

The Region of the Danube Delta in the 7th to 10th Century and the Case of the so-called Lykostomion Maritime Province*

To the memory of Prof. Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova (1924-2018)

The Theory

The Avar and Slavic incursions starting at the end of the 6th century, followed by the foundation of the First Bulgarian state in 680, resulted in a loss of vast areas in the Balkans by the Byzantines whose authority was now limited to Eastern Thrace and the coastal regions of the peninsula¹. In the 8th century, however, a Byzantine Reconquista started first on the Peloponnese, and then in Thessaly and Epirus, where the actions of the central government were favoured by the maritime location of the areas and the aid of the imperial navy². Around the year 800, the creation of a *thema* in Western and Central Thrace under the name »Macedonia« marked the first important territorial gain towards the reconquest of the Eastern Balkans³. The northern regions of what was once the Byzantine West remained under Bulgarian domination until the campaign of Emperor John Tzimiskes against the Rus' in 971⁴. As one can see, the Empire could easily defend or regain those areas located close to the seashores compared to the Balkan hinterland. This was one of the reasons why some scholars thought that Byzantium was able to hold its territories in the former province of Scythia Minor from the reign of Constantine IV in the late 7th century until John Tzimiskes drove the Rus' of Svyatoslav back and conquered the Bulgarian capital Preslav in 971⁵.

The view of the continuity of Roman (and Byzantine) administration and culture in the region between the Danube and the Black Sea, called by Ion Barnea a »mighty strong-

hold of Romanitas on the Lower Danube«⁶, withstanding the assaults of Slavs and Bulgars, found broad support among the earlier generations of Romanian scholars. Some of these include Ion Barnea, Petre Diaconu, Radu Florescu, Radu Ștefan Ciobanu, Adrian Rădulescu, Octavian Iliescu (more cautious in his earlier works) and Dan Gh. Teodor, just to mention the most outstanding names⁷. Apart from those, some Bulgarian historians such as Ivan Dujčev, Velizar Velkov, Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, Genoveva Cankova-Petkova and Vasil Gjuzelev thought that the coastal location of Varna made it easier for Constantinople to preserve its control over the ancient town of Odessos (Varna) until the second half of the 8th century⁸. Recent works on material culture and studies on the Byzantine political history in the 7th century have shown the collapse of the Danubian Limes in Scythia Minor starting in Phocas' and Heraclius' reigns (602-641), and the retreat of Byzantine administration and garrisons to the South in Thrace⁹.

However, the lack of any opposition to the imperial navy in the Black Sea before the first attack of the Rus' against Constantinople in 860, whose maritime forces were no match for the Byzantine fleet, still leads some historians to the conclusion that, despite Bulgarian control over the mainland in Dobruja, the Byzantines were able to claim their supremacy in the region of the Danube Delta and even to organize an administrative unit called the *thema* of Lykostomion. This was the idea of Hélène Ahrweiler, presented in her famous book *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre. La politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VII^e-XV^e siècles*¹⁰.

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1 Lilie, Reaktion 18-20. – Haldon, Byzantium in the Seventh Century 65-66. – Ditten, Einwanderung der Slawen. – For dating the battle between Constantine IV and Asparukh, which resulted in the foundation of the First Bulgarian state to the south of the Danube, in 680, see De Gregorio/Kresten, Datierung des Bulgarenfeldzugs. – Božilov, Istorija I 212.

2 Kislinger, Regionalgeschichte 33-37. – Kislinger, Dyrhachion 331-346. – Charanis, Nicephorus I.

3 Wassiliou-Seibt, Byzantine Frontier. – Ditten, Thrakien 160.

4 Božilov/Gjuzelev, Istorija na Dobrudža II 9-21.

5 Barnea, Dobrogea 207-208. – Florescu/Ciobanu, Problema stăpânirii bizantine 384-391. – Diaconu, La Dobroudja et Byzance 219-220. – Diaconu, La présence des Byzantins 367-369. – Damian, Prezența politică bizantină 298; 302; 313. – For a critical overview on this topic, see Harhoiu, Observații generale 349-350.

6 Barnea, Dobrogea 218. – The same notion can be found in Barnea, La Danube 583-584.

7 Barnea, Dobrogea 209. – Barnea/Ștefănescu, Din istoria Dobrogei III 7-31. – Barnea, La Danube 583-587. – Barnea, Periochē 83-84. – Diaconu, La Dobroudja et Byzance 218. – Diaconu, Kilia et Licostomo 250. – Florescu, Limesul dunărean 171-174; 177. – Florescu/Ciobanu, Problema stăpânirii bizantine 381-382; 384-391. – Rădulescu, Românii 77-80. – Iliescu, Licostomo 460. – Iliescu, Kilia 234, n. 34. – Iliescu, Nouvelles contributions 246-247. – Teodor, Quelques aspects 2; 9. – Teodor, Nouvelles considérations 100. – For further literature, see the bibliography in Madgearu, Byzantine Military Organization.

