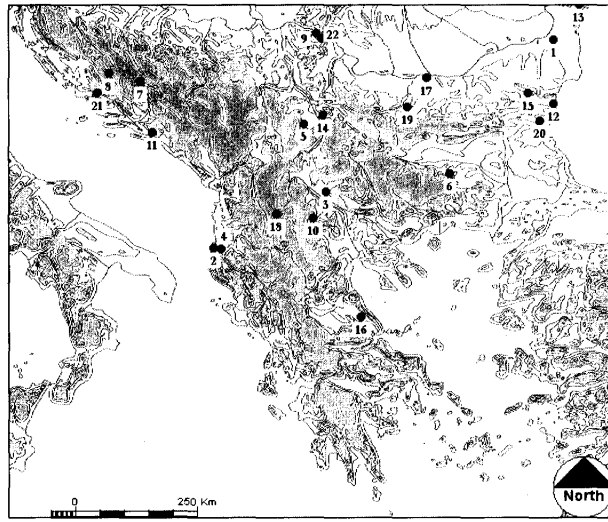


Fig. 1. Distribution of sixth-century baptisteries in the Balkans: 1. Adamclisi; 2. Ballshi; 3. Bargala (Goren Kozjak); 4. Byllis; 5. Caričin Grad; 6. Chobandere; 7. Cim-Mostar; 8. Crkvenica; 9. Boljetin; 10. Debrešte; 11. Dubrovnik; 12. Džhanavar tepe; 13. Histria; 14. Klisura; 15. Krumovo Kale; 16. Nea Anchialos; 17. Novae (Svishtov); 18. Perushtica; 19. Sadovec (Golemannovo Kale); 20. Pirinch tepe; 21. Salona; 22. Veliki Gradac

older basilicas (Fig. 1). Canon law had required that the baptismal sacrament should be administered by bishops only.<sup>45</sup> But by A.D. 500, perhaps due to the bishop's new administrative tasks, his presence at the baptismal ceremony was no longer a requirement.<sup>46</sup> The presence of more than one baptistery in the same city (e.g., three at Stobi) suggests the performance of baptism by clergy other than the city's bishop.<sup>47</sup> The rapid multiplication of baptisteries betrays an increasing need of religious services.<sup>48</sup> This growth also shows the concern of the ecclesial and, we may presume, imperial authorities, for the conversion of a significantly larger number of people. Some scholars have interpreted this as an indication that large numbers of non-Christian soldiers of the Roman army, mostly barbarians, were now converted *en masse*.<sup>49</sup> Others, observing that the correlate of the increasing number of baptisteries is their significant reduction in size, suggested that changes may have occurred in the ritual of service, with baptism being now administered chiefly to children.<sup>50</sup> In the absence of contextual data from written sources, it is not possible to decide which one of these interpretations we should follow. Moreover, it is not impossible that both factors were at work in the Balkans. In any case, these architectural changes clearly point to an increasing concern with including larger numbers of people within the Christian community.

Such efforts for mass conversion were directed primarily toward the army. This results primarily from the presence of baptisteries in fort churches (Fig. 2). Two sites in the Iron Gates segment of the *limes* may illustrate the case. At Boljetin, the single-naved church of the fort built on top of earlier, fourth-century buildings, has a baptismal font in the south-eastern corner, right next to the apse.<sup>51</sup> At Veliki Gradac, the church was built with its vestibule blocking the camp's western gate. The gate itself now became a narrow atrium, with a baptistery on the southern side.<sup>52</sup> Similar examples are known from hillforts in Bosnia and Slovenia, many of which probably owed their existence to the Justinianic occupation of the western

<sup>45</sup> Consequently, some believe that whenever baptisteries are found, they signalize the presence of a bishopric. See Pere de Palol, »El baptisterio en al ambito arquitectonico de los conjuntos episcopales urbanos«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève, Aoste (21–28 septembre 1986)* (Rome 1989) 1.565–566. See also D. Pallas, »Le baptistère dans l'Illyricum oriental«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste (21–28 septembre 1986)* (Rome 1989) 3.2488. For the interpretation of newly built baptisteries, see N. Chaneva-Dechevska, »Rannekhristianskie baptisterii v Bolgarii«, in *Actes du XIV-e Congrès international des études byzantines. Bucharest, 6–12 septembre 1971*, ed. M. Berza and E. Stănescu (Bucharest 1976) 3.306–309; N. Chaneva-Dechevska, »Die frühchristliche Architektur in Bulgarien«, in *Actes du X-e Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Thessalonique, 28. septembre – 4. octobre 1980* (Thessaloniki/Vatican 1984) 2.620.

<sup>46</sup> Pallas (n. 45 above) 2490.

<sup>47</sup> P. Chevalier, »Les baptistères paléochrétiens de la province romaine de Dalmatie«, *Diadora* 10 (1988) 115.

<sup>48</sup> That this phenomenon must have been associated with Justinian's reign is suggested by specimens found in Dalmatia, all built or otherwise modified in the period immediately following the Byzantine occupation of this region during the war in Italy. See Nenad Cambi, »Starokršćanska crkvena arhitektura na području Salonićanske metropolije«, *Arheološki vestnik* 29 (1978) 615.

<sup>49</sup> Chaneva-Dechevska (n. 45 above, 1976) 309.

<sup>50</sup> Chevalier (n. 47 above) 150. Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne [»Notes d'archéologie bulgare«, *Cahiers archéologiques* 17 (1967) 46] thought that baptism for children was indicated by the basin found in the Galata basilica, an idea quickly embraced by other scholars. See Renate Pillinger, »Monumenti paleocristiani in Bulgaria«, *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 61 (1985) 306–307. Her interpretation of the so-called baptismal font has recently been rejected on solid, archaeological grounds; see Andrei Opaiț, Cristina Opaiț, and Teodor Bănică, »Der frühchristliche Komplex von Slava Rusă«, in *Die Schwarzmeerküste in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. R. Pillinger, A. Pülz, and H. Vettters (Vienna 1992) 118.

<sup>51</sup> Đurđe Bošković, »Apperçu sommaire sur les recherches archéologiques du limes romain et paléobyzantin des Portes de Fer«, *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Ecole Française de Rome* 9 (1978) 437. For the sixth-century building phase at Boljetin, see Kondić (n. 34 above) 155.

<sup>52</sup> Bošković (n. 51 above) 437.

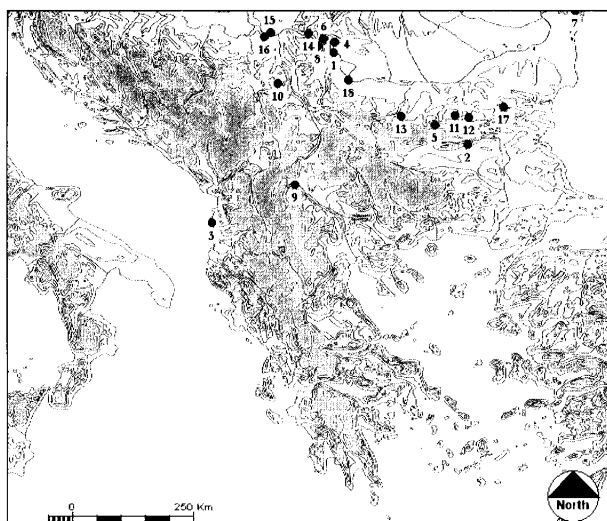


Fig. 2. Location map of principal fortified sites mentioned in the text: 1. Prahovo; 2. Dyadovo; 3. Durrës; 4. Glamija; 5. Grad\_t; 6. Hajdučka Vodenica; 7. Histria; 8. Malo Golubnje; 9. Markovi Kuli; 10. Momčilov grad; 11. Nikiup; 12. Riakhovec; 13. Sadovec (Sadovsko Kale and Golemannovo Kale); 14. Saldum; 15. Sapaja; 16. Svetinja; 17. Vavovo Kale; 18. Archar

Balkans during the Gothic War.<sup>53</sup> According to the author of the *De re strategica*, »the men in the garrison [of forts] should not have their wives and children with them«, though, »if a fort is extremely strong, so that there is no danger of its being besieged, and we can keep it provisioned without any problems«, soldiers may have their families reside with them.<sup>54</sup> Early Byzantine forts in the Iron Gates segment of the Danube frontier were small, often no larger than 0.5 hectare. They could not have been manned by more than 300 to 400 soldiers.<sup>55</sup> In any case, there is no indication of a civilian habitat. At Veliki Gradac, the only other known building erected within the camp is a *horreum* near the northern gate.<sup>56</sup> The archaeological material discovered within the fort bespeaks its purely military character.<sup>57</sup>

The archaeological evidence thus suggests that we may take novel 11 at face value. The local bishop's authority extended not only over the city, but also over the nearby forts.<sup>58</sup> Justinian's foremost concern was both to provide individual safeguards for his subjects<sup>59</sup> and to save their souls.<sup>60</sup> In both cases, bishops were key elements of the imperial policies. Justinianic architecture has been viewed as typically imperial, for only the emperor could have provided the immense funds needed for his building program. Nevertheless, no church could have been built unless the bishop, at

the head of a procession, had prayed and planted a cross at its foundation.<sup>61</sup>

The strong association between bishops and local military forces is also evidenced by literary sources. Theophylact Simocatta narrates an interesting episode of Peter's campaign of 594 against the Sclavenes.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Crvenica (Bosnia): Đuro Basler, *Spätantike und frühchristliche Architektur in Bosnien und der Herzegowina* (Vienna 1993) 48. At Pridraga and Cim, baptisteries were associated with triconch churches, a clear indication of a Justinianic building phase, see Nenad Cambi, »Triconch churches on the Eastern Adriatic«, in *Actes du X-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 2.50. For other examples, see Chevalier (n. 50 above) 153–154 and Nenad Cambi, »Nuove scoperte di archeologia cristiana in Dalmazia«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 3.2402. A baptistery was added on the northern side of the church built within the hillfort at Korinjski hrib, in Slovenia; see S. Ciglenečki, *Höhenbefestigungen aus der Zeit vom 3. bis 6. Jh. im Ostalpenraum* (Ljubljana 1987) 101–102.

<sup>54</sup> *De re strategica* 9, ed. Dennis (n. 8 above) 29.

<sup>55</sup> For the relation between the size of the fort and that of its garrison, see N. P. Kardulias, »Estimating population at ancient military sites: the use of historical and contemporary analogy«, *American Antiquity* 57 (1992) 276–287.

<sup>56</sup> Miloje Valić and Vladimir Kondić, »Le limes romain et paléobyzantin des Portes de Fer«, in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III. 13. internationaler Limeskongress Aalen 1983. Vorträge* (Stuttgart 1986) 558.

<sup>57</sup> In contrast, for instance, to forts associated with extramural civilian settlements, as in Golemanovo Kale. Even then, however, the sixth-century, Justinianic building phase involved a transfer of the baptistery from the extramural to the intramural church. See Uenzen (n. 34 above) 104.

<sup>58</sup> According to Justinian's legislation, heterodox were excused from the military service which was the duty of the orthodox alone. See Gerostergios (n. 40 above) 161.

<sup>59</sup> See Procopius, *Buildings* 4.1.

<sup>60</sup> See Thurman (n. 40 above) 17.

<sup>61</sup> *Novellae* 67 of 538 and 131 of 545, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3. 344 and 657. See Thurman (n. 40 above) 36–37. For Justinianic architecture as typically imperial, see Krautheimer (n. 44 above) 203. The emperor as donor appears in an inscription recently found in Heraclea Lyncestis. See L. Dzhidrova, »Heraclea Lyncestis i problemiot na khronologijata i interpretacijata«, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 15 (1999) 282. Bishops occasionally appear as donors, as in the inscription of the floor mosaic in the basilica at Sandanski. See T. Ivanov, D. Serafimova, and N. Nikolov, »Razkopki v Sandanski prez 1960 g.«, *Izvestia na arkheologicheskiia Institut* 31 (1969) 105–209. See Jean-Pierre Caillet, »Les dédicaces privées de pavements de mosaïque à la fin de l'Antiquité. Occident européen et monde grec: données socioéconomiques«, in *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Age. Colloque international. Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, Université de Rennes – Haute Bretagne, 1–6 mai 1983*, ed. Xavier Barral i Altet (Paris 1987) 15–38. Another bishop, Leontius of Serdica, is mentioned in an inscription of 580, as the sponsor for the restoration of the city's aqueduct. See Beshevliev (n. 34 above) 2; M. Stancheva, »Sofia au Moyen Age à la lumière de nouvelles études archéologiques«, *Byzantinobulgarica* 5 (1978) 217.

<sup>62</sup> Theophylact Simocatta 7.3.1–10, tr. Whitby (n. 3 above) 182–183.



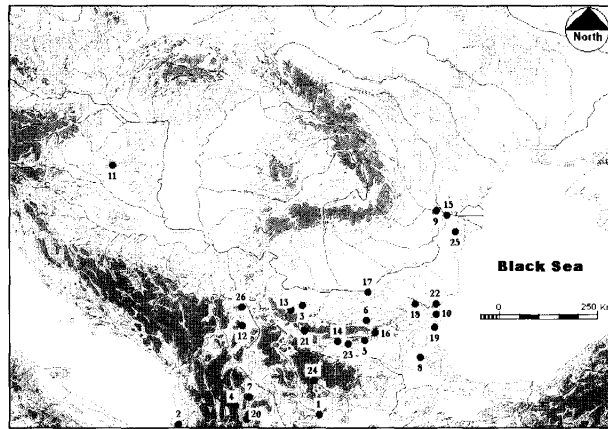


Fig. 3. Location map of the principal sites with basilicas mentioned in the text: 1. Amphipolis (Iraklitsa); 2. Ballshi; 3. Berkovica; 4. Heraclea Lyncestis (Bitola); 5. Brani pole; 6. Carevec; 7. Debrešte; 8. Devin; 9. Dinogetia (Garvăn); 10. Džhanavar tepe; 11. Fenékpusztá; 12. Caričin Grad; 13. Goliamo Belovo; 14. Diocletianopolis (Hisar); 15. Noviodunum (Isaccea); 16. Karanovo; 17. Iatrus (Krivina); 18. Krumovo Kale; 19. Mesembria (Nesebăr); 20. Pčinija; 21. Pirdop; 22. Pirinch tepe; 23. Karasura (Rupkite–Kalet); 24. Sandanski; 25. Slava Rusă; 26. Zlata

»From bygone times«, the city of Asemus had a garrison. As soon as the citizens learned that Peter was about to arrive, the garrison took up the standards and arrayed in armor, welcomed the general most gloriously. Peter noticed the military excellency of this local militia and attempted to remove it from the city and include it amongst his own forces. But the citizens of Asemus produced a decree of the emperor Justin (I? II?) which granted the city continual armed protection. Since Peter ignored all arguments, the soldiers took refuge in the city's church. Peter sent a body of his soldiers to expel them by force, but those who had taken refuge there arrayed themselves with arms and blockaded the church doors from all sides. Infuriated, Peter sent an imperial bodyguard to arrest the bishop of the city, but the citizens of Asemus closed the gates and covered the general with insults. Peter had no choice but to leave Asemus and »proceeded to march forwards, escorted by great curses from the city.« The most intriguing aspect of this episode is that the bishop was seen as responsible for the insubordination of the city's garrison. He appears, at least to Peter, as the most prominent political figure in the city. The Bulgarian archaeologist Dimitrina Mitova-Dzhonova even believes that the church referred to by Theophylact as περίβολος was the episcopal basilica, the most prominent building in the city of Asemus.<sup>63</sup> In reality, the

»sacred precinct« (ιερός περίβολος) is just Theophylact's metaphor for the church barricaded by soldiers of the city garrison.<sup>64</sup>

It is true, however, that on various sites in the northern Balkans, churches were literally built as parts of the ramparts (Fig. 3). Garrison churches were often so close to the precinct, that their apses were sometimes incorporated into the walls.<sup>65</sup> Other churches were built within one of a fort's towers or just next to them.<sup>66</sup> Sometimes, a church was built very close to the main gate, as if to obstruct access to the interior.<sup>67</sup> At Veliki Gradac, one of the fort's gates was indeed

<sup>63</sup> D. Mitova-Dzhonova, »Archäologische und schriftliche Angaben über das Asylrecht in der frühchristlichen und mittelalterlichen Kirche auf dem Territorium des heutigen Bulgariens«, in *Actes du X-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 2.343–344. See also D. Mitova-Dzhonova, »Peribolosāt pri rannokhristianskata bazilika u nas«, in *Prouchvaniia i konservaciia na pameticite na kulturata v Bălgariia*, ed. R. Rachev (Sofia 1974) 53–64.