8 Cankova-Petkova, O teritorii 142. – Gjuzelev, Mar Nero 16. – Dimitrov, Varna 56 and n. 9. – For Varna in the Early Middle Ages, see Pletnjov, Varna 56-74. – Pletnjov/Pusev, Istorija na Varna II 49-122.

9 Harhoiu, Observații generale. – Zahariade, Scythia Minor 231-236. – Pletnjov, Vtora Mizija i Skitija 111-135. – Madgearu, Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală 138-144. – Madgearu, Downfall 315-324. – Madgearu, End. – Madgearu, Province of Scythia. – Fiedler, Studien.

10 Ahrweiler, Byzance et la mer 57-58, n. 2; 89. – See the book review of Petre Șerban Năsturel in Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes 4/3-4, 1966, 649-651.

Her main arguments were the existence of an important Genoese settlement Lykostomo within the Delta in the Late Middle Ages (most probably modern Periprava)¹¹, and the dedicatory preface in the *Lexicon* of Patriarch Photius from the second half of the 9th century. Since the work is dedicated to Thomas, *prōtopatharios* and *archōn* of Lykostomion¹², Ahrweiler considered it justified to identify the earlier settlement with the later one. From the scholars who criticized such argumentation two names deserve to be mentioned – Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, who thought that the toponym in question might be a homonymous town in Epirus or Thessaly¹³, where a Bishop of Lykostomion is attested at the beginning of the 10th century¹⁴; and Ivan Jordanov, who studied all known Byzantine coins and seals found in the region of Dobruja¹⁵. Nevertheless, some recent studies based predominantly on the analysis of sigillographic and numismatic data claim to have brought new arguments in favour of a Byzantine maritime and administrative presence at the Lower Danube in the three centuries preceding Tzimiskes' campaign of 971¹⁶. However, their conclusions differ from each other; while some of the scholars such as Damian and Busetto, who build on the works of Barnea and Diaconu, consider it impossible for the Byzantines to have organized all the campaigns starting in the late 7th century without the assistance of a fleet and administration in the area of the Delta¹⁷, other historians such as Madgearu¹⁸ and Mărculeț¹⁹ argue in favour of the existence of a maritime province at the Lower Danube only in the second half of the 9th and perhaps at the beginning of the 10th century.

The present paper focuses mainly on the written sources complemented with results derived from the latest studies in

geoarchaeology of the Danube Delta. As for existing numismatic and sigillographic data²⁰, the analysis of it sometimes seems to lack objectivity²¹. Up to present date, not a single seal of a Byzantine official bearing in their title the toponym of Lykostomion has been found. Finding scattered coins and seals that belonged to Byzantine officials from other parts of the Empire in Dobruja and the region of the Delta can hardly be accepted as proof of communication between the alleged Byzantine *stratēgos* of Lykostomion and his colleagues²². Coins for their part are an interesting source for tracing trade connections along the Western Black Sea coast, but as Harhoiu remarks, using them as evidence for political sovereignty as some earlier scholars did²³, should be supplemented by other data to avoid misinterpretations²⁴.

The wars between Byzantium and the Bulgars

The Seventh Century

Written sources dating from the two centuries after Theophylact Simocatta wrote his historiographical work can offer us little help if we try to answer the question of what happened in the Byzantine provinces of Scythia Minor and Moesia Inferior after the rebellion of Phocas in 602 and the fall of Emperor Maurice²⁵. However, a brief discussion seems to be useful for the purposes of this study. The *History* of Theophylact Simocatta shows us that at the end of Maurice's reign Byzantium has already had difficulties in maintaining the defence line in Scythia Minor and keeping the Avars

11 Portulans grecs II (232, 11-22 Delatte). – Raiteri, *Atti* 203-205. – Iliescu, *Lycostomo* 435-456.

12 Photius, *Lexicon*, *Epistula dedicatoria* (I 3, 4-5 Theodoridis): Φώτιος Ὁμῆ πρωτοπαθαρῖω καὶ ἀρχοντὶ τοῦ Λυκοστομίου φιλτάτῳ μαθητῇ χαιρεῖν. – Teodor, *Quelques aspects* 9 wrongly speaks about a seal of Thomas *Prōtopatharios*, which does not exist.

13 Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Quelques observations* 81-86. – Cf. Kostova, *Settlement Patterns* 33. – On Lykostomion in Thessaly, see Koder/Hild, *Hellas and Thessalia* 207-208.

14 *Notitiae episcopatum VII* 307 (279 Darrouzès): ὁ Λυκοστομίου ἤτοι Θεσσαλικῶν Τεμπῶν. – For dating the note in the time of the first patriarchate of Nicholas I (901-907), see Darrouzès' commentary on page 55 of the edition.

15 Jordanov, *Dobrudža* 187-191; 199-200.

16 Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization* 17-21. – Madgearu, *Marea Neagră* 22-23. – Madgearu, *Lycostomion Theme*. – Mărculeț, *Prōtopathariō kai archonti*. – Mărculeț, *Stăpânirea bizantină 7-17*. – Damian, *Prezența politică bizantină* 284-313.

17 Damian, *Prezența politică bizantină* 286-287; 313. – Busetto, *Presenza della flotta* 222.

18 Alexandru Madgearu, to whom we owe a series of publications dealing with the history of the Lower Danube from Roman times to the Late Middle Ages, expressed his scepticism about Ahrweiler's interpretation in his work on continuity and discontinuity on the Lower Danube in the 7th and 8th century, cf. Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală* 147-149. In his recent monograph on Byzantine administration in the Northern Balkans in the 11th and 12th century, he tries to summarize all available data on the problem and concludes that a maritime province of Lykostomion, the aim of which was to protect Constantinople from the Bulgars and the Rus', did exist in the area of the Danube Delta in the second half of the 9th century, cf. Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization* 17-21. – Madgearu, *Marea Neagră* 22-23. – Madgearu, *Lycostomion Theme*.

19 In his first book on Byzantine domination on the Lower Danube the Romanian historian only points out the scientific debate in one of the footnotes, cf. Mărculeț, *Imperial Bizantin* 6, n. 5. In the second one he deals with the problem in a separate chapter and concludes that a Byzantine »archontate« with a centre in Lykostomion did control the area of the Danube mouth in the second half of the 9th and perhaps during the 10th century, before Tzimiskes took possession of the north-eastern Balkans in 971; cf. Mărculeț, *Stăpânirea bizantină 7-17*. – Mărculeț, *Prōtopathariō kai archonti*.

20 For an overview of Byzantine coins found in Dobruja, see Mănuclu-Adameșteanu, *Monede byzantine I-V*. – Mănuclu-Adameșteanu, *La diffusion* 276-286. – Poenaru-Bordea/Ocheșanu, *Probleme istorice*. – On seals, cf. Jordanov, *Dobrudža*.

21 See Jordanov's critique and his remark that finding Byzantine seals dating back to the 9th and 10th century (before 971) in the region of Pliska and Preslav does not mean that the heartland of the Bulgars was under Byzantine control, cf. Jordanov, *Dobrudža* 187-191. 199-200.

22 Barnea, *Sceaux byzantins* 55-56. – Barnea/Ștefănescu, *Din istoria Dobrogei III* 15-19. – Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization* 17-19.

23 Cf. Condurachi/Barnea/Diaconu, *Nouvelles recherches* 179-181.

24 Harhoiu, *Observații generale*. – See also the remarks of Kostova, *Settlement Patterns* 22; 27 on distribution of coin finds from the 8th-10th century in the northern and southern part of Dobruja. – One of the most important issues concerning the history of Dobruja in Early Middle Ages relates to the three valla extending from the Danube to the Black Sea. These are the Small Earthen Dyke, the Large Earthen Dyke, and the Stone Dyke. The problem of their chronology and builders is still a matter of dispute which caused different interpretations and remains open for discussion. For the valla in Dobruja, see Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization* 9-15 (with further bibliography). – Rašev, *Starobălgarski ukreplenija*.

25 Since this is a huge topic more attention will be paid to this subject in the final publication of the project.

and Slavs beyond the borders of the province²⁶. Barbarian raids may have even reached Marcianopolis (near modern Provadiya), but the Byzantine counter-attacks could easily force them to withdraw beyond the Danube²⁷. Moreover, if we regard what Simocatta says about the campaigns of Priscus in 593 and Peter in 594, we can see that imperial authority was still present in the towns on the Lower Danube lying to the west of Dorostolon (modern Silistra)²⁸. The situation changed drastically during the reigns of Phocas and Heraclius²⁹. In the summer of 626, the Empire had to defend its own capital against the army of the Avar Khagan whose Slavic subjects had sailed along the western coast of the Black Sea and then transported their *monoxyla* (dug-outs) over land straight to the Golden Horn³⁰. There was obviously no power in the provinces of Scythia Minor and Moesia Inferior that could have prevented them from doing so. Moreover, the scarce archaeological and numismatic data from the 7th and 8th centuries in Romania and Bulgaria, compared to earlier and later centuries, seem to suggest a decline in urban life on the Danube and the northern areas of the Western Black Sea coast, as well as an end of Byzantine authority in the region between the Lower Danube and the Balkan Mountains³¹.