<sup>64</sup> For Theophylact's metaphorical, sometimes bombastic style, see Thérèse Olajos, »Quelques remarques sur le style de Théophylacte Simocatta«, *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32 (1982) 157.

<sup>65</sup> Noviodunum: Barnea and Vulpe (n. 33 above) 477. Berkovica: Mitova-Dzhonova (n. 63, 1984) 340–341. Devin: Peter Soustal, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini 6: Thrakien (Thrace, Rodope und Haimimontus)* (Vienna 1991) 238. Diocletianopolis: M. Madzharov, »Diocletianopolis, ville paléochrétienne de Thrace«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 3.2531 (built after ca. 450). Golemanovo Kale: Uenze (n. 34 above) 35. Heraclea Lyncestis: Ivan Mikulčić, »Frühchristlicher Kirchenbau in der S. R. Makedonien«, *Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* 33 (1986) esp. 237 and fig. 2.

<sup>66</sup> Biogradi (Bosnia): Basler (n. 53 above) 38. Sv. Juraj (Croatia): Željko Tomić, »Arheološka svejdočanstva o ranobizantskom vojnom graditeljstvu na sjevernojadranskom otocima«, *Prilozi Instituta za Arheologiju u Zagrebu* 5–6 (1988–1989) 32 with fort plan (sixth century). Pčinija (Macedonia): Z. Georgiev, »Gradishte, s. Pchinia – docnoantichki i ranovizantiski kastel«, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 10 (1985–1986) 203–4 and fort plan. Dinogetia (Romania): Ioan Barnea, »Monumente de artă creștine pe teritoriul RPR«, *Studii teologice* 10 (1958) 295–296; Ioan Barnea, »Dinogetia – ville byzantine du Bas Danube«, *Vizantina* 10 (1980) 251 and city plan. Diocletianopolis (Bulgaria): A. Zaprianov, »Novootkrit paraklis v Hisar«, *Izvestiia na arheologicheskii Institut* 32 (1970) 305–310. Amphipolis (Greece): Kara Hattersley-Smith, *Byzantine Public Architecture, Between the Fourth and the Early Seventh Centuries A.D. with Special Reference to Towns of Macedonia*, Ph.D. diss. (University of Oxford 1988) 198 and city plan.

<sup>67</sup> Krumovo Kale (Bulgaria): Dimităr Ovcharov, »Dve rannovizantiiski kreposti ot Severoiztochna Bălgariia«, *Arheologia* 13 (1971), no. 4, 29; Dimităr Ovcharov, *Vizantiiski i bălgarski kreposti V–X vek* (Sofia 1982) fig. 10 (fort plan); Ralph Hoddinott, *Bulgaria in Antiquity: an Archaeological Introduction* (New York 1975) 264. Debrešte (Macedonia): Jadwiga Rauhutowa, »Debrešte (Makedonien, Jugoslawien), eine frühbyzantinische Stätte«, in *Symposium italo-polacco. Le origini di Venezia. Problemi, esperienze, proposte. Venezia, 28–29 febbraio – 1–2 marzo 1980* (Venice 1981) 45–47 and fig. 3, with fort plan. Carevec (Bulgaria): A. Pisarev, »Le système



obstructed by a church built with its baptistery in the gate's entrance.<sup>68</sup> In other cases, the church stood between the main walls and the *proteichisma*. At Berkovica (Bulgaria), the three-aisled basilica built outside the fort, right up against its wall, was later incorporated into a large bastion-like structure protruding from the fort's precinct.<sup>69</sup> Such instances of a clear association between church and defense walls are not unique. Similar examples are known from the eastern Black Sea area<sup>70</sup> and Africa.<sup>71</sup> The majority of these churches were dated to the sixth century, primarily on the basis of style. In addition, the Balkans provide two examples of fortified churches built in isolated regions, apparently without any related settlements or ceme-teries. At Dzhana-var tepe, 4 km south of Varna, a single-naved basilica was built with projecting north and south rooms flanking both apse and narthex, all in the form of powerful towers. The one on the northwestern side was a baptistery. Some have suggested Syrian influences,<sup>72</sup> but there is no doubt as to the defensive character of the complex. A still more compelling example is the Stag's basilica at Pirdop, in western Bulgaria, with a massive rectangular wall with four angle towers enclosing the church. The precinct seems to have been built at the same time as the extant church.<sup>73</sup> Despite claims to the contrary,<sup>74</sup> the defensive character of the complex is betrayed not only by its walls and towers, but also by barrel vaults and domes replacing the timber roof during the last building phase.<sup>75</sup> It is not clear why these two churches were fortified in this way.<sup>76</sup> Taking into consideration their isolated location, it may however be possible to compare them to other churches built within city or fort ramparts or close to the strongest parts of the precincts. In both cases, we may recognize the bishop's decision to build churches that could easily be turned into strongholds.

## MONASTERIES AND RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Bishops had also considerable control over local monasteries, at least since the council of Chalcedon had introduced the requirement of election and confirmation of the abbot by the local bishop.<sup>77</sup> Concerned with the salvation of his subjects' souls, the emperor was no less concerned with the organization of monastic life. Novel 5 of 535 ordered that all monasteries follow the common life (κοινὸβίον).<sup>78</sup> Three years later, novel 67 upheld Chalcedon's rule that monasteries must first receive episcopal permission to be built.

Our knowledge of sixth-century monasticism is based exclusively on evidence from outside the Balkan area.<sup>79</sup> Procopius mentions monasteries built or renewed by Justinian in Armenia, Asia Minor, Palestine, Phoenicia, Sinai, and Constantinople.<sup>80</sup> He apparently has no knowledge of any monasteries in the Balkan provinces.

de fortification entre le Danube et les versants nord des Balkans pendant l'antiquité tardive», in *Akten des 14. internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum*, ed. H. Vetters and M. Kandler (Vienna 1990) 877 and fig. 1, with city plan.

<sup>68</sup> Bošković (n. 51 above) 437.

<sup>69</sup> Mitova-Dzhonova (n. 63 above, 1984) fig. 1 (fort's plan); Mitova-Dzhonova (n. 63 above, 1974) 56.

<sup>70</sup> Iu. N. Voronov and O. Kh. Bgazhba, »Krepost' Cibilium – odin iz uzlov Kavkazskogo limesa Iustinianovski epokhi«, *Vizantiiskii vremennik* 48 (1987) 131 and fig. 3; L. G. Khrushkova, »Pitiunt et le littoral oriental de la Mer Noire à l'époque paléochrétienne«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 3.2670.

<sup>71</sup> Denys Pringle, *The Defense of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest: an Account of the Military History and Archaeology of the African Provinces in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries* (Oxford 1981) 180 and 122.

<sup>72</sup> Pillinger (n. 50 above) 285–287. The church has been dated, on dubious grounds, to the fifth century [Hoddinott (n. 67 above) 327].

<sup>73</sup> For the dating of the church, see Hoddinott (n. 67 above) 283. Though the last building phase may be of Justinianic age [see Krautheimer (n. 44 above) 252; Chaneva-Dechevska (n. 45 above, 1984) 619], the last remodelling of the church may have occurred at some time during the last third of the sixth century [Krautheimer (n. 44 above) 251].

<sup>74</sup> See Mitova-Dzhonova (n. 63 above, 1974) 56.

<sup>75</sup> Pillinger (n. 50 above) 284–285; Krautheimer (n. 44 above) 251–252.

<sup>76</sup> To my knowledge, there are no other examples of isolated churches in the Balkans, despite claims to the contrary; see Mikulčić (n. 65 above) 244. The only other case is located outside the area under discussion, in Istria; see Ante Šonje, »Ranovizantinska bazilika sv. Agneze u Muntajani Poreština u Istri«, *Starinar* 27 (1976) 53–69.

<sup>77</sup> It was at Chalcedon, the fourth ecumenical council, that monasteries were integrated into the imperial church. For the confirmation of the abbot, see novel 5 of 535. See also Gerostergios (n. 40 above) 438; Charles A. Frazee, »Late Roman and Byzantine legislation on the monastic life from the fourth to the eighth centuries«, *Church History* 51 (1982) 268; Georg Jenal, *Italia ascetica atque monastica. Das Asketen- und Mönchtum in Italien von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit der Langobarden (ca. 150/250–604)* (Stuttgart 1995) 811; Joseph Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Washington 1995) 32.

<sup>78</sup> *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3.31. The term »laura« does not appear in Justinianic laws, although Justinian acknowledged the existence of monasteries of hermits [Patrich (n. 77 above) 32].

<sup>79</sup> See, most recently, Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven/London 1992).

<sup>80</sup> Gerostergios (n. 40 above) 453. There is no information on monastic foundations in the Balkans comparable to that of saints' lives referring to contemporary Anatolia. See Frank R. Trombley, »Monastic foundations in sixth-century Anatolia and their role in the social and economic life of the countryside«, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 30 (1985) 45–59.

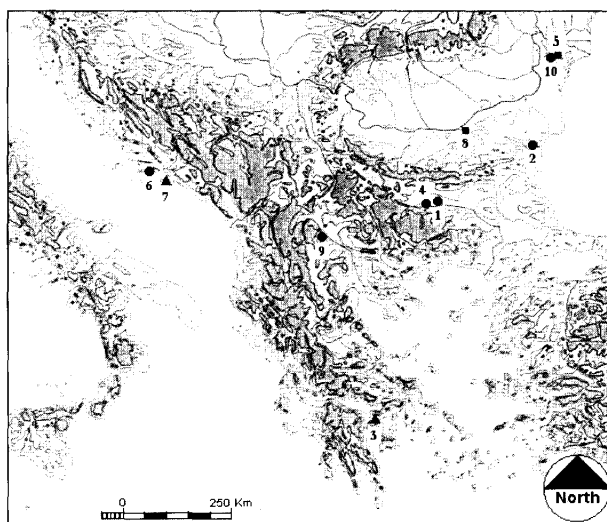


Fig. 4. Distribution of sixth-century monasteries (circle), villae rusticae (triangle), and rural settlements (square) in the Balkans: 1. Anevo; 2. Aladzha; 3. Akra Sophia; 4. Isparihovo; 5. Kurt Baiâr; 6. Majsan; 7. Polače; 8. Novgrad; 9. Palikura; 10. Slava Rusã

Book IV of his *Buildings*, which is dedicated to the description of the Balkans, also ignores any churches built by Justinian, though the archaeological evidence suggests that the emperor's restoration program comprised not only forts, but also churches. The existence of monastic communities at that time in the Balkans is only indirectly suggested by literary sources. During Justinian's reign, the »Scythian monks« were zealous supporters of a formula attempting to reconcile adherents of the council of Chalcedon with the Monophysites. This doctrine, called Theopaschitism (»one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh«), was fully embraced by the »Scythian monks« who even went to Rome to win the support of Pope Hormisdas.<sup>81</sup> A few decades later, during the reigns of Tiberius and Maurice, John Moschus wrote about hermitages around Thessalonica.<sup>82</sup> Other sources are less explicit. Archbishop John, the author of the first book of the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, clearly states that there were two notable churches outside the city walls of Thessalonica: that dedicated to the three sister saints Chione, Irene, and Agape, and that of St. Matrona. The latter is also called a φρούριον and may have been an example of the fortified churches already discussed. Nothing indicates, however, that it was a monastery.<sup>83</sup> In 592, Emperor Maurice, on the eve of his campaigns against the Sclavenes and the Avars, forbade soldiers or civil servants from entering monasteries before the end of their term.<sup>84</sup> His edict caused a strong reaction from Pope Gregory the Great,

who maintained that the emperor should not intervene in matters of religious vocation.<sup>85</sup> Maurice responded by allowing soldiers who had already served for three years to become monks.<sup>86</sup> It has been argued that Maurice's edict referred to the male population of Thrace, an indirect indication of monasteries there. Though the edict was issued in connection with the Slavic and Avar invasions into the Balkans, there is no evidence to support the idea that Maurice's edict referred to recruitment in Thrace.<sup>87</sup> Soldiers and civil servants could have joined monasteries located anywhere else in the empire.

The archaeological evidence for monasteries is also very meager (Fig. 4). We know that by 536, in Constantinople and its vicinity, there were at least 67 male monasteries,<sup>88</sup> but nothing comparable exists in the Balkans. There is some evidence of monasteries on the Adriatic coast. A fifth-century monastic site was found on the island of Majsan, near Korčula. It was organized around two porticoed courtyards and included a small church with *memoria* containing the relics of St. Maximus.<sup>89</sup> The site was still occupied during the second half of the sixth century, for it has also produced a hoard with the last coin struck for Emperor Justin II.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Zeiller (n. 16 above) 383–384; Barnea and Vulpe (n. 33 above) 458–459. See also John Moorhead, *Justinian* (New York 1994) 125–128. The Scythian monks do not seem to have been either too popular, or too influential in their home region. This might have been the result of their known association with Vitalianus' revolt. See Andreas Schwarcz, »Die Erhebung des Vitalianus, die Protobulgaren und das Konzil von Heraclea 515«, *Bulgarian Historical Review* 4 (1992) 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Leben des heiligen David von Thessalonike*, ed. by V. Rose (Berlin 1887) 15–6. See N. Moutsopoulos, »Monasteries outside the walls of Thessaloniki during the period of Slav raids«, *Cyrrillo-methodianum* 11 (1987) 129.

<sup>83</sup> *Miracles of St Demetrius* 1.12.107, 1.12.108, and 1.13.119. See Moutsopoulos (n. 82 above) 154.

<sup>84</sup> Edict 110, in Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453* (Munich 1924) 1.13–14.

<sup>85</sup> Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*, ed. P. Ewald and L. M. Hartmann (Berlin 1957) 3.61, 3.64, and 8.10.

<sup>86</sup> Frazee (n. 77 above) 276.

<sup>87</sup> See Danuta Gorecki, »The Thrace of Ares during the sixth and seventh centuries«, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 14 (1989) 226. On the other hand, recruitment shortages were already a serious problem during Justinian's reign. See A. Fotiou, »Recruitment shortages in sixth-century Byzantium«, *Byzantion* 58 (1988) 66–67.

<sup>88</sup> Gerostergios (n. 40 above) 435; Frazee (n. 77 above) 271. For a late sixth- and early seventh-century monastic complex in the Aegean, see Wolfram Martini and Cornelius Steckner, *Das Gymnasium von Samos. Das frühbyzantinische Klostergut* (Bonn 1993).

<sup>89</sup> Cambi (n. 53 above, 1989) 2420.