Thus, the Avar and Slavic incursions in the first half of the 7th century had paved the way for the next invaders, whose aim was to cross the Danube and settle in Scythia Minor. After the dissolution of the so-called »Great Bulgaria« of Kubrat, his third son Asparukh headed to the West, leading part of the Bulgars and settling in the Onglos³². It would go far beyond the scope of this paper to present in detail the scientific debate considering the site of the Onglos³³, known

only from the works of two Byzantine historians, Theophanes the Confessor and Patriarch Nicephorus, who used one and the same source for this part of their narratives³⁴. Nevertheless, some brief remarks seem necessary because the location of the Onglos is closely connected to the site of the battle between the Byzantine army of Constantine IV and the Bulgars of Asparukh, which in turn had a crucial effect on the medieval history of the Lower Danube.

According to the accounts of Theophanes and Patriarch Nicephorus, we may assume that the Onglos was a region located to the north of the Danube³⁵, perhaps between the rivers Prut, Seret and Danube³⁶, or bounded by the Danube, the Prut, and the Dniester. The attempt of some, predominantly Bulgarian, scholars to identify the Onglos and the site of the battlefield with the rampart in Niculițel in Northern Dobruja seems not to stand its ground because the Byzantine historians clearly state that after their victory, the Bulgars crossed the Danube and reached the so-called Varna near Odessos³⁷. The supporters of this hypothesis argue in favour of a fourth branch of the Danube Delta which may have flown to the south of the rampart in Niculițel³⁸, but such a statement finds no support in the recent studies on the history of the Danube Delta. The geoarchaeological data on the evolution of this area in the last 7500 years have shown that this process took place within the so-called Danube Bay (fig. 1). Due to this fact, the St. George branch (Brațul Sfântu Gheorghe) became a constant southern line for Delta's evolution from the Beștepe Hills in the west to the Dunavăț Promontory in the east³⁹.

To the east of this promontory and far away from the rampart of Niculițel, however, the St. George branch did build

26 For an overview of the history of Scythia Minor in the late 6th and the first half of the 7th century, cf. Zahariade, Scythia Minor 231-236. – Pletnjov, Vtora Mizija i Skitija. – Madgearu, Downfall. – Madgearu, End. – Madgearu, Province of Scythia.

27 Theophylact Simocatta, Historia VII 2, 1-2 (247, 8-18 de Boor/Wirth). – Madgearu, Province of Scythia.

28 Theophylact Simocatta, Historia VI 6, 1-6; VII 1-7 (230, 13-231, 3; 245, 21 – 256, 25 de Boor/Wirth). – Pohl, Awaren 136-143. – Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, Symbolē 162-169. 195-197. – Goubert, Les guerres 116-124.

29 Haldon, Byzantium in the Seventh Century 41-48. – Lilie, Reaktion 197-199.

30 Simeonov, Kosmidion 231. – Simeonov, Belagerung.

31 Barnea, Dobrogea 206. – Fiedler, Studien. – Bounegru/Adumitroaei, Life. – Custurea/Nastasi, End of Urban Life. – Harhoiu, Observații generale 351. – Gândilă, Coin Circulation.

32 Cf. Ziemann, Großbulgarien for further bibliography on Kubrat's »Great Bulgaria«.

33 A good summary of written sources and scholarly works may be found in Ziemann, Onglos.

34 Besides the studies on Theophanes and Patriarch Nicephorus, which Ziemann, Onglos quotes, see Treadgold, Trajan the Patrician. – Howard-Johnston, Witnesses 237-312.

35 Theophanes, Chronographia A.M. 6171 (357, 27-358, 4 de Boor): ἔπειτα τούτων ὁ τρίτος, Ἀσπαρούχ λεγόμενος, τὸν Δάναπριν καὶ Δάναστριν περάσας καὶ τὸν Ὀγγλον καταλαβὼν βορειοτέρους τοῦ Δανουβίου ποταμοῦ μεταξὺ τούτου κάκεινων ὤκησεν, ἀσφαλῆ καὶ δυσμάχητον εἶναι τὸν τόπον στοχασάμενος ἐξ ἐκάστου μέρους· τελματώδης γὰρ ἔμπροσθεν, καὶ ἄλλοθεν τοῖς ποταμοῖς στεφανούμενος. – Nicephorus Patriarches, Breviarium 35 (88, 21-27 Mango): τούτων ὁ λοιπὸς τρίτος ἀδελφὸς ὄνομα Ἀσπαρούχ τὸν Δάναπριν καὶ τὸν Δάναστριν ποταμὸν περαιωθείς περὶ τὸν Ἴστρον οἰκίζεται, τόπον πρὸς οἰκήσιν ἐπιτήθειον, Ὀγγλον τῆ σφῶν καλούμενον φωνῆ,