<sup>90</sup> C. Fisković, »Ranosrednjevjekovne ruševine na Majsanu«, *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 11 (1981) 146. For the Byzantine coin hoard,

At Ispersikhovo, near Plovdiv in Thrace, an early Byzantine monastery incorporated a small single-naved church with a baptistery on the southern side and another annex containing a font added later on the north-western side. The rest of the complex consisted of a series of rooms, some roughly mortared with mud. They included a cattle shed and a bread oven. Tools for woodwork and agriculture and household pots show that soon after the church was built a group of monks settled here and cultivated the land. The complex was surrounded by a wall sometime during the sixth century.<sup>91</sup> At Anevo, in the same area, Bulgarian archaeologists recently explored another monastic complex, dated to Justinian's reign.<sup>92</sup> A cave monastery may have existed not far from the modern monastery of Aladzha, near Varna. Its early dating to the fourth century is secured by fragments of glassware, but coins minted for Emperor Justinian indicate that the complex may still have been in use during the 500s.<sup>93</sup> Finally, at Slava Rusă, in Dobrudja, recent excavations have unearthed a monastic complex with two single-naved churches and three building phases dated to the late fifth, early sixth, and late sixth century, respectively. At some time in the last decades of the sixth century a wall was built around the complex.<sup>94</sup>

The total number of sixth-century monasteries known so far from the Balkans is thus strikingly small. How can this situation be explained? Some authors believe that much of the invisibility of monastic sites in the Balkans is due to the domination of the *laura* system in which the monks, living in individual hermitages, would gather on feast days at a common center for services and meals.<sup>95</sup> The *laura* system developed in Palestine in the course of the fourth century. It was based on the idea that only mature and experienced monks who had developed a strong self-discipline should be allowed to live in solitude in individual cells most of the time and meet only for a communal liturgy and meal on weekends. Justinianic legislation clearly discouraged the *laura* system.<sup>96</sup> However, it is not true that *lauras* are more difficult to identify by archaeological means. There are numerous examples known from contemporary sites in the Judaean desert. At least two buildings could be found in the center of any *laura*: a church and a bakery, the latter being part of a larger structure with rooms for storing utensils and food. Since the cells were scattered around the core buildings, the *laura* usually did have an enclosing wall, but in *lauras* established in flat areas, the borders of their territories were marked by a long stone fence.<sup>97</sup> This pattern can easily be recognized in the case of the monastic

complex at Ispersikhovo, perhaps also in that of Anevo, but there are no bakeries and no storage rooms in the complex at Slava Rusă, while the monastic complex at Majsan better fits the coenobitic model. Even if all cases considered were *lauras*, it is still not enough to explain the absence of significant coenobitic sites. It is no accident that, though mentioning monks or hermits, no sources specifically refer to monasteries.

In my opinion, the lack of monasteries may be explained in reference to another striking absence in the archaeological record of the sixth-century Balkan provinces, that of rural settlements. To be sure, archaeologists identified significant numbers of *villae rusticae* and rural settlements dated to the first four centuries A.D.<sup>98</sup> After the middle of the fifth century, however, medium-sized estates seem to have completely disappeared. By 450, the last *villae rusticae*, which have survived until then in the sheltered areas of Dalmatia and north-east Bosnia, were completely abandoned.<sup>99</sup> The only evidence of rural *villae* comes from Akra Sophia, near Corinth, where a systematic archaeological

see Ivan Mirnik, »Ostava bizantskog novca s Majsana«, *Numizmatičar* 5 (1982) 141–146.

<sup>91</sup> Hoddinott (n. 67 above) 297.

<sup>92</sup> I. Dzhambov, »Un centre chrétien découvert récemment en Thrace. L'oppidum près de Sopot (du VI-e au XIII-e siècle) et l'identification de Kopsis«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 3.2519.

<sup>93</sup> Georgi Atanasov, »Rannovizantijski skalni carkvi i manastiri v Iuzhna Dobrudzha«, *Arkheologija* 3 (1991) 34–35.

<sup>94</sup> Opaït, Opaït, and Bănică (n. 50 above) 113–117.

<sup>95</sup> Opaït, Opaït, and Bănică (n. 50 above) 121–122.

<sup>96</sup> See section III of the novel 5 of 535, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3.31–32; Frazee (n. 77 above) 272; Patrich (n. 77 above) 32.

<sup>97</sup> Hirschfeld (n. 79 above) 18–20. For early sixth-century *lauras*, see also Patrich (n. 77 above) 57–133.

<sup>98</sup> The fundamental work on Roman villas and rural economy in the Balkans during the first five centuries of the Christian era remains Joachim Henning, *Südosteuropa zwischen Antike und Mittelalter. Archäologische Beiträge zur Landwirtschaft des I. Jahrhunderts u.Z.* (Berlin 1987) 22–35 and figs. 7–11, with a complete list of sites.

<sup>99</sup> Karel Kurz, »Wirtschaftshistorische Glossen zur Landwirtschaft der römischen Provinzen an der Wende der Antike und des Mittelalters (Zur Situation in der Umgebung von Sirmium)«, in *Simpozijum »Predslavenski etnički elementi na Balkanu u etnogenezi južnih Slovena«, održan 24–26. oktobra 1968. u Mostaru*, ed. A. Benac (Sarajevo 1969) 99; Henning (n. 103 above) 35 and 37 (Henning points to the absence of rural settlements of any kind during the 500s). Some rightly pointed to the disappearance of the medium-sized villa estates which had provided the majority of decurions as an important factor contributing to the decline of cities. See Andrew Poulter, »The use and abuse of urbanism in the Danubian provinces during the Later Roman Empire«, in *The City in Late Antiquity*, ed. J. Rich (New York 1992) 122.

exploration yielded a sumptuous *villa* with mosaic floor in one of the rooms. The owner of the *villa* may have been an imperial military official in charge with the defense of the near-by Hexamilion.<sup>100</sup> Another *villa rustica* was found in 1949 at Polače, on the island of Mljet off the Adriatic coast. It has been dated to the fifth or sixth century.<sup>101</sup>

Evidence for peasant settlements is also scarce. According to Procopius, Justinian »made the defenses so continuous in the estates (χωρία), that each farm (ἀγρός) either has been converted into a stronghold (φρούριον) or lies adjacent to one which is fortified.«<sup>102</sup> It has been argued that this shows significant rural populations surviving in the Balkans well into the sixth-century.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, Procopius even provides an example of a village entirely transformed into a stronghold, through Justinian's munificence.<sup>104</sup> But he also describes peasants becoming »makeshift soldiers for the occasion«,<sup>105</sup> thus suggesting that agricultural occupations were now abandoned. The only evidence for the survival of a significant peasant population comes from the immediate vicinity of Constantinople.<sup>106</sup> Elsewhere the existence of open settlements with exclusively agricultural functions remains doubtful.<sup>107</sup> Despite the evident bias of early Byzantine archaeologists in the Balkans toward urban centers,<sup>108</sup> the evidence for rural settlements is remarkably scanty (Fig. 4). Recent excavations at Kurt Baiâr, near Slava Cercheză, in Dobrudja, not far from the presumed monastic site at Slava Rusă, unearthed a rectangular, single-roomed house built with stones bonded with clay and mud bricks. The building had two phases, dated to the fifth and sixth century, respectively.<sup>109</sup> Salvage excavations near Novgrad (Bulgaria), not far from the ancient site of Iatrus, have also revealed two similar structures, one of which is dated by a coin minted for Emperor Justin II.<sup>110</sup> Altogether, this is all the evidence we have so far from the Balkans. There is nothing comparable to the village at Qasrin, in the Golan highlands, nor anything similar to the two-storied peasant houses found by R. M. Harrison in the hinterland of the city of Kyaneai, in Lycia, or to those found by S. Eyice in the Silifke region of Cilicia.<sup>111</sup>

Unlike the rarity of monasteries, that of rural settlements could, however, be explained in reference to contemporary legislation. In 505, Emperor Anastasius was compelled to acknowledge the impossibility of collecting the *annona* in Thrace and to introduce the *coemptio*.<sup>112</sup> Thirty years later, Justinian issued the novel 32, which attempted to stop an ever-accelerating decline of peasantry in Haemimons and Moesia Inferior.

Because of high-interest loan rates, peasants were compelled to forfeit their lands; some fled and some died of starvation, and the general situation was described as being worse than after a barbarian invasion.<sup>113</sup> In that same year, Justinian extended the purview of novel 32 to Illyricum, because creditors there were taking the lands (*terrulae*) of the peasants.<sup>114</sup> No improvement occurred

<sup>100</sup> Timothy E. Gregory, »An early Byzantine complex at Akra Sophia near Corinth«, *Hesperia* 54 (1985) 411–428.

<sup>101</sup> Ivanka Nikolajević, »Veliki posed u Dalmaciji u V i VI veku u svetlosti arheoloških nalaza«, *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 13 (1971) 280–281.

<sup>102</sup> Procopius, *Buildings* 4.1, transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 229.

<sup>103</sup> Sophie Patoura, »Les invasions barbares en Illyrie et en Thrace (IV-e–VI-e s.): conséquences démographiques et économiques«, in *Communications grecques présentées au V-e congrès international des études du Sud-Est européen. Belgrade: 11–17 septembre 1984*, ed. T. P. Giouhalas (Athens 1985) 206. According to Agathias (5.11), the Cutrigur chieftain Zabergan, who led the invasion of 558/9, quickly reached Thrace after crossing many *deserted* villages in Moesia and Scythia Minor.

<sup>104</sup> Bellouros, in Rhodope (*Buildings* 4.10).

<sup>105</sup> *Buildings* 4.2, transl. Dewing (n. 1 above) 235.

<sup>106</sup> Theophylact Simocatta (6.1.4) refers to a χωριον some fifteen miles away from Heraclea (Perinthus). The village had a large population and was a food supplier for the imperial armies. Two inscriptions found at Selymbria and Şarköy, in Thrace, refer to the estates of a certain Zemocarthos. See Velizar Velkov, »Les campagnes et la population rurale en Thrace au IV-e–VI-e siècles«, *Byzantinobulgarica* 1 (1962) 62.

<sup>107</sup> One could include into this category Hood's »isles of refuge« in the bay of Itea [Sinclair Hood, »Isles of refuge in the early Byzantine period«, *Annual of the British School at Athens* 65 (1970) 37–44] and the site at Diporto in the Gulf of Domvrena [Timothy Gregory, »Diporto: an early Byzantine maritime settlement in the Gulf of Corinth«, *Δελτίον της χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής ηταιρείας* 12 (1984) 287–304], though the latter settlement seems to have been primarily commercial in orientation.

<sup>108</sup> See Dunn (n. 17 above) 70.

<sup>109</sup> Andrei Opaît and Teodor Bănică, »Das ländliche Territorium der Stadt Ibida (2.–7. Jh.) und einige Betrachtungen zum Leben auf dem Land an der unteren Donau«, in *Schwarzmeerküste* (n. 50 above) 105–106.

<sup>110</sup> S. Stefanov, »Novgrad. Starinni selishta«, *Izvestiia na arheologicheskii Institut* 34 (1974) 291–292.

<sup>111</sup> Z. U. Ma'oz and A. Killebrew, »Ancient Qasrin: synagogue and village«, *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988) 5–9; R. M. Harrison, »Nouvelles découvertes romaines tardives et paléobyzantines en Lycie«, *Compte rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 7 (1979) 229–239; S. Eyice, »Ricerche e scoperte nella regione di Silifke nella Turchia meridionale«, in *MILION* (n. 9 above) 15–33.

<sup>112</sup> Cod. Just. 10.27.2, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 2.407; see Velkov (n. 106 above) 58; Michel Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI-e au XI-e siècle. Propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris 1992) 382.

<sup>113</sup> See Kaplan (n. 112 above) 378.

<sup>114</sup> *Novella* 33, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3.240; see Kaplan (n. 112 above) 378.

and, ten years later, Justinian's novel 128 introduced the *epibole* to the fiscal law, in order to cope with the demographic instability of the countryside upsetting the process of tax collection. Every farmer was now burdened with liability for taxes from the abandoned land of his next-door neighbor.<sup>115</sup> Justinian's successor, Justin II, twice granted tax exemptions for peasants in Moesia and Scythia Minor.<sup>116</sup> In both cases, at stake were food supplies for troops stationed in these two provinces.<sup>117</sup>

The rarity of rural settlements may explain the rarity of monasteries. The association between the two is strongly suggested by cases of monasteries established in densely populated regions with numerous rural communities. The *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* provides valuable evidence for the connection between Anatolian villages and monasteries. Sykeon was a χωρίον on the military highway between Constantinople and Ancyra, some twelve miles from Anastasiopolis.<sup>118</sup> The abandoned martyrion of Saint George lying on the high ground outside the village became a local pilgrimage site for the residents of neighboring villages.<sup>119</sup> Theodore gained the allegiance of a village held in thrall by a pagan sorcerer.<sup>120</sup> During Phocas' reign, the people of Akoumis, a nearby village, presented a vineyard to the monastery.<sup>121</sup> Theodore also mediated a dispute between the villages of Halioi and Apokouis.<sup>122</sup> In contrast, all evidence for the Balkans suggests that monastic sites there were associated with urban centers, such as Ibida (in the case of Slava Rusă) or Philippopolis (in the case of Ispcrikhovo and, possibly, of Anevo).<sup>123</sup>

## CHRISTIANITY AND BARBARIANS

In *barbaricum*, the archaeological evidence with overtly Christian symbolism poses somewhat different problems of interpretation. Unlike the situation on the *limes* in Transcaucasia, where churches appear relatively far from the territories under the direct control of the Romans, no Christian monuments were found beyond the Danube frontier. The only puzzling exception is the basilica at Fenékpusztá, on the western shore of Lake Balaton (Hungary). In the mid-500s, just before the arrival of the Avars, the fourth-century fort built there under Constantine the Great or his successors was re-occupied. At some time during the second half of the sixth century, the three-aisled basilica was erected in the northwestern corner of the fort. This church was restored sometime around 600,

and then destroyed, together with the adjacent settlement, around 630.<sup>124</sup> In all its architectural details, as well as in its location, the basilica at Fenékpusztá is unique. It has nothing in common with architectural types established since the early fourth century in the neighboring, eastern Alpine region or in Dalmatia. Christian congregations there used box

<sup>115</sup> Novella 128, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis* 3.636–646; see Gorecki (n. 87 above) 225.

<sup>116</sup> Novellae 148 of 566 and 162 of 575, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (n. 30 above) 3.733–723 and 750–751; see Velkov (n. 106 above) 59.

<sup>117</sup> Roman armies on the Danube frontier relied occasionally on food captured from the enemy. The author of the *Strategikon* recommended that, after attacking Slavene villages, »provisions found in the surrounding countryside should not simply be wasted, but use pack animals and boats to transport them to our own country« [11.4.32, transl. Dennis (n. 4 above) 124]. Roman armies and populace twice received food from the Avars, first after the fall of Sirmium (John of Ephesus 5.32), then during a five-day truce for the celebration of Easter, in 598, »when famine was pressing hard on the Romans« and the qagan »supplied the starving Romans with wagons of provisions« [Theophylact Simocatta 7.13.3–4, transl. Whitby (n. 3 above) 196]. By contrast, the Avars, unlike the Germanic federates, never received supplies of grain from the Romans. See Walter Pohl, »Zur Dynamik barbarischer Gesellschaften: das Beispiel der Awaren«, *Klio* 73 (1991) 599.

<sup>118</sup> *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon*, ed. A. J. Festugière (Paris 1970) 3. For a discussion of this *vita*, as well as for other examples of sixth-century monasteries with strong connections to their surrounding countryside, see Trombley (n. 80 above) 46–51.

<sup>119</sup> *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* 34.

<sup>120</sup> *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* 31–34.

<sup>121</sup> *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* 113.

<sup>122</sup> *Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* 119–20.

<sup>123</sup> Monastic communities on the eastern frontier also tended to coalesce around major cities, such as Amida [Harvey (n. 15 above) 71].