καταλαβόμενος, δυσχερῆ τε καὶ ἀνάλωτον πολεμίοις ὑπάρχοντα· ἀσφαλῆς τέ ἐστι τὰ μὲν ἔμπροσθεν τῆ τε δυσχωρία καὶ τῶ τελματώδης εἶναι τυγχάνων· τὰ δ' οὖν ὀπίσθεν κρημνοῖς ἀβάτοις τετειχισμένα. – Moravcsik, Byzantinoturcica II 213. – Bănescu, Onglos 434-438. – Beševliev, Săobștețenieto 34-38. – Gjuzelev, Asparuch 26 and 38. – The data in the chronicle of Michael the Syrian are ambiguous because he speaks about a Bulgar leader called Bulgaria who settled together with 10 000 men south to the Danube with the permission of Emperor Maurice, cf. Michael the Syrian, Chronicle X 21 (II 363 Chabot). The only Bulgarian source dealing with Asparukh's conquest, the so-called Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle from the 11th century, known for omitting all wars and conflicts between Bulgaria and Byzantium, simply mentions the Danube river and the settlement of the Bulgars in the »Land of Karvuna« (Dobruja) without giving any further topographical details, cf. Tăpkova-Zaimova/Miltanova, Historical and Apocalyptic Literature 281, 13-24 (Slavonic text) and 291-292 (English Translation). – Biliarsky, Prophet Isaiah. – Ivanov, Bogomilski knigi 275.

36 For localizing the Onglos to the north of the Danube mouth, see the overview in Ziemann, Onglos. – Georgiev, Asparuhov Onglos. – Atanasov/Russev, Onglos 15-18. – Hălcescu, Despre Onglos. – On placing the Onglos between the rivers Prut, Seret and Danube, cf. Božilov, Istoricheskata geografija. – Madgearu, Onglos. – Božilov, Istorija I 208-213. – The location of the Onglos in Eastern Muntenia suggested by Diaconu, Localizarea Onglos-lui seems to be unconvincing due to many reasons.

37 For a review on this theory, see Rašev, Ezičeska kultura 33-37. – Rašev, L'Onglos 70-78. – Damian, Prezența politică bizantină 313. – Petre, Byzance et Scythie Mineure 562-566.

38 Rašev, Ezičeska kultura 36. – Baltakov, Paleogeografskata obstanovka.

39 Vespremeanu-Stroe et al., Holocene Evolution 49-51. – Panin, Danube Delta. – Romanescu, Island of Peuce. – For a review of historical sources, see also Himmler, Untersuchungen 29-33.

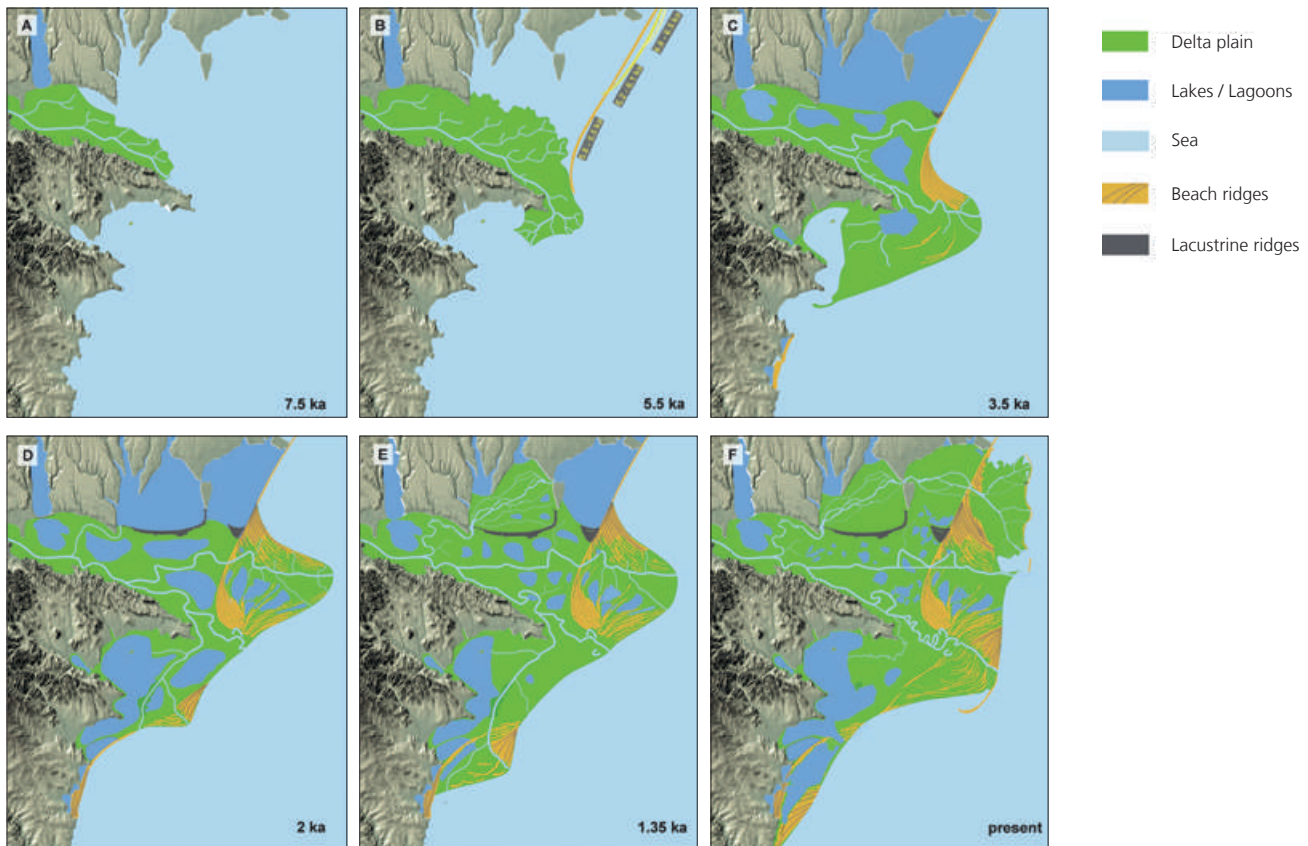


Fig. 1 Geological changes of the Danube Delta. – (From Vespremeanu-Stroe et al., Holocene Evolution 50).

another branch (modern Dunavaț, identified by some scholars with the ancient Hieron or Peuce branch⁴⁰), which according to a recent study of Romanian and French scholars may have been the main distributary of the Delta for centuries⁴¹. Perhaps the area between it and the new St. George branch is where the ancient island of Peuce was located⁴². It is this island, which the Armenian geography of Anania Shirakatsi (called *Ašxarhaç'oyc'*) states was the place where Asparukh, the Khan of the Bulgars, dwelled⁴³. Peuce is known from other sources, such as the

ancient *periploï*, a Claudian's panegyric on Emperor Honorius and a description of the Black Sea in the historiographical work of Ammianus Marcellinus, just to name some of them⁴⁴. The Bulgars may have placed the area within the Danube branches under their control, something that is attested with other invaders coming from the North and reaching the Danubian Limes⁴⁵. However, it would be hard to assume that the battle of 680 took place on this island. The reasons for this assumption may nonetheless be found in the work of Theophanes. The

40 Periplus Ponti Euxini IV-V 63-68 (135, 11-15 Diller): Ἀπὸ δὲ Ἀντιφίλου εἰς Ψιλὸν καλούμενον στόμα τοῦ Ἰστρου ποταμοῦ σταδῶν μίλιον ἑξήκοντα. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Ψιλοῦ καλούμενου στόματος τοῦ Ἰστρου εἰς δευτέρου στόμιον σταδῶν μίλιον ἑξήκοντα. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ δευτέρου στόμιου ἐπὶ τὸ Καλὸν στόμιον σταδῶν μίλιον ἑξήκοντα. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Καλοῦ στόμιου ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρακον (ὡς δὲ ὀνομάζουσι) στόμιον τέταρτον τοῦ Ἰστρου σταδῶν μίλιον ἑξήκοντα. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Ἄρακου ἐπὶ Ἰερὸν λεγόμενον στόμιον πέμπτον τοῦ Ἰστρου σταδῶν κίλιον ἑξήκοντα. οὗτος δὲ Ἰστρος ποταμὸς ὁ καὶ Δανουβίος λεγόμενος κατέρχεται ἀπὸ τῶν ἑσπερίων τόπων, τὴν ἐκβολὴν πέντε στόμασι ποιούμενος.

41 Vespremeanu-Stroe et al., Holocene Evolution 55-56. – See also Panin, Danube Delta 260.

42 A recently conducted interdisciplinary study was aimed at trying to find an answer to the question where Peuce was located. According to the scholars it was a part of the eastern Dunavaț promontory, cf. Romanescu, Island of Peuce.

43 Anania Shirakatsi, *Ašxarhaç'oyc'* III 10 (48 Hewsens). – Ziemann, Onglos 35.

44 Periplus Ponti Euxini V 68 (135-136, 24-27 Diller): ἔχει δὲ καὶ νήσους ἐν αὐτῷ κειμένας πολλὰς τε καὶ μεγάλας τοῖς μεγέθεσιν, ὡς λόγος, ὧν ἡ μετὰ τῆς θαλάσσης κειμένη καὶ τῶν στομάτων ἐστὶν οὐκ ἕλαττον μὲν τῆς Ῥόδου νήσου, Πεύκη δὲ λέγεται αὕτη διὰ τὸ πλῆθος ὧν ἔχει πευκῶν. – Stephanus Byzantinus, *Ethnica* Π 131 (IV 64 Billerbeck/Neumann-Hartmann) Πεύκη· νῆσος ἐν τῷ Ἰστρῷ. οἱ οἰκίτορες Πευκίνοι. – Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXII 8, 43-45 (III 30, 28-32, 4 Seyfarth): *Cum autem ad alium portuosum ambitum fuerit uentum, qui arcus figuram determinat ultimam, Peuce prominet insula, quam circumcolunt Trogodytæ et Peuci minoresque aliae gentes, et Histros quondam*