<sup>124</sup> See E. Tóth, »Bemerkungen zur Kontinuität der römischen Provinzialbevölkerung in Transdanubien (Nordpannonien)«, in *Völker* (n. 5 above) 260–261; G. Kiss, »Funde der Awarenzeit aus Ungarn in Wiener Museen. I: Funde aus der Umgebung von Keszthely«, *Archaeologia Austriaca* 68 (1984) 166–168; Robert Müller, »Die spätromische Festung Valcum am Plattensee«, in *Germanen, Hunnen und Awaren. Schätze der Völkerwanderungszeit*, ed. G. Bott and W. Meier-Arendt (Nuremberg 1987) 270–272; Robert Müller, »Ein Nebenschauplatz, die Befestigung von Fenékpusztá«, in *Frühmittelalterliche Machtzentren in Mitteleuropa. Mehrjährige Grabungen und ihre Auswertung. Symposium Mikulčice, 5.–9. September 1994*, ed. », Stana and L. Poláček (Brno 1996) 131. The basilica at Fenékpusztá was first published by Károlyi Sági, who wrongly dated it to the fourth century [»Die zweite altchristliche Basilika von Fenékpusztá«, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 9 (1961) 397–440]. For a brief survey of the so-called Keszthely culture, see Robert Müller, »La cultura di Keszthely«, in *Gli Avari. Un popolo d'Europa*, ed. G. C. Menis (Udine 1995) 165–172. The destruction of the basilica at Fenékpusztá may have taken place at the time of the »civil war« that broke within the Avar qaganate shortly after the siege of Constantinople (626). See Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa 567–822 n. Chr.* (Munich 1988) 268–269.

churches, without apse, the altar pushed forward into the nave, with a semicircular bench for the clergy behind the altar.<sup>125</sup> With its three apses, the church at Fenékpusztá is more likely to have been inspired by the architecture of Constantinople. Similar churches were built during Justinian's reign in Scythia Minor,<sup>126</sup> Moesia,<sup>127</sup> Thrace,<sup>128</sup> Epirus Nova<sup>129</sup>, and Dacia Mediterranea.<sup>130</sup> The same plan was also popular on the *limes* in Transcaucasia.<sup>131</sup> In at least two cases,<sup>132</sup> these were very large basilicas. The presence of a residential complex built nearby suggests the existence of an episcopal residence.<sup>133</sup> It is possible, therefore that the church at Fenékpusztá was an episcopal basilica.<sup>134</sup> No indication exists of a Christian community at Fenékpusztá before ca. 550,<sup>135</sup> but the choice of plan and elevation for the three-aisled basilica suggests that despite its location relatively closer to the bishoprics in North Italy, members of the Fenékpusztá community maintained strong ties with the Empire and looked to the Balkan provinces as a source of inspiration for their church.

Long-distance relations are also illustrated by finds of Menas flasks.<sup>136</sup> Such vessels were produced in Egypt, and were used by pilgrims to carry home miracle-working *eulogia* water, which was dispensed from cisterns at the famous shrine of St. Menas at Abu Mina. At least two specimens (from Szombathely and Moigrad), can be dated to the early seventh century (i.e., to the Avar period) on the basis of recent chronological studies on Menas flasks found at Kom el-Dikka, near Alexandria.<sup>137</sup> Such a late date also corresponds to disc-brooches with religious scenes, which occasionally appear in burials of the Early Avar period<sup>138</sup> found in southwest Hungary.<sup>139</sup>

All this evidence clearly points to the existence of a relatively large, well organized group of Christians in the region south and west of the Balaton Lake, around Fenékpusztá. By year 600, these Christians, although undoubtedly subjects of the qagan of the Avars, maintained long-distance relations with Palestine, Egypt, and Italy. Whether they were recruited from Avars or from the local population the Avars had found in Pannonia after the defeat of the Gepids, is difficult, if not impossible, to decide. In any case, both the basilica at Fenékpusztá and the burial assemblages attributed to this group (known as the »Keszthely culture«) suggest that its identity derived, at least in part, from a strong sense of belonging to the Christian world.

The evidence of crosses worn as pectorals or brooches, and imitating the imperial costume, raises different questions.<sup>140</sup> Late fifth- or early sixth-century Latin

<sup>125</sup> Krautheimer (n. 44 above) 179; Rajko Bratož, »The development of the early Christian research in Slovenia and Istria between 1976 and 1986«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* 3.2355 (Rifnik) and 2360 (Ajdna). Another example at Vranje: Ciglencčki (n. 53 above) 65. See also N. Duval, »Quelques remarques sur les églises-halles«, *Antichità altoadriatiche* 22 (1982) 409–410.

<sup>126</sup> Slava Rusă: Barnea and Vulpe (n. 33 above) 476; Ioan Barnea, s.v. »absidă«, in *Enciclopedia arheologiei și istoriei vechi a României* (Bucharest 1994) 1.20.

<sup>127</sup> Novae, the episcopal basilica: A. B. Biernacki, »Remarks on the basilica and episcopal residence at Novae«, *Balkanica* 2 (1990) 201; Stefan Parnicki-Pudelko, »The early Christian episcopal basilica in Novae«, *Archaeologia Polona* 21–22 (1983) 268. The three-aisled basilica with one apse was built in the late 400s. During the first half of the sixth century, the plan was modified with the addition of two other apses and two ancillary rooms flanking the presbytery (probably, a prothesis and a diakonikon, respectively).

<sup>128</sup> Karanovo, near Nova Zagora: B. D. Borisov, »Starokhrisianskite baziliki (IV–VI v.) kraj s. Karanovo, Burgaska oblast«, *Arkheologija* 30 (1988), no. 3, 38–46. The Karanovo basilica was built in the fourth century and modified in the sixth.

<sup>129</sup> Ballshi: Skënder Anamali, »La basilique de Ballshi«, *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* 1988, 131–135.

<sup>130</sup> Goliarno Belovo, in western Bulgaria: Hoddinott (n. 67 above) 299; Krautheimer (n. 44 above) 275. The trefoiled baptistry added during the last building phase indicates a date in the sixth century; see Chaneva-Dechevska (n. 45 above, 1976) 306–309. In two other cases, the central apse is not round, but polygonal: Caričin Grad, episcopal basilica (basilica A): N. Duval, »L'architecture religieuse de Tsaritchin Grad dans le cadre de l'Illyricum oriental au VIe siècle«, in *Villes* (n. 34 above) 407; Pirdop: Krautheimer (n. 45 above) 251; Chaneva-Dechevska (n. 45 above, 1984) 619. The episcopal basilica at Caričin Grad was probably built in the early 500s, at the time of the city's foundation.

<sup>131</sup> Khrushkova (n. 70 above) 2667 and 2679; Lekvinadze (n. 7 above) 186.

<sup>132</sup> Novae, the largest basilica found so far in Bulgaria (24.30 m x 46.26 m) [Biernacki (n. 127 above) 188]; Alakhadzy, the largest basilica found in the eastern Black Sea area (28 m x 50 m) [Khrushkova (n. 70 above) 2679].

<sup>133</sup> At Novae, see Biernacki (n. 127 above) 206; at Caričin Grad, see Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, »Bischofsresidenzen des 4.–7. Jhs. im östlichen Mittelmeer-Raum«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 1.659. The interpretation of the episcopal residence at Caričin Grad has been disputed by Duval (n. 130 above) 417.

<sup>134</sup> A Pannonian bishop, *Vigilius episcopus Scaravansiensis*, attended both church councils at Grado, in 572/577 and 579 (MGH LL Concil. 2:588; MGH 8:7). See E. Tóth, »Vigilius episcopus Scaravaciensis«, *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 26 (1974) 274. Scarabantia/Sopron was located to the north from Fenékpusztá, on the western shore of the Neusiedler Lake, not far from modern Vienna. See N. Christie, »The survival of Roman settlement along the Middle Danube: Pannonia from the fourth to the tenth century AD«, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 11 (1992) 317–339. It has been argued that Vigilius, although a bishop of Scarabantia, resided in Italy. He would have left Pannonia in 568, together with the Lombards led by King Alboin. See K. Reindel, »Die Bistumsorganisation im Alpen-Donau-Raum in der Spätantike und im Frühmittelalter«, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 72 (1964) 288. In fact, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. See H. Berg, »Bischöfe und Bischofssitze im

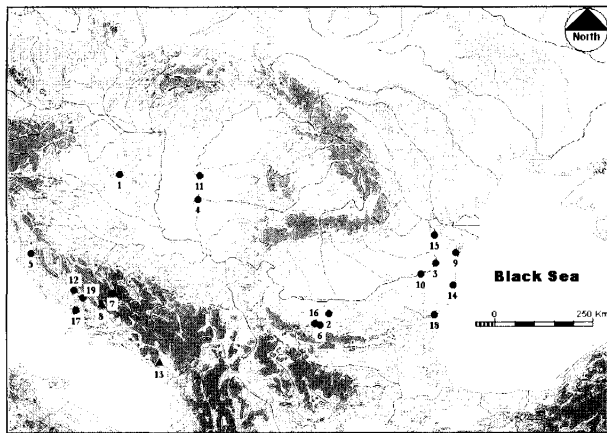


Fig. 5. Distribution of Latin crosses worn as pectorals (circle) and brooches (triangle) north and south of the Danube river: 1. Balatonfűzfő–Szalmassytelep; 2. Bezhanovo; 3. Cernavodă; 4. Deszk; 5. Dico; 6. Sadovec (Golemannovo Kale); 7. Gornje Turbe; 8. Gradina; 9. Histria; 10. Izvoarele–Pârjoaia; 11. Kiszombor; 12. Knin; 13. Lisičići; 14. Mangalia; 15. Pietra Frecăței; 16. Sadovec (Sadovsko Kale); 17. Salona; 18. Varna; 19. Vid

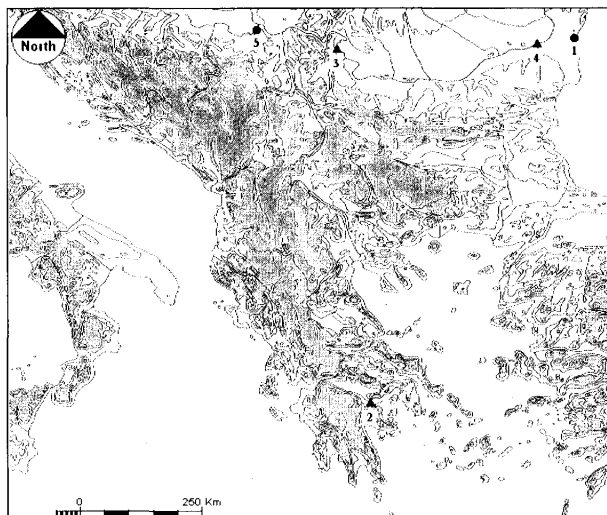


Fig. 6. Distribution of stick crosses (circle) and crosses moline (triangle) in the Balkans: 1. Constanța; 2. Corinth; 3. Aquis (Prahovo); 4. Izvoarele–Pârjoaia; 5. Višnjića

crosses of various sizes and degrees of elaboration were often found in remarkably wealthy funerary assemblages,<sup>141</sup> settlement contexts<sup>142</sup>, or hoards<sup>143</sup> in the Balkans, all associated in some way with local elites (Fig. 5). Crosses of this kind often display sophisticated ornamental patterns in cloisonné,<sup>144</sup> granulation,<sup>145</sup> and filigree,<sup>146</sup> which suggest that these artifacts were procured from distant production centers, perhaps from Constantinople or other major cities. They were

Ostalpen- und Donauraum vom 4. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert», in *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn. Berichte des Symposiums der Kommission für Frühmittelalterforschung 25. bis 28. Oktober 1982, Stift Zwettl, Niederösterreich*, ed. H. Wolfram and A. Schwaner (Vienna 1985) 1.85.

<sup>135</sup> Despite the existence of another, late fourth-century basilica at Fenépuszta, there is no archaeological relationship between the sixth-century settlement and the one previously abandoned during the second half of the fifth century. The earliest burials in the intramural cemetery date from after ca. 550. See Robert Müller, »Über die Herkunft und das Ethnikum der Keszthely-Kultur«, in *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. D. Bialeková and J. Zábojník (Bratislava 1996) 76 and 81. *Contra*: Edit B. Thomas, »Die Romanität Pannoniens im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert«, *Germanen, Hunnen und Awaren. Schätze der Völkerwanderungszeit*, ed. G. Bott and W. Meier-Arendt (Nuremberg 1987) 285.

<sup>136</sup> For the specimens from Constanța, Orșova, Moigrad, and Capidava, see Ioan Barnea, »Menasampullen auf dem Gebiet Rumäniens«, in *Akten des XII. internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie. Bonn, 22.–28. September 1991*, ed. E. Dassmann, K. Thraede, and J. Engemann (Münster 1995) 509–514. For the ampulla from Szombathely, see Zoltán Kádár, »Die Menasampulle von Szombathely (Steinamanger, Ungarn) in Beziehung zu anderen frühchristlichen Pilgerandenken«, *ibid.* 886. It is very likely that both the specimen from Moigrad and that from Szombathely came from Egypt through Dalmatia.

<sup>137</sup> Zsolt Kiss, *Ampulki swietego Menasa z polskich wykopalisk na Kom el-Dikka (1961–1981)* (Warsaw 1989).

<sup>138</sup> »Early Avar« is a *terminus technicus* going back to Ilona Kovrig's influential analysis of the cemetery at Alattyán. Kovrig divided the period between 568 (the foundation of the Avar qaganate) and 805 (the collapse of the Avar qaganate) into three phases: Early (ca. 570–650/660), Middle (650/660–700), and Late Avar (700–800). The archaeology of the Avars is still based on this chronology. See Ilona Kovrig, *Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Alattyán* (Budapest 1963).

<sup>139</sup> Eva Garam, »Die awarenzeitlichen Scheibenfibeln«, *Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungaricae* 1993, 99–134. For other sixth-century Christian finds from Hungary, see Thomas (n. 141 above) 290–291. For a remarkable piece of Ravennate sculpture, see Edit B. Thomas, »Korabizánci kőfaragvány Felsőöregcséről«, *Folia Archaeologica* 25 (1974) 161–165.

<sup>140</sup> Imperial portraits with pectoral crosses appear on solidi struck for Emperors Theodosius II, Arcadius, Honorius, and Justinian. They were also imitated on coins minted for the Ostrogothic kings Theodahat and Baduila, as well as on Frankish and Visigothic tremisses of the 500s. See H. Vierck, »Imitatio imperii und interpretatio Germanica vor der Wikingerzeit«, in *Les Pays du Nord de Byzance (Scandinavie et Byzance). Actes du colloque nordique et international de byzantinologie tenu à Upsal 20–22 avril 1979*, ed. R. Zeitler (Uppsala 1981) 92.

<sup>141</sup> Gornje Turbe (Bosnia): Z. Vinski, »Krstoliki nakit epohe seobe naroda u Jugoslaviji«, *Vjesnik Arheološkog Muzeja u Zagrebu* 3 (1968) 105 with pl. I/4. Cernavodă (Romania): A. Rădulescu and V. Lungu, »Le christianisme en Scythie Mineure à la lumière des dernières découvertes archéologiques«, in *Actes du XI-e Congrès* (n. 45 above) 3.2584–2587 and 2583 fig. 15. Mangalia (Romania): Renate Pillinger, »Ein frühchristliches Grab mit Psalmenzitat in Mangalia/Kallatis (Rumänien)«, in *Schwarzmeerküste* (n. 50 above) 99–102 with pl. 16/19. The Gornje Turbe cross was found in a Christian burial within a sixth-century basilica.