potentissima ciuitas et Tomi et Apollonia et Anchialos et Odessos, aliae praeterea multae, quas litora continent Thraciarum. amnis uero Danubius oriens prope Rauracos montesque confines limitibus Raeticis per latiore orbem praetentus ac sexaginta nauigabiles paene omnes recipiens fluuios septem ostiis per hoc Scythicum litus erumpit in mare. quorum primum est Peuce, insula supra dicta ut interpretata sunt uocabula Graeco sermone, secundum Naracustoma, tertium Calonstoma, quartum Pseudostomon; nam Borionstoma ac deinde Stenostoma longe minora sunt ceteris, septimum caenosum et palustri specie nigrum. – Claudian, IV Cons. 623-637 (IV 2 47-48 Charlet): *Ausi Danubium quondam tranare Gruthung / in lintres fregere nemus; ter mille ruebant / per fluuium plenae cuneis inmanibus alni. / Dux Odotheus erat. Tanta conamina classis / incipiens aetas et primus contudit annus: / submersae cecidere rates; fluitantia numquam / largius Arctos pauere cadauera pisces; / corporibus premitur Peuce; / per quinque recurrens / hostia barbaricos uix egerit unda cruores, / confessusque parens Odothei regis opima / rettulit exuiasque tibi. Ciuile secundis / conficis auspiciis bellum. Tibi debeat orbis / fata Gruthungorum de bellatumque tyrannum: / Hister sanguineos egit te consule fluctus; / Alpinos genitor rupit te consule montes.* – However, it is difficult to say to what extent these texts represent the reality of the Late Antiquity or whether the authors simply copied the information from their sources, in this case Strabo and Pliny the Elder, cf. Romanescu, Island of Peuce 522.