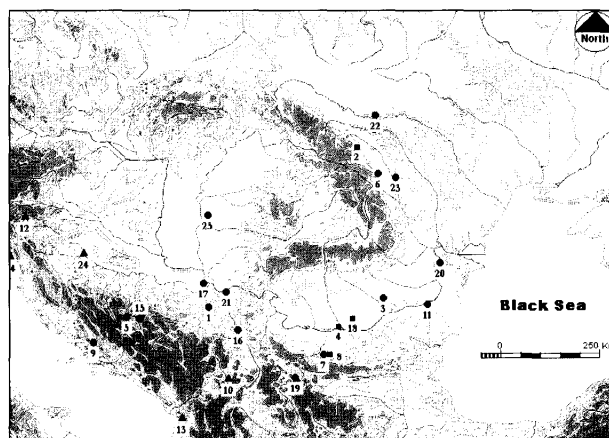


Fig. 7. Distribution of Maltese crosses worn as pectorals (circle) or brooches (triangle) and of molds for casting Maltese crosses (square) in the regions north and south of the river Danube: 1. Batočina; 2. Botoana; 3. Bucharest; 4. Celei; 5. Čipuljići; 6. Davideni; 7 and 8. Sadovec (Golemannovo Kale); 9. Gornji Dolac; 10. Gračanica; 11. Izvoarele-Pârjoaia; 12. Kranj; 13. Lezhë; 14. Mali Vrh; 15. Mihaljevići; 16. Niš; 17. Novi Banovci; 18. Olteni; 19. Pernik; 20. Piatra Frecăței; 21. Ram; 22. Rashkov; 23. Ruginoasa; 24. Sisak; 25. Székkutas

replicated in less ornamented, cheaper versions in silver<sup>147</sup> or antimony.<sup>148</sup> Very few crosses of this kind were found in the considerable number of settlement or funerary assemblages excavated so far across the Danube.<sup>149</sup> This is also true for slender stick crosses<sup>150</sup> or crosses moline,<sup>151</sup> which were worn as pectorals attached to lavishly adorned necklaces of gold (Fig. 6).

By contrast, Maltese crosses worn (especially by women) either as pectorals<sup>152</sup> or attached to dress pins<sup>153</sup> and earrings,<sup>154</sup> were found in much humbler contexts, often in association with ordinary effects, such as glass beads or crossbow brooches (Fig. 7). Molds found in sixth-century forts<sup>155</sup> demonstrate that such crosses were produced locally. Identical molds were found, however, on contemporary sites north of the Danube,<sup>156</sup> and there is also evidence of crosses produced there.<sup>157</sup> In addition, the distribution of Maltese crosses overlaps that of ceramic artifacts (pots and spindle whorls) with incised crosses,<sup>158</sup> sometimes followed by a wavy line,<sup>159</sup> or swastikas (Fig. 8).<sup>160</sup> There are also images of fish<sup>161</sup> and even short inscriptions.<sup>162</sup> That such signs may have carried a Christian symbolism was already advanced by some authors.<sup>163</sup> Very similar, if not identical, signs were found on various sites located far from each other. Handmade pots with such decoration are of indisputably local production. This suggests the existence of a cross-

<sup>142</sup> Sadovsko Kale (Bulgaria): Uenze (n. 34 above) 527 and pls. 8/9 and 126/2. Golemannovo Kale (Bulgaria): Uenze (n. 34 above) 116, 118–119, 302, 332–333, 403, 477–478 and pl. 126/1.

<sup>143</sup> Varna (Bulgaria): D. I. Dimitrov, »Rannovizantijsko zlatno šakrovishte ot Varna«, *Arkheologija* 5 (1963), no. 2, 39 fig. 8. Histria (Romania): Ioan Barnea, Octavian Iliescu, and Corina Nicolescu, *Cultura bizantină în România* (Bucharest 1971) 139.

<sup>144</sup> Varna [Dimitrov (n. 143 above) 35–40] and Gornje Turbe [Vinski (n. 141 above) 105].

<sup>145</sup> Histria: Barnea, Iliescu, and Nicolescu (n. 143 above) 139. Mangalia: Pillinger (n. 141 above) 99–102. Barbat (Croatia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 105. See also J. Wolters, *Die Granulation. Geschichte und Technik einer alten Goldschmiedekunst* (Munich 1983) 28 and 162.

<sup>146</sup> Sadovsko Kale and Golemannovo Kale: Uenze (n. 34 above) 327 and 332–333.

<sup>147</sup> Salona: Vinski (n. 141 above) 107 and pl. V/12. Viminacium: L. Zotović, »Die gepidische Nekropole bei Viminacium«, *Starinar* 43–44 (1992–1993) 189 fig. 4. Dirmo (Croatia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 107 and pl. V/14. Vid (Croatia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 108 and pl. V/16. Knin (Croatia): Vinski (n. 141) 108 and pl. V/15. The Knin cross is unique for its niello decoration. The sixth-century cemetery at Gradina, near Duvno (Bosnia), produced a large number of such crosses, worn as brooches, not as pectorals. See N. Miletić, »Ranosrednjovekovna nekropola u Koritima kod Duvna«, *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine u Sarajevu* 33 (1978) 145–151 and pls. I/16, II/24, 37, and 38, III/52, and V/66 and 74; Z. Marić, »Kasnoantička nekropola na praistorijskoj Gradini u Koritima kod Duvna«, in *Simpozijum* (n. 99 above) 241 and fig. 2. Another cross brooch was found in an inhumation burial in the ruins of a Late Roman villa at Lisičići, near Konjica (Herzegovina) [Vinski (n. 141 above) 106 with pl. IV/7]. In the 500s, cross brooches were also popular in the Alpine region of northern Italy and in Spain.

<sup>148</sup> Piatra Frecăței (Romania): A. Petre, *La romanité en Scythie mineure (IIe–VIIe siècles de notre ère). Recherches archéologiques* (Bucharest 1987) 78 with pl. 143 fig. 237 a–b.

<sup>149</sup> The only gold specimen is the cross with Greek inscription found in an Early Avar burial assemblage of the so-called »Keszthely culture« at Balatonfüzfő-Szalmassztelep (Hungary). The cross was associated with a silver *capsula* bearing the image and the name of the Apostle Peter. See Gyula László, »Die Awaren und das Christentum im Donauraum und im östlichen Mitteleuropa«, in *Das heidnische und christliche Slaventum. Acta II Congressus internationalis historiae Slavicæ Salisburgo-Ratisbonensis anno 1967 celebrati*, ed. F. Zagiba (Wiesbaden, 1969) 150; Péter Tomka, »Il costume«, in *Gli Avari, un popolo d'Europa*, ed. G. C. Menis (Udine 1995) 88. An exact replica of this cross with an identical inscription in Greek (ΖΩΗ) was found in a sixth-century fort at Bezhanovo (Bulgaria); see Dimităr Ovcharov and Margarita Vaklinova, *Rannovizantijski pametnici ot Bălgariia IV–VII vek* (Sofia 1978) 122. A distant parallel is the silver cross with engraved images of the Lamb found at Izvoarele-Pârjoaia: Vasile Culică, »Antichitățile creștine de la Izvoarele, jud. Constanța«, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 94 (1976) figs. 4/2 and 7/21. For a bronze imitation from a mid-sixth century cemetery in Hungary, see Dezső Csallány, *Archäologische Denkmäler der Gepiden im Mitteldonaubecken* (Budapest 1961) 190 and 274 with pl. CXXIV/12. For a lead cross found in an Avar burial assemblage at Deszk (Hungary), see Béla Kürti and Gábor Lőrinczy, »...avarnak mondták magukat« (Exhibit catalogue) (Szeged 1991) 13 with pl. VIII. Similar crosses appear in contemporary Anglo-Saxon burial assemblages; see A. Meaney and S. C. Hawkes, *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire* (London 1970) 54–55.

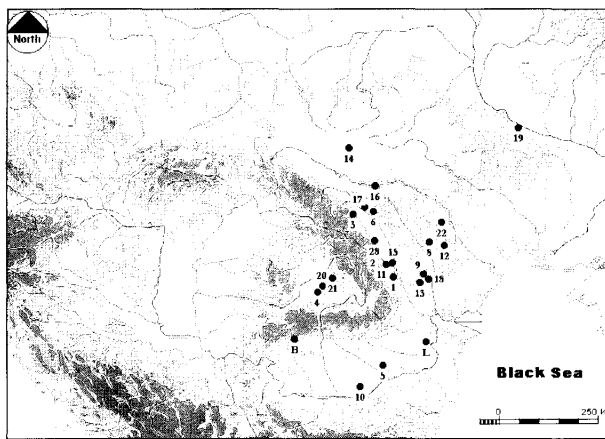


Fig. 8. Distribution of ceramic artifacts (pots and spindle whorls) with incised crosses, images of fish, and Christian inscriptions north of the Danube river: 1. Bacău; 2. Borniş; 3. Botoşana; 4. Bratei; 5. Bucharest; 6. Corlăteni; 7. Davideni; 8. Dănceni; 9. Dodeşti; 10. Dulceanca; 11. Gutinaş; 12. Hansca; 13. Horga; 14. Horodok; 15. Izvoare–Bahna; 16. Kavetchina; 17. Lozna; 18. Murgeni; 19. Pen'kyvka; 20. Sighişoara; 21. Sălaşuri; 22. Selişte. Other sites (lamp finds): B. Bumbeşti; L. Luciu

regional set of symbols shared by potters and/or users of pottery, despite an arguably localized production.

Finally, late sixth-century, luxury pectoral crosses with rounded ends, such as that from the Mersin hoard,<sup>164</sup> seem to have been imitated in the 600s by crosses found in Middle Avar archaeological assemblages.<sup>165</sup> Such crosses have no Balkan analogies and were perhaps inspired by artifacts obtained from the Empire either through plundering or, more likely, gift-giving. Their distribution strikingly coincides with that of *phylacteria*, small pendants with enclosed relics or biblical verses (Fig. 9).<sup>166</sup>

The different chronology and the distribution of these types of crosses suggest the existence of a pattern. Early pectoral crosses of the Latin type were not imitated north of the Danube. Judging from the existing evidence, access to such artifacts was restricted to local Balkan elites, either military or religious. By contrast, Maltese crosses produced locally on a large scale for soldiers in the garrisons of forts or for their wives were quickly replicated on contemporary sites north of the Danube. Pectoral crosses and *phylacteria* were still popular in mid- and late-seventh-century Avaria, as high-status individuals, particularly women, were occasionally buried with such artifacts. Although at the time, many, if not all, early Byzantine sites in the Balkans had been abandoned, crosses and *phylacteria*

<sup>150</sup> Višnjica, near Belgrade: M. Tatić-Đurić, »Zlatni nalaz iz Višnjice«, *Zbornik Narodnog Muzeja* 4 (1964) 185–186 with pl. I/1–2. Constanţa (Romania): C. Cîrjan, »Un mormînt creştin descoperit la Tomis«, *Pontica* 3 (1970) 383–385. Both crosses have a good analogy at Chufut kale, in Crimea. See V. V. Kropotkin, »Iz istorii srednevekovog Kryma (Chufut Kale i vopros o lokalizacii goroda Fully)«, *Sovetskaiia arkhologiiia* 28 (1958) 214 fig. 5/7–8.

<sup>151</sup> Prahovo (Serbia): Janković (n. 44 above) 213–314 with pl. XVIII/12. Izvoarele-Pîrjoiaia (Romania): Culică (n. 149 above) figs. 6/5 and 8/24. Corinth: G. R. Davidson, *The Minor Objects (Corinth XII)* (Princeton 1952) pl. 110/2071. A grit stone mold for crosses moline was found in a mortuary assemblage at Suuk Su, in Crimea. See N. I. Repnikov, »Nekotorye mogil'niki oblasti krymskikh gotov«, *Izvestiia imperatorskoi arkhologicheskoi komissii* 19 (1906) 6 and 72 fig. 51.

<sup>152</sup> Čipuljici (Bosnia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 108 and pl. IV/19. Mihaljevići, near Sarajevo: Nada Miletic, »Nekropola u selu Mihaljevićima kod Rajlovca«, *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine u Sarajevu* 11 (1956) 13 and pls. II/2, III, and VIII. Ram (Serbia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 110–111 and pl. VII/30. Batočina (Serbia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 108 and pl. VI/17. Gornji Dolac (Croatia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 110 and pl. VI/24. Izvoarele-Pîrjoiaia (Romania): Vasile Culică, »Obiecte cu caracter creştin din epoca romano-bizantină găsite la Pîrjoiaia-Dobrogea«, *Pontica* 2 (1969) 355–356 and 358 fig. 1/3; Culică (n. 149 above) figs. 3/3, 7/18, 20, and 8/28. Piatra Frecăţei (Romania): Petre (n. 148 above) 78 and pl. 143 fig. 236 a–e. A similar cross was found in a mortuary assemblage at Koreiz, in Crimea [Repnikov (n. 151 above), 37–38 and 73 fig. 61]. Maltese crosses were also worn as brooches; see Vinski (n. 141 above) 107 and pls. IV/9 and V/10; Katica Simoni, »Funde aus der Völkerwanderungszeit in den Sammlungen des Archäologischen Museums in Zagreb«, *Vjesnik Arheološkog Muzeja u Zagrebu* 22 (1989) 112 and pl. 4/4; Frano Prendi, »Një varrezë e kulturës arbërore në Lezhë«, *Iliria* 9–10 (1979–1980) 128 and pl. IX/V.22.

<sup>153</sup> Golemanovo Kale: Uenze (n. 34 above) 501 and pl. 4/9. Niš: Vinski (n. 141 above) 109 and pl. VI/20. Pernik, near Sofia: Venecia Liubenova, »Selishteto ot rimskata i rannovizantiiskata epokha«, in *Pernik I. Poselishten zhivotna khālma Krakra ot V khil. pr. n. e. do VI v. na n.e.*, ed. T. Ivanov (Sofia 1981) 189 fig. 130. Novi Banovci (Serbia): Vinski (n. 141 above) 110 and pl. VI/29.

<sup>154</sup> Piatra Frecăţei: Petre (n. 148 above) 78–79 and 144 fig. 238 a–g.

<sup>155</sup> Golemanovo Kale: Uenze (n. 34 above) 164 fig. 9/6. Celei: Nicolae Dănilă, »Tipare de turnat cruci din secolele IV–VI, descoperite pe teritoriul României«, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 101 (1983) 557–561.

<sup>156</sup> Olteni: Constantin Preda, »Tipar pentru bijuterii din sec. VI e.n. descoperit la Olteni (r. Videle, reg. Bucureşti)«, *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche* 18 (1967) 513–515. Bucharest: Victor Teodorescu, »Centre meşteşugăreşti din sec. V/VI în Bucureşti«, *Bucureşti. Materiale de istorie şi muzeografie* 9 (1972) 95 and 81 fig. 3/6. Botoşana: Dan Gh. Teodor, *Civilizaţia romanică la est de Carpaţi în secolele V–VII (aşezarea de la Botoşana-Suceava)* (Bucharest 1984) 40–41 and 99 fig. 20/1.

<sup>157</sup> Davideni: Ioan Mitrea, »Principalele rezultate ale cercetărilor arheologice din aşezarea de la Davideni (sec. V–VII e.n.)«, *Memoria Antiquitatis* 6–8 (1974–1976) 69 and fig. 14/1. Ruginoasa: Dan Gh. Teodor, *Creştinismul la est de Carpaţi de la origini şi pînă în secolul al XVI-lea* (Iaşi 1991) 165 and 125 fig. 7/3. Rashkov: V. D. Baran, »Die frühslawische Siedlung von Raškov, Ukraine«, *Beiträge zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Archäologie* 8 (1986) 144 and 91 fig. 7/7. By contrast, Avar assemblages in Hungary produced

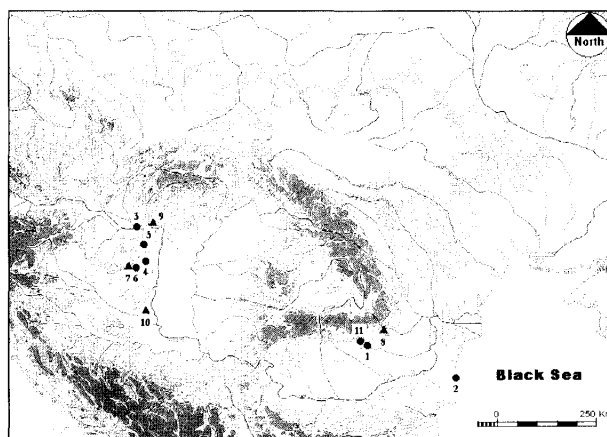


Fig. 9. Distribution of seventh-century crosses with rounded ends (circle) and phylacteria (triangle): 1. Băleni; 2. Constanța; 3. Holiare; 4. Igar; 5. Bóly; 6 and 7. Ozora-Tótipusztá; 8. Sărata Monteoru; 9. Ștúrovo; 10. Vajsa; 11. Valea Voievozilor

produced in Byzantium or imitating artifacts from the Empire, perhaps from outside the Balkans, continued to be in demand among upper-class members of the Avar society. The existence of this distribution pattern points to a phenomenon known as *imitatio imperii*, which has been also documented for other areas of *barbaricum*.<sup>167</sup> However, not all artifacts with Christian associations seem to have enjoyed the same popularity. For example, humbler signs of Christian devotion, such as mold-made clay lamps with cross-shaped handles, are absent from sixth- to seventh-century sites in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine.<sup>168</sup> On the other hand, the ceramic decoration with cross-like signs seems to have been inspired by incised and painted (*dipinti*), cross-like signs and inscriptions, which appear in great numbers on sixth-century amphorae.<sup>169</sup> Such amphorae, carrying olive oil, wine, or *garum*<sup>170</sup> were particularly common on the Danube frontier and may have served for state distributions to the Roman troops stationed there.<sup>171</sup> Judging from the intrasite distribution of artifacts on sixth- and seventh-century sites north of the Danube river, amphorae, or, more likely, their contents, were viewed and used as prestige goods by local elites. Access to such goods may have been a key strategy for imitating the military lifestyle of fort garrisons in the Balkans. They are rare north of the Danube frontier and may have been viewed as »trophies« and prestige goods.

The evidence of crosses, cross molds, *phylacteria*, and cross-like signs on ceramic artifacts found in *barbaricum*, was often interpreted as a result of missions,

only one Maltese cross, that from Székkutas [László (n. 149 above) 151]. It is possible that the cross from an unknown location in Banat (now at the Museum in Timișoara) was initially part of an Avar burial assemblage. See Adrian Bejan and Petre Rogozea, »Descoperiri arheologice mai vechi și mai recente prefeudale și feudale timpurii din Banat«, *Studii și comunicări de istorie-etnografie* 4 (1982) 213 and pl. I/1.

<sup>158</sup> Bacău: Ioan Mitrea and Al. Artimon, »Descoperiri prefeudale la Curtea Domnească-Bacău«, *Carpica* 4 (1971) 246 fig. 16/7–8 and 247 fig. 17/1–2. Borniș: Teodor (n. 157 above) 133 and 121 fig. 42/3. Bratei: Ion Nestor and Eugenia Zaharia, »Raport preliminar despre săpăturile de la Bratei, jud. Sibiu (1959–1972)«, *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 10 (1973) 191–201. Several sites on the territory of the modern city of Bucharest (Băneasa, Soldat Ghivan Street, Străulești, and Tei): Margareta Constantiniu, »Ōantierul arheologic Băneasa-Străulești«, *Cercetări arheologice în București* 2 (1965) 93; Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche and Margareta Constantiniu, »Un établissement du VIe siècle à Bucarest«, *Dacia* 25 (1981) 314 fig. 12/3; Margareta Constantiniu, »Săpăturile de la Străulești-Măicânești. Așezarea feudală II«, *Cercetări arheologice în București* 2 (1965) 178 fig. 85/2; Sebastian Morintz and Dinu V. Rosetti, »Din cele mai vechi timpuri și pînă la formarea Bucureștilor«, in *Bucureștii de odinioară în lumina săpăturilor arheologice*, ed. I. Ionașcu (Bucharest 1959) 11–47 with pl. XXXI/5. Davideni: Mitrea (n. 163 above) fig. 5/3; Ioan Mitrea, »Așezarea din secolele V–VII de la Davideni, jud. Neamț. Cercetările arheologice din anii 1988–1991«, *Memoria Antiquitatis* 19 (1994) 322 fig. 23/4. Dodești: Dan Gh. Teodor, *Continuitatea populației autohtone la est de Carpați. Așezările din secolele VI–XI e.n. de la Dodești-Vaslui* (Iași 1984) 47 fig. 19/7. Dulceanca: Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, »Habitats du VIe et VIIe siècles de notre ère à Dulceanca IV«, *Dacia* 36 (1992) 150 fig. 19/2 and 143 fig. 12/10. Gutinaș: I. Mitrea, C. Eminovici, and V. Momanu, »Așezarea din secolele V–VII de la Ōtefan cel Mare, jud. Bacău«, *Carpica* 18–19 (1986–1987) 243 fig. 10/1, 4 and 246 fig. 13/5. Horga: Ghenuță Coman, »Evoluția culturii materiale din Moldova de sud în lumina cercetărilor arheologice cu privire la secolele V–XIII«, *Memoria Antiquitatis* 3 (1971) 481 fig. 2/4. Horodok: B. O. Timoshchuk and O. M. Prikhodniuk, »Rann'oslov'iansky pam'iatki VI–VII st. v seredn'omu Podnystrov'i«, in *Slov'iano-rus'ki starozhynosti*, ed. V. I. Bidzilya (Kiev 1969) 77 fig. 4/3, 4. Izvoare-Bahna: Ioan Mitrea, »Ōantierul arheologic Izvoare-Bahna«, *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 14 (1980) 444 fig. 11/2. Kavetchina: L. V. Vakulenko and O. M. Prikhodniuk, *Slavianskie poseleniia I tys. n.e. u s. Sokol na Srednem Dnestre* (Kiev 1984) 46 fig. 21/15. Lozna: Teodor (n. 157 above) 133 fig. 15/5–6. Murgeni: Coman, op. cit., 481 fig. 2/5. Sighișoara: Gheorghe Baltag, »Date pentru un studiu arheologic al zonei municipiului Sighișoara«, *Marisia* 9 (1979) 75–106 with pl. XXXVIII/3. Sălașuri: Zoltán Székely, »Așezarea prefeudală de la Sălașuri (com. Vețca, jud. Mureș)«, *Marisia* 5 (1975) 71–80 with pl. XXXVI/1. Seliște: I. A. Rafalovich and V. L. Lapushnian, »Mogil'niki i ranneslavianskoe gorodishche u s. Selishte«, in *Arkheologicheskie issledovaniia v Moldavii* (1973 g.), ed. V. I. Markevich (Kishinev 1974) 132 fig. 11/6. Suceava: Teodor (n. 157 above) 133 fig. 15/1, 4.

<sup>159</sup> Dulceanca: Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, *Așezări din secolele III și VI e.n. în sud-vestul Munteniei. Cercetările de la Dulceanca* (Bucharest 1974) fig. 52/2. Bucharest: Dinu V. Rosetti, »Siedlungen der Kaiserzeit und der Völkerwanderungszeit bei Bukarest«, *Germania* 18 (1934) 210 fig. 5/4. Scoc: Teodor (n. 157 above) 138 fig. 19/2.

<sup>160</sup> Bratei: Eugenia Zaharia, »La station no. 2 de Bratei, dép. de Sibiu (VIe–VIIIe siècle)«, *Dacia* 38–39 (1994–1995) 349 fig. 13/7. Bucharest: Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, »Ciurel, habitat des VI–VIIe

in connection with the implementation, in the mid-500s, of Justinian's fortified frontier, and the area controlled by Romans on the left bank through a number of bridge-heads.<sup>172</sup> There is, however, no indication of missions on the Danube frontier in the 500s. This may well be just because of our relatively poor knowledge of developments on the Danube frontier of the Empire in the 500s. But it may equally be the result of the absence of a significant monastic movement in the Balkans, for it is known that many monasteries were also missionary centers. In all known cases, missions were directed toward protecting the Empire's frontiers through building alliances with neighboring polities.<sup>173</sup> The *pax Romana* was equated with the *pax Christiana*, and the empire's foreign policy became intimately associated with the missionary work of the Church.<sup>174</sup>

According to the Syriac chronicle attributed to Zacharias of Mitylene, there were two attempts in the 500s to convert the Huns living north of the Caucasus range. The first was undertaken by a monk of the monastery Beth Aishaquni near Amida, the other by Kardutsat (Theodetos), the bishop of Albania, and by Maku (Makarios), Bishop of Armenia. Kardutsat's mission took place at some point during the second quarter of the sixth century.<sup>175</sup> This mission was initially directed toward providing religious services to Roman prisoners, but ended in baptizing a considerable number of Huns and translating the gospels into their language. Bishop Makarios also erected a church in Hunnic territory. There is no equivalent to this mission known for the Danube frontier of the Empire. Nor is there any parallel to the conversion of King Ethelbert of Kent by Augustine and other forty monks, who landed at Thanet in 597 bearing an icon of Christ, and a silver cross and chanting the Roman liturgy.<sup>176</sup> The absence of any information regarding sixth-century missions on the Danube frontier is puzzling, particularly in contrast with the 300s, when attempts were made to convert the Goths on the Danube frontier to the mainstream imperial Christianity of Bishop Ulfila's days.<sup>177</sup> In the early 400s, Theotimos, Bishop of Tomis, was well known to the Huns living north of the Danube, who called him »the god of the Romans« (θεὸν Ῥωμαίων).<sup>178</sup> No sixth-century bishop, however, is known to have conducted such missions beyond that frontier, despite the increasingly prominent position bishops now occupied in the administration of the northern Balkans. To be sure, some of the groups living beyond the Danube frontier were already Christian. The Gepids were of Arian faith since their early contacts with the Goths converted by Ulfila.<sup>179</sup> By 528,

siècles d.n.è.», *Dacia* 23 (1979) 189 fig. 4/21; Dolinescu-Ferche and Constantiniu (n. 158 above) 309 fig. 9/6. Dănceni: Teodor (n. 157 above) 125 fig. 7/8. Dulceanca: Dolinescu-Ferche (n. 159 above) fig. 70/1. Hansca: Teodor (n. 157 above) 125 fig. 7/9. Pen'kyvka: D. T. Berezovec, »Poseleniia ulichei na r. Tiasmene«, in *Slaviane nakanune obrazovaniia Kievskoi Rusi*, ed. B. A. Rybakov (Moscow 1963) fig. 19.

<sup>161</sup> Botoșana: Dan Gh. Teodor, *Civilizația romanică la est de Carpați în secolele V–VII (așezarea de la Botoșana-Suceava)* (Bucharest 1984) 98 fig. 19/5. Corlăteni: Teodor (n. 157 above) 130 fig. 12/5.

<sup>162</sup> Târgșor: Victor Teodorescu, »O nouă cultură arheologică recent precizată în țara noastră: cultura Ipotești-Cindești (sec. V–VII)«, in *Sesiunea de comunicări științifice a muzeelor de istorie, dec. 1964* (Bucharest 1971) 2.109. Hansca: Teodor (n. 157 above) 137 fig. 19/1 and 8.

<sup>163</sup> Ghenuță Coman, »Mărturii arheologice privind creștinismul în Moldova secolelor VI–XII«, *Danubius* 5 (1971) 75–100; Ioan Barnea, »Le christianisme sur le territoire de la RSR au IIIe–XIe siècles«, *Etudes Balkaniques* 1 (1985) 92–106; Teodor (n. 163 above). Romanian archaeologists tend to treat this evidence in purely ethnic terms. Crosses and cross-like signs are viewed as indication of a Romanian population, since it is believed that the »barbarians« were unable to grasp the concepts of the Christian ideology.

<sup>164</sup> Alisa V. Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums* (Leningrad 1985) 287 and pl. 99.

<sup>165</sup> Ozora-Tótipusztá: Eva Garam, »Sepulture di principi«, in *Gli Avari, un popolo d'Europa*, ed. G. C. Menis (Udine 1995) 130. Táp-Borbapusztá: Péter Tomka, »II costume«, *ibid.* 86. Vajska: O. Bruckner, »The sixth-century necropolis at Vajska«, *Sirmium* 4 (1982) 29–40 with pl. VII. Valea Voievozilor: Luciana Oancea, »Descoperiri arheologice la Valea Voievozilor (com. Răzvad), județul Dâmbovița – 1972«, *Scripta Valachica* 4 (1973) 115–116 and 113 fig. 27/7. Băleni: Nicolae Dănilă, »Noi contribuții la repertoriul materialelor paleocreștine din Muntenia«, *Glasul Bisericii* 45 (1986) 102. Another cross with rounded ends was found in a burial assemblage at Koreiz, in Crimea; see Repnikov (n. 151 above) 37–38 and 73 fig. 63. See also Eva Garam, »Über Halsketten, Halsschmucke mit Anhängern und Juwelenkrägen byzantinischen Ursprungs aus der Awarenzeit«, *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 43 (1991) 163.

<sup>166</sup> The most cited verse was Psalm 91.1: »He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.« See G. J. M. Bartelink, »Phylakterion-phyllacterium«, in *Mélanges Christine Mohrmann. Recueil nouveau offert par ses anciens élèves* (Utrecht 1973) 30–31, 41, and 43. One of the two *phylacteria* found in a female grave at Constanța (Romania) contained small fragments of human bones, arguably relics. See Cîrjan (n. 156 above) 384. The Ozora-Tótipusztá cross was found in association with a gold *phylacterium* [Garam (n. 165) 160 and 161 fig. 7]. Three other specimens were attached to silver collars found in a female burial at Igar, dated to the Middle Avar period. See Gyula Fülöp, »New research on finds of Avar chieftains-burials at Igar, Hungary«, in *From the Baltic to the Black Sea. Studies in Medieval Archaeology*, ed. D. Austin and L. A. Alcock (London 1990) 141 and 139 fig. 7/2. A bronze *phylacterium* attached to a bronze collar was also found in a Middle Avar burial at Bóly; see Gyula Fülöp, »Awarenzeitliche Fürstengräber von Igar«, *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 40 (1988) 178 with n. 84. *Phylacteria* were relatively common artifacts in Late Avar burials and contemporary mortuary assemblages in Crimea. See Anton Točík, *Slawisch-awarisches Gräberfeld in Holiare* (Bratislava 1968) 61, 67, 70, and 85; Anton Točík, *Slawisch-awarisches Gräberfeld in*

Grepes, the king of the Herules settled by Emperor Anastasius in western Moesia and Dacia Ripensis, received baptism in Constantinople, together with his family and chief warriors.<sup>180</sup> However, no attempts are known to have been made for the conversion of any sixth-century group living north of the Danube. There is no indication of missions targeted towards either Avars or Slavs.<sup>181</sup>

On the other hand, the presence of Christians among barbarians is clearly attested in written sources. In 593, as Priscus' troops were chasing the Sclavenes deep into their own territory, one of their prisoners was a Gepid, who happened to be a friend and subject of the Sclavene »king« Musocius. He betrayed his »king«, however, and revealed the location of Musocius' village to the Romans, because he »had once long before been of the Christian religion.«<sup>182</sup> The *Miracles of St Demetrius* describe in detail the story of a group of Roman prisoners, brought to Pannonia in the early 600s by Avar warriors. They maintained their language and Christian faith for more than sixty years and remained, even under their Avar masters, a »Christian tribe.«<sup>183</sup> The author of the *Strategikon* knew that there were many Romans living among Sclavenes, some of whom may have been Christians. He recommended caution in dealing with them, for they »have given in to the times, forget their own people, and prefer to gain the good will of the enemy« (i.e., of the Sclavenes).<sup>184</sup>

Despite the presence of many Christian prisoners, their proselytism can hardly explain the presence of artifacts with Christian symbolism on sixth- and seventh-century sites north of the Danube. In addition, the association, in some cases, of such artifacts with clearly non-Christian practices,<sup>185</sup> suggests another explanation. Adoption by barbarian elites of Christian artifacts does not necessarily imply adoption of Christianity, although it certainly presupposes some knowledge of the underlying ideology. In many cases, the political use of this ideology and particularly its association with imperial power seems to have been more attractive than its content. According to Michael the Syrian, during a raid into Greece in the 580s, the Sclavenes carried off on carts the holy vessels and *ciboria* from devastated churches. In Corinth, however, one of their leaders took the great *ciborium* and using it as a tent, made it his dwelling.<sup>186</sup> The Sclavene chief seems to have clearly grasped the symbolic potential of the otherwise useless stone *ciborium*, shaped as it was like a canopy over a throne.<sup>187</sup> The same is true for the ruler of the Avars. Following the conquest of Anchialos in 584, the qagan proclaimed

Štúrovo (Bratislava 1968) 30–31; E. V. Veimarn and A. I. Aibabin, *Skalistinskii mogil'nik* (Kiev 1993) 51 and 64; 51 fig. 31/27; 65 fig. 42/30–31 and 40. A cremation burial from the large sixth- and seventh-century cemetery at Sărata Monteoru (Romania) produced a gold *phylacterium* similar to that found on the nearby site at Izvoarele-Pârjoaia, on the right bank of the Danube. See Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn 1992) 84; Culică, (n. 158 above) 355–356 and 362 fig. 2. That the Sărata Monteoru *phylacterium* should be dated to the mid-600s is shown by its association with a crescent-shaped pendant very similar to that found, also associated with *phylacteria*, in the Middle Avar burial at Igar.

<sup>167</sup> Vierck (n. 140 above); see also Garam (n. 165 above, 1991) 177.

<sup>168</sup> For two isolated finds of lamps (Bumbești and Luciu), see Octavian Toropu and Octavian Stoica, »Descoperiri arheologice și numismatice din Oltenia«, *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 9 (1970) 494 fig. 3; Maria Comșa, »Romanen-Walachen-Rumänen«, in *Welt der Slawen. Geschichte, Gesellschaft, Kultur*, ed. J. Herrmann (Berlin 1986) 130 fig. 6. Clay lamps of the plain orange class were produced in large numbers in the Balkans, as indicated by molds, some signed in Greek, found in a fort near Kranevo (Bulgaria). Specimens with cross-shaped handles imitate bronze lamps. See N. Poulou-Papadimitriou, »Lampes paléochrétiennes de Samos«, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 110 (1986) 595; Zizi Covacef and E. Corbu, »Considerații asupra unor categorii de opaițe descoperite în sectorul V al cetății Capidava«, *Pontica* 24 (1991) 291–292; Georgi Kuzmanov, »Die Lampen«, in *Die spätantiken Befestigungen* (n. 44 above) 225–226. The Luciu specimen belongs to a rare series of bronze lamps (Kuzmanov's class LVIII) and may have been initially attached to a chandelier in a church. As such, it may have reached Walachia as a result of a raid. See Georgi Kuzmanov, *Antichni lampi. Kolekciia na Nacionalniia Arkheologicheski Muzei* (Sofia 1992) 55.

<sup>169</sup> N. Cheluță-Georgescu, »Complexe funerare din secolul VI e.n. la Tomis«, *Pontica* 7 (1974) 363–376; D. Tudor, »Comunicări epigrafice. VII«, *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 26 (1975), no. 1, 132–135; D. Tudor, »Comunicări epigrafice (IX)«, *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 32 (1981), no. 3, 423–436; Andrei Opaît, »O săpătură de salvare în orașul antic Ibida«, *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 41 (1990), no. 4, 19–54; Andrei Opaît, »Ceramica din așezarea și cetatea de la Independența (Murighiol) secolele V î.e.n.–VII e.n.«, *Peuce* 10 (1991) 133–182. See also Mabel Lang, *Athenian Agora 21: Graffiti and Dipinti* (Princeton 1976); S. A. Beliaev, »Pozdneantichnye nadpisi na amforakh iz raskopok Khersonesa 1961 g.«, *Numizmatika i epigrafika* 7 (1968) 127–143.

<sup>170</sup> Wolfgang Hautumm, *Studien zu Amphoren der spätromischen und frühbyzantinischen Zeit* (Fulda 1981) 48 and 64; F. H. van Doorninck, Jr., »The cargo amphoras on the 7-th century Yassi Ada and 11-th century Serçe Liman shipwrecks: two examples of a reuse of Byzantine amphoras as transport jars«, in *Recherches sur la céramique byzantine*, ed. V. Déroche and J.-M. Spieser (Athens/Paris 1989) 252; Burkhard Böttger, »Zur Lebensmittelversorgung des niedermösischen Kastells Iatrus (4.–6. Jh.)«, in *Akten des 14. internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum*, ed. H. Vettors and M. Kandler (Vienna 1990) 925–930; Michael Mackensen, »Amphoren und Spatheia von Golemannovo Kale (Ausgrabung 1936/1937)«, in *Die spätantike Befestigungen* (n. 44 above) 252.

<sup>171</sup> See Catherine Abadie-Reynal, »Céramique et commerce dans le bassin égéen du IV-e au VII-e siècle«, in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, ed. G. Dagron (Paris 1989) 143–162.

himself »king« by putting on a cloth of imperial purple from a local church, to which it had been donated by Empress Anastasia, Tiberius II's wife.<sup>188</sup> That the qagan of the Avars was familiar with Christian practices and ideology is demonstrated by another episode. Theophylact Simocatta narrates that in 598 the Avars and the Romans met in Scythia Minor, under the walls of Tomis. It was Easter and »famine was pressing hard on the Romans«. »With strange providence (παράδοξον πρὸν οὐκ ἐνί), the qagan sent an embassy to Priscus, the general of the Roman army, and revealed his intention not only to establish a five-day truce, in order to allow Romans to celebrate their Christian festival, but also to provide plenty of food for the occasion.<sup>189</sup> Whatever the exact intentions of the qagan, this episode shows that he was aware of the importance of Easter for his Christian enemies. In 579, Bayan even accepted to take an oath on the gospels that, by building a bridge over the Sava river, he had no intentions to attack Singidunum. This did not make him either Christian or less treacherous in the eyes of Menander the Guardsman, who related the episode. But the qagan was a master of deceit: when the archbishop of Singidunum brought the gospels, Bayan »stood up from his throne, pretended to receive the books with great fear and reverence, threw himself on the ground and most fervently swore by the God who had spoken the words on the holy parchment that nothing of what he had said was a lie.«<sup>190</sup> Unlike other similar cases, the Christian oaths taken by Bayan in 579 were not preceded by his baptism. Nevertheless, it would have been impossible for him to dupe the emperor himself and, in the end, to surround, besiege, and conquer both Sirmium (582) and Singidunum (584), without leaving, in 579, the impression of a pagan soul truly terrified by the word of the Christian god. Perhaps the archbishop of Singidunum believed Bayan was sincere and hoped that he would eventually accept baptism. But when Sirmium fell in 582, all illusions quickly dissipated. During the last moments of the city, one of its desperate inhabitants scratched on a tile with a shaking hand: »God Jesus Christ, save our city, smash the Avars, and protect the Romans and the one who wrote this.«<sup>191</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The comparison between the archaeological evidence from Fenékpuszt and that of pectoral crosses, cross molds, *phylacteria*, and ceramic artifacts with incised crosses, symbols, and inscriptions, all found

<sup>172</sup> Ioan Mitrea, »Dovezi ale prezenței creștinismului în sec. VI în Moldova«, *Mitropolia Moldovei și a Sucevei* 55 (1980) 400–403; Dănilă (n. 165 above) 557–561; Mircea Rusu, »Paleocreștinismul nord-dunărean și etnogeneza românilor«, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie* 26 (1983–1984) 35–84; Barnea (n. 169 above); Teodor (n. 163 above). For the association between missions and bow brooches, see Dan Gh. Teodor, »Fibule 'digitate' din secolele VI–VII în spațiul carpato-dunăreano-pontic«, *Arheologia Moldovei* 15 (1992) 124. For a radically different interpretation of cross molds, see Maria Comșa, »Les formations politiques (cnézats de la vallée) du VIe siècle sur le territoire de la Roumanie«, *Prace i materialy Muzeum archeologicznego i etnograficznego w Łodzi* 25 (1978) 109–117.

<sup>173</sup> Istrun Engelhardt, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz. Ein Beitrag zur Strukturanalyse byzantinischer Mission zur Zeit Justins und Justinians* (Munich 1974) 179. All known missions operating without imperial control were Monophysite enterprises.

<sup>174</sup> Obolensky (n. 14 above) 275.

<sup>175</sup> *The Syriac Chronicle of Zachariah of Mitylene*, transl. by F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks (London 1899) 329–331. See Nina Pigulevskaia, »Note sur les relations de Byzance et des Huns au VIe s.«, *Revue des études sud-est-européennes* 7 (1969) 201.

<sup>176</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.25. For the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, see A. Angenendt, »The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons considered against the background of early medieval mission«, in *Angli e Sassoni al di qua e al di là del mare. Spoleto, 26 aprile-1 maggio 1984* (Spoleto 1986) 2.747–781.

<sup>177</sup> Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford 1996) 60–61. For Ulfila's life and activity, see Peter Heather and John Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool 1991) 133–154. For the problem of conversion, as a mode of social and cultural integration, see Herrin (n. 35 above) 28–34.

<sup>178</sup> Sozomen 7.26.6–9. See Barnea and Vulpe (n. 33 above) 407. John Chrysostomos, the patriarch of Constantinople, is also known for having sent a mission to the »nomadic Scythians on the Ister River.« At about the same time, another bishop, that of Margus, was organizing raids deep into the territory of the Huns, plundering their royal tombs (Priscus, fr. 6).

<sup>179</sup> Jordanes, *Getica* 25. A sixth-century Arian bishop of the Gepids, Trasaricus, was known to John of Biclar (MGH AA 11:212). See Zeiller (n. 16 above) 538.

<sup>180</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.14.29–34; John Malalas 18.6. For the date of this event, see Pál Lakatos, *Quellenbuch zur Geschichte der Heruler* (Szeged 1978) 90.

<sup>181</sup> Unlike cases in contemporary Europe, where the presence of missionaries was condoned by powerful kings whose political ambitions became closely bound up with the advancement of particular Christian cults or clerisies, missions to the Slavenes had no potential target, for no rulers existed, who were powerful enough to protect the missionaries. See N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings. Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester 1997) 28–29; Obolensky (n. 14 above) 281. For the Slavene »kings« and the nature of their power, see Florin Curta »Feasting with 'kings' in an ancient 'democracy': on the Slavic society of the early Middle Ages (sixth to seventh century)«, *Essays in Medieval Studies* 15 (1999) 19–34.

<sup>182</sup> Theophylact Simocatta 6.8.13, transl. Whitby (n. 3 above) 171.

<sup>183</sup> *Miracles of St Demetrius* 2.284–285.

<sup>184</sup> *Strategikon* 11.4.31, transl. Dennis (n. 4 above) 124. For this passage, see Alexandru Madgearu, »About Maurikios, Strategikon, XI.4.31«, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 35 (1997) 119–121.

north of the Lower Danube, shows how complex the situation was beyond the *limes*. Do the artifacts found on sixth- to seventh-century sites north of the Danube indicate a Christian identity? As suggested in the previous section of this paper, in the absence of any evidence of a well organized congregation, similar to that signaled by the basilica at Fenékpuszta, the artifacts with Christian symbolism found on »barbarian« sites can hardly be interpreted as evidence of conversion. By contrast, both the basilica and the burial assemblages in Fenékpuszta or on neighboring, contemporary sites point to the existence of a relatively strong Christian community in Pannonia.

How can this contrast be explained? It is tempting to associate the basilica and the intramural cemetery at Fenékpuszta with Justinian's increasing involvement, in the early 550s, in the conflict between Lombards and Gepids.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, by the mid-sixth century, Justinian seems to have been able, by means of payments of large sums of money, to contain the threat to the Danube frontier. He allied himself with Lombards and Antes against Gepids and Huns, respectively. It is against this background that the sudden appearance of the Christian congregation at Fenékpuszta should be seen. The plan of the church built there shortly after *ca.* 550 was clearly inspired by contemporary churches in the Balkans, not by those in the neighboring regions of Dalmatia or north Italy. It is possible, therefore, that the existence of the Christian community at Fenékpuszta was in some way associated with imperial policies in *barbaricum*. If, as suggested, the church at Fenékpuszta was an episcopal basilica, we have good reasons to associate this congregation with contemporary developments in the Balkans, where bishops were undertaking military responsibilities and baptisteries multiplied in response to an increasing demand of religious services. No evidence exists, however, that the Fenékpuszta community was designed to be a mission in barbarian territory.<sup>193</sup>

The situation north of the Lower Danube is somewhat different. After Chilbudius' death in 533, there was a drastic change in Justinian's agenda in the Balkans. From this moment until Maurice's campaigns of the 590s, no offensive strategy underpinned imperial policies in the area. Instead, Justinian began an impressive plan of fortification, of a size and quality the Balkans had never witnessed before. The project, or at least the most important part of it, was probably completed when Procopius finished Book IV of his *Buildings*. In addition, Justinian remodelled the administrative structure of the Balkans and created the *quaestura*

<sup>185</sup> For example, the *phylacterium* found in a cremation burial of the mid-seventh century at Sárata Monteoru; see Fiedler (n. 166 above) 84.

<sup>186</sup> Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 10.21. In doing so, the Sclavene chief might have imitated the qagan of the Avars, who at one time had met the Byzantine embassy seating on a golden throne under a canopy (ὡςπερ καλύβης τινός). See Menander the Guardsman, fr. 27, ed. R. C. Blockley (Liverpool 1985) 238.

<sup>187</sup> Ivanka Nikolajević, »L'arte bizantina: ricettività e creatività locale«, in *Gli Slavi occidentali e meridionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto 1983) 803. In the 570s, the throne of the Byzantine emperor was usually associated with the throne of Christ, particularly after Justin II initiated the building of a new throne in the imperial palace (the so-called Chrysotriklinos). Justin II's coins emphasize this quasi-religious theme of the *enthroned emperor*, already glorified by Flavius Cresconius Corippus in his poem on the ceremonial of the emperor's rise to power. For more details on contemporary imperial imagery, see Averil Cameron, »Images of authority: elites and icons in late sixth century Byzantium«, in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* 1979, ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham 1981) 221.

<sup>188</sup> Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 10.21. It is possible that this was the church of the martyr Alexander, which is mentioned by Theophylact Simocatta (6.5.2). For the date of this event and the identity of the qagan (Bayan's son), see Pohl (n. 124 above) 152–153; N. I. Serikov, »Ioann Efesskii«, in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh*, ed. L. A. Gindin, S. A. Ivanov, and G. G. Litavrin (Moscow 1991) 1.290.

<sup>189</sup> Theophylact Simocatta 6.13.1–7, transl. Whitby (n. 3 above) 196–7. For the interpretation of this episode as calculated display of generosity, see Pohl (n. 124 above) 152–153.

<sup>190</sup> Menander the Guardsman, fr. 25.1, transl. Blockley (n. 196 above) 223. The earliest evidence of an oath taken by the gospels dates back to the fourth century. By the mid-sixth century, it has become the rule. See M. Lemosse, »Recherches sur l'histoire du serment de *calumnia*«, *Revue de l'histoire du droit* 21 (1953) 48–50; Lothar Kolmer, *Promissorisches Eide im Mittelalter* (Kallmünz 1989) 238. For oaths taken from barbarians on the frontier, see Augustine, *epp.* 46 and 47, transl. W. Parsons (Washington 1951) 220–221 and 226–227.

<sup>191</sup> J. Brunsmid, »Eine griechische Ziegelinschrift aus Sirmium«, *Eranos Vindobonensis* 1893, 331–333.

<sup>192</sup> Walter Pohl, »Die Langobarden in Pannonien und Justinians Gotenkrieg«, in *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. D. Bialeková and J. Zábojník (Bratislava 1996) 33. See also Konstantin P. Christou, *Byzanz und die Langobarden. Von der Ansiedlung in Pannonien bis zur endgültigen Anerkennung* (Athens 1991) 91. For the policy of settling one group of barbarians against the other, as the fundamental principle of Justinian's policy on the northern frontier, see Frank Wozniak, »Byzantine diplomacy and the Lombard-Gepidic wars«, *Balkan Studies* 20 (1979) 156.

<sup>193</sup> There is no indication that the »Keszthely culture« had any significant influence on contemporary Avar burial assemblages. By contrast, such artifacts as belt straps and plates of the Felnac type, buckles decorated in animal style II, or eye-shaped glass beads bespeak a strong influence of Early Avar fashions on the communities at Fenékpuszta and other related sites. See Róbert Müller, »Neue archäologische Funde der Keszthely-Kultur«, in *Awarenforschungen*, ed. F. Daim (Vienna 1992) 1.278–279.

<sup>194</sup> Novel 41 [Corpus Iuris Civilis (n. 39 above) 262]; John Lydus, *On Powers* 2.28. The new administrative unit combined



*exercitus* in order to support both financially and militarily those frontier provinces which were most affected by his building program.<sup>194</sup> These measures, however, were not taken in response to any major threat, for Roman troops continued to control the left bank of the Danube, possibly through bridge-heads such as those of Drobeta and Sucidava. In addition, the Danube fleet, which was under the command of the *quaestor exercitus*, continued to operate throughout the sixth century.<sup>195</sup>

In addition to military and administrative measures, Justinian offered his alliance to the Antes (*foedus* of 545)<sup>196</sup> and began recruiting mercenaries from among both Sclavenes and Antes for his wars in Italy and Transcaucasia. Unlike Antes, however, the Sclavenes never became Justinian's allies. In his *Wars*, Procopius reserved the longest ethnographic *excursus* to the Sclavenes, but viewed them as newcomers and nomads.<sup>197</sup> They were unpredictable and disorderly barbarians. In the late 500s or early 600s, the author of the *Strategikon* described the Sclavenes as completely faithless and having »no regard for treaties, which they agree to more out of fear than by gifts.«<sup>198</sup> The reluctance to view the Sclavenes as potential allies seems to have been based on the fact that »there are many kings among them always at odds with one another.«<sup>199</sup>

Instead of building alliances, Justinian's response to the problems of the Danube *limes*, particularly to Slavic raids, was the building and fortification program. During the last fifteen years of his reign, no Slavic raid crossed the Danube. In addition, the implementation of the program seems to have been accompanied by an economic »closure« of the frontier. No coins of either copper or gold were found north of the Danube, in either stray finds or hoards, which are dated between 545 and 565.<sup>200</sup> This halt in coin circulation seems to have been accompanied by a strong crisis in trading activities across the Danube and a subsequent scarcity of goods of Roman provenance. Relative scarcity turned these goods into »trophies.« Soon after 565, however, the quantity of both coins and prestige goods of Roman provenance increased dramatically, as Slavic raiding resumed on a much larger scale. The evidence of amphoras found on sites north of the Danube frontier, many of which date from after ca. 550, is a case in point. Olive oil, wine, or *garum* seem to have been on a demand as high as gold, silver, horses, and weapons, which, according to John of Ephesus, now caught the attention of Slavene warriors raiding the Balkan provinces of the empire.<sup>201</sup> It is during this period that the first artifacts with Christian symbolism appear on sites

territories at a considerable distance from each other, such as Moesia inferior, Scythia minor, some islands in the Aegean Sea, Caria, and Cyprus, all ruled from Odessos/Varna by a prefect. The only link between all these provinces were the sea and the navigable Danube. Since Cyprus, the Aegean islands, and Caria represented the most important naval bases of the Empire, but were also among the richest provinces, the rationale behind Justinian's measure must have been to secure both militarily and financially the efficient defense of the Danube frontier. For the *quaestura exercitus*, see Sergei Torbatov, »Quaestura exercitus: Moesia Secunda and Scythia under Justinian«, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 1 (1997) 78–87.

<sup>195</sup> See Menander the Guardsman, fr. 21; Theophylact Simocatta 8.6.7.

<sup>196</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.32–34. The Antes were ἑνοπῶνδοι (i.e., *foederati*). For ἑνοπῶνδοι as both military and political partners of the empire, see S. A. Ivanov, »Poniatiia 'soiuza' i 'podchineniia' u Prokopiiia Kesariiskogo«, in *Etnosocial'naia i politicheskaia struktura rannefeodal'nykh slavianskikh gosudarstv i narodnostei*, ed. G. G. Litavrin (Moscow 1987) 28. Other examples of ἑνοπῶνδοι in Procopius' *Wars* are the Lombards (7.33.12), the Gepids (7.34.10), the Saginae (8.2.18), the Goths (8.5.13), the Sabiri (8.11.24), and the Cutrigurs (8.19.5). Note that most of those allies were on the northern frontier of the empire.

<sup>197</sup> S. A. Ivanov, L. A. Gindin, and V. L. Cymburskii, »Prokopii Kesariiskii«, in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh*, ed. L. A. Gindin et al. (Moscow 1991) 1.219. Among all references to Sclavenes in Procopius' work, there is no use of the adverbs παλαιόν, πάλαι, ἄει, ἐς ἐμὲ or ἀνέκαθεν, while all verbs used in reference to settlement (οἰκέω, ἰδρύομαι, νέμονται) appear in the present tense or in the medium voice. See L. A. Gindin, »Problema slavianizacii karpato-balkanskogo prostranstva v svete semanticheskogo analiza glagolov obitaniia u Prokopiiia Kesariiskogo«, *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* 3 (1988) 178–181.

<sup>198</sup> *Strategikon* 11.4.4, transl. Dennis (n. 4 above) 122. Here and there, individual Sclavenes may appear as fighting for the Romans, as in the case of Souarounas, a Slavene soldier in the Roman army operating in Transcaucasia (Agathias 4.20.4). Another Slavene mercenary made himself useful to Belisarius during the siege of Auximum in 540 (Procopius, *Wars* 6.26.16–22). But unlike Antes, these soldiers seem to have been hired on an individual basis, due to their special skills.

<sup>199</sup> *Strategikon* 11.4.30, transl. Dennis (n. 4 above) 123.

<sup>200</sup> Curta (n. 34 above) 95–6. The economic »closure« was certainly not a deliberate effect, for it is likely that the strain on coin circulation, which is also visible in hoards found south of the Danube frontier, was caused by the very execution of Justinian's gigantic plan. Fewer coins were withdrawn from circulation, and even fewer found their way into hoards.

<sup>201</sup> John of Ephesus 6.6.25.

<sup>202</sup> It is interesting to note that the earliest evidence of attempts to convert the Slavs appears much later in Western, not Byzantine sources. In his *Life of St Columbanus*, Jonas of Bobbio, speaking of Columbanus' missionary goals, claimed that he had once thought to go preaching to the Wends who were called Slavs (*Veneti qui et Sclavi dicuntur*). He eventually gave up this mission of evangelization, because the eyes of the Slavs were not yet open for the light of the Scriptures [I 27, ed. H. Haupt (Darmstadt 1982) 488]. One of Columbanus' disciples, Bishop Amandus, preached among the Slavs, sometime around 630. His *Life*, written a century later, describes his journey across the Danube, to the Slavs, who, »sunk in great error, were caught in the devil's snares« (MGH SRM 5:440). Some sixty years after Bishop Amandus, St. Marinus was burnt at stake by

north of the Danube frontier. Their locally produced replicas soon became part of many archaeological assemblages associated with local elites. With no

apparent missionary initiative, however, the Christianization of the Danube *limes* encouraged imitation, without producing conversion.<sup>202</sup>

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Slavs (called *Uuandali*) living in the borderlands of Bavaria [*Vita Sancti Martini*, ed. B. Sepp (Regensburg 1892) 170]. By contrast, a bishop of Salzburg, St. Hrodbert, was much more successful in converting a king of the Carantanian Slavs in the late 600s (MGH SRM 6:15). Probably as a result of these efforts, at the sixth ecumenical council in Constantinople (November 680), the Slavs were known to have welcomed Christian missionaries. See G. G. Litavrin, »Iz aktov shestogo vselenskogo sobora«, in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh*, ed. S. A. Ivanov et al. (Moscow 1995) 2.212.7

Резиме:

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## ЛИМЕС И КРСТ: РЕЛИГИОЗНА ДИМЕНЗИЈА РАНОВИЗАНТИЈСКЕ ДУНАВСКЕ ГРАНИЦЕ У VI ВЕКУ

Односу између лимеса и црквене организације на Балкану у VI веку досад није посвећена довољна пажња. Упркос супротним тврдњама, Прокопије *Грађевине* пружају чврсте доказе да је средином VI века степен утврђености границе на Дунаву и провинција у унутрашњости досегао ниво каква на Балкану никада раније није забележен. Током прве половине VI века, онемоћале градске управе заменили су епископи, чија се моћ ширила и преко граница епископија. То важи и за епископа града Аквиса, поменутог у новели 11 из 535. године, чијем су ауторитету подвргнути и град и оближња утврђења (*castella*), јер се од њега очекивало да »прогна боносијанску невољу (јеретике) из града и с лица земље или да их (поново) приведе правоверју«. Од Јустинијановог доба расте број баптистерија, често дозиданих уз старије базилике (сл. 1). Постојање више од једне крстионице у истом граду (Стобију, на пример) упућује на то да је обред крштења, осим епископа, обављало и друго свештенство. Умножавање крстионица указује на повећане потребе верске праксе. Остаје, међутим, нејасно да ли њихове све мање димензије значе и да су сада углавном крштавана деца. Постојање баптистерија у црквама у оквиру утврђења (сл. 2), као што су Бољетин или Велики Градац, упућује на другачије решење. Рановизантијска утврђења у ћердапском делу Дунава била су мала, површине често не веће од пола хектара, и није их могло опслуживати више од 300 до 400 војника. У сваком случају, будући да нема трагова цивилног живота, баптистерији су морали бити намењени војној посади. Археолошки налази, дакле, сугеришу да новелу 11 можемо прихватити као тачну.

На снажну повезаност епископа и локалних војних снага указују и писани извори. Када су рановизантијске трупе под командом Петра, брата цара Маврикија, стигле у Аземус на Дунаву, локална војна посада је истакла заставе и постројила се под пуном опремом, приправна да ода почаст генералу који је дошао у обилазак. Међутим, када је Петар хтео да повуче посаду из града и припоји је сопственим трупама, она се склонила у градску цркву. Петар је послао део свог људства да их из ње извуче, али су наоружани војници у храму заузели положаје и запречили црквена врата са свих страна. Разјарени Петар је покушао да ухапси епископа, али су житељи Аземуса затворили капије, а генерала обасули увредама. Понижен, Петар није имао другог избора до да напусти Аземус. Најзанимљивији аспект ове приче јесте то што се одговорност за непослушност градске посаде приписује епископу. Он се, бар Петру, чини најважнијом политичком личношћу.

На више места на подручју северног Балкана цркве су грађене као део бедема (сл. 3), често тако близу да су њихове апсиде инкорпориране у зидине. Понекад би црква била сазидана у једној од кула утврђења, или тако близу главне

капије да је ометала улазак. Осим тога, Балкан нуди два примера утврђених цркава подигнутих на усамљеним местима, по свему судећи мимо било каквог насеља или гробља (Цанавар тепе и Пирдоп). Имајући на уму изолованост тих цркава, могуће је направити поређење с онима подигнутим унутар зидина града или утврђења, или у близини најјачег дела фортификације. У оба случаја, можемо наслутити намеру епископа да сагради цркву коју је лако претворити у тврђаву.

После Халкедонског сабора епископи су имали знатну контролу над локалним манастирима. Наше знање о монаштву у VI веку заснива се искључиво на подацима с подручја изван Балкана. На постојање монашких заједница на Балкану писани извори упућују само посредно. Мада се помињу монаси или пустињаци, ниједан извор не говори о манастирима. И археолошки подаци су у том погледу оскудни (сл. 4). Непостојање манастира би се могло довести у везу с још једном упадљивом празнином у археолошкој слици о балканским провинцијама у VI веку, а то је непостојање руралних насеља. Чини се да су после средине V века потпуно нестали поседи средње величине ослоњени на *villae rusticae*. Ретки су и налази који би сведочили о селима у VI веку (сл. 4). Објашњење се може довести у везу са савременим законодавством које је покушавало да заустави све брже пропадање сељаштва на Балкану, чиме се пак може објаснити малобројност манастира, будући да су се монашки центри углавном развијали у густо насељеним подручјима с бројним сеоским заједницама. За разлику од ситуације на лимесу у Транскавазији, где су цркве подизане релативно далеко од подручја под непосредном контролом Римљана, с ону страну дунавске границе царства нема хришћанских споменика. Једини збуњујући изузетак јесте базилика у Фенекпусти, на западној обали језера Балатон у Мађарској. Црква је јединствена, јер нема ничег заједничког с архитектонским обрасцима установљеним у суседним областима. Узор су јој изгледа биле базилике подигнуте у Јустинијаново доба у Малој Скитији, Мезији, Тракији, Новом Епиру и Средоземној Дакији. Повезаност хришћана у Карпатском басену с удаљеним верским центрима царства илуструју и налази Мениних бочица и дискова-брошева с религијским сценама. Међутим, налази крстова који су ношени као пекторали или брошеви покрећу друга питања. Латински крстови су били чест налаз у изузетно богатим археолошким целинама на Балкану (сл. 5). Њихови орнаментални мотиви упућују на удаљене производне центре, можда на Цариград. У многобројним досад истраженим насеобинским или гробним целинама на подручју преко Дунава нађено је веома мало латинских, млинарских или штапастих крстова (сл. 6). Насупрот томе, малтешки крстови који су ношени као пекторали или као део одевне опреме нађени су у много скромнијим контекстима,

често заједно с веома обичним покретним инвентаром (сл. 7). Калупи нађени у утврђењима из VI века показују да су ти крстови локални производ, али су такви калупи откривени и на налазиштима из истог периода северно од Дунава. Распрострањеност малтешких крстова преклапа се с распрострањеношћу керамичких предмета (лонаца и агршака) с урезаним крстовима или свастикама (сл. 8). Да су таква обележја могла носити хришћанску симболику, мишљење је које су већ изнели неки аутори. Крстови нађени у средњоаварским археолошким целинама из VII века имитирају луксузне пекторалне крстове са заобљеним крајевима. Њихова распрострањеност подудара се с распрострањеношћу филактерија, малих привезака с реликвијама или с библијским стиховима (сл. 9).

Постојање таквог модела дистрибуције упућује на феномен познат као *imitatio imperii*. Упркос супротним тврдњама, ништа не указује на мисионарску активност на дунавској граници током VI века. То може бити последица одсуства значајнијег монашког покрета на Балкану, јер се зна да су многи манастири били и мисионарски центри. Не зна се ни

за једног епископа који се у VI веку бавио мисионарством у областима преко Дунава, попут Теотимоса, епископа Томиса с почетка V века, међу Хунима познатог као »бог Римљана«. Мада су неке групе у тој области, попут Гепида или Херула, већ биле хришћанизоване, нема индиција о мисионарском раду чији би циљ били Авари или Словени. Упркос чињеници да писани извори недвосмислено потврђују присуство хришћана међу варварима, то што је варварска елита прихватала хришћанске предмете не мора нужно подразумевати и прихватање хришћанства. Хришћански предмети откривени на налазиштима северно од Дунава заправо сугеришу изненадну популарност коју су у другој половини VI века стекла добра римске провенијенције. Локално произведене реплике убрзо су постале део многих археолошких целина које се доводе у везу с локалном елитом. Без икакве уочљиве мисионарске иницијативе, хришћанизација дунавског лимеса подстакла је подражавање, не доводећи при том и до преобраћања.

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