45 Wolfram, *Goten* 422, n. 128.

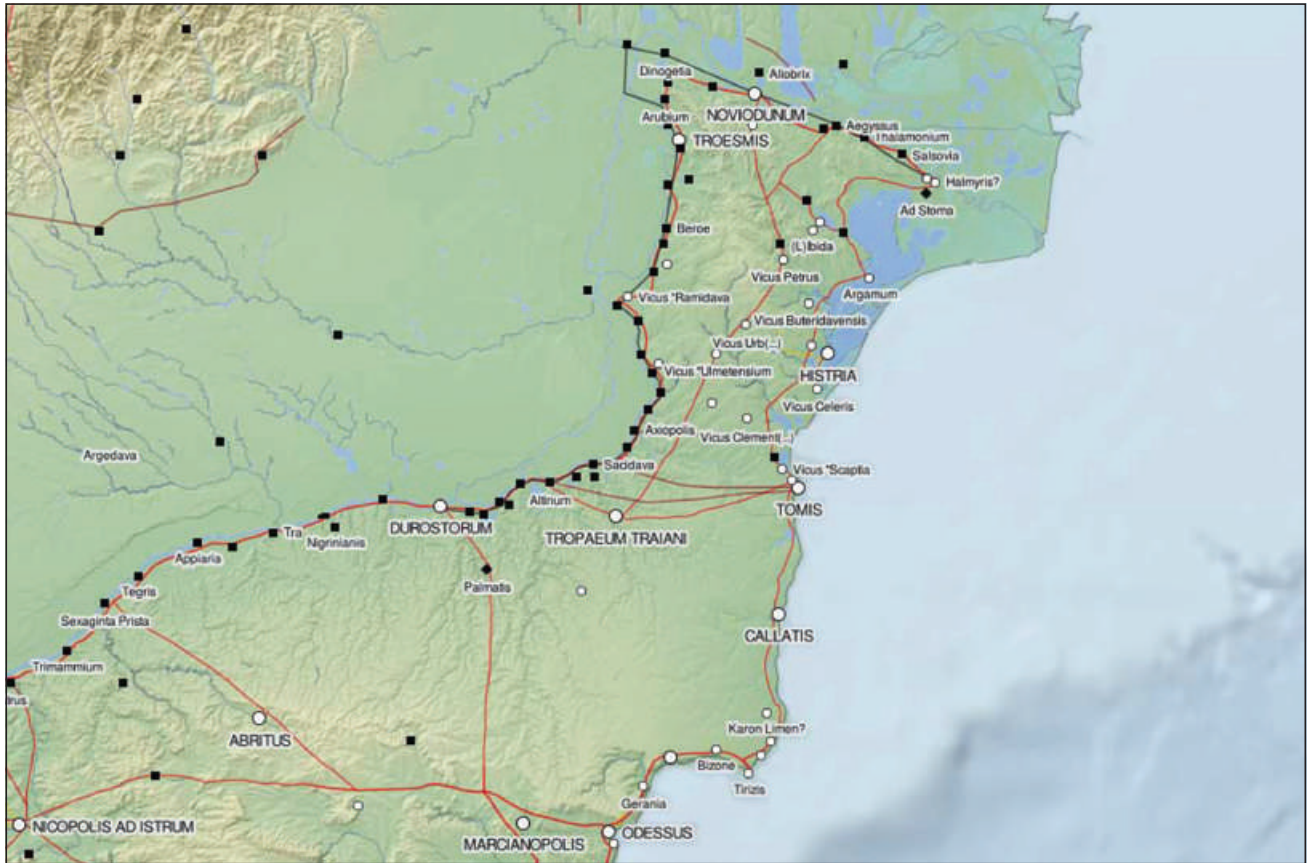


Fig. 2 The Danube delta and adjacent regions in the Roman period. – (From Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire, <https://imperium.ahfeldt.se/> [public domain]).

Byzantine historian speaks about the mainland (*ēpeiros*) where Constantine IV arranged his land troops and in the vicinity of which the navy lied at anchor⁴⁶. This indicates that the imperial army disembarked on solid ground, which can be identified with the southernmost regions of modern Budjak or Bessarabia and thus limits the possibility for localizing the battlefield on the island of Peuce in the marshy area of the Danube mouth.

Having placed the region to the north of the Danube and the area of the Delta under their control, the Bulgars of Asparukh started raiding the territories to the south of

the river⁴⁷. This resulted in the first Danubian campaign the Byzantines had organized in the previous 80 years⁴⁸. Under the command of Emperor Constantine IV, the army crossed the Straits and headed to the Danube accompanied by the navy⁴⁹. As already mentioned, the land troops were arranged on the mainland (*ēpeiros*) between the Onglos and the Danube, while the fleet was lying at anchor on the promontory nearby. Having seen the imperial forces, the Bulgars withdrew to a safe place but the Byzantines were unable to attack them because of the marshy area between the rivals⁵⁰.

46 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (358, 18-20 de Boor): και διὰ μὲν τῆς πρὸς τῷ Ὀγλῷ καλουμένῳ καὶ Δανουβίῳ ἡπείρου τὰ περὶ τὰ παρατάξας, διὰ δὲ τῆς πλησιαζούσης ἀκτῆς τὰς ναῦς προσορμίσας.

47 Ziemann, *Wandervolk* 161-167. – See also Petrov, *Obrazuvane* 179-287.

48 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6149 (347, 6-7 de Boor) speaks about a campaign of Emperor Constans II against the *Sklauinai* in 657. It is not clear whether these Slavs lived in Macedonia or between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains. On this topic, cf. Božilov, *Istorija* I 113. – Koledarov, *Politička geografija* 8.

49 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (358, 11-18 de Boor): ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος μεμαθηκῶς, ὅτι ἐξάπινα ἔθνος ῥυπαρὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον ἐκείθεν τοῦ Δανουβίου εἰς τὸν Ὀγλὸν ἐσκήνωσεν, καὶ τὰ πλησιάζοντα τῷ Δανουβίῳ ἐκτρέχει καὶ λυμαίνεται, τοῦτ' ἔστι τὴν νῦν κρατούμενην ὑπ' αὐτῶν χώραν, ὑπὸ Χριστιανῶν τότε κρατούμενην, ἠλιάθη σφόδρα· καὶ κελεύει περᾶσαι πάντα τὰ θέματα ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ. – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 36 (88-90, 1-5 Mango): Κωνσταντῖνος δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἔγνω ὡς τὸ σκηνῶσαν παρὰ τὸν Ἰστρον ἔθνος τὰ πλησιάζοντα τῆς ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς χωρῖα καταθέον διαφθεῖρειν ἐπεχειρεῖ, στρατὸν ὀπίτην ἐπὶ τὴν Θρακῶν διαβίβασας χώραν, ἔτι τε καὶ στόλον ὀπίσας κατὰ τοῦ ἔθνους ὡς ἀμυνόμενος ὤχετο. – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV 21, 10 (III

226, 15 – 227, 3 Büttner-Wobst): Τὸ δὲ τῶν Βουλγάρων ἔθνος εἰς τὰς Ῥωμαϊκὰς χώρας τὰς πέραν τοῦ Ἰστρον γενόμενον ταῦταις ἀκρατῶς ἐλυμαίνεται. ἐκστρατεύει τοῖνον κατ' αὐτῶν ὁ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος κατὰ γῆν τε καὶ θάλασσαν, στόλον πολλὸν ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης εἰσαγαγὼν εἰς τὸν Δάνουβιν. – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 113, 6 (168-169, 35-49 Wahlgren). – Georgios Monachos, *Chronicon* IX 25 (II 728, 18-729, 14 de Boor). – For Byzantine armed forces in the second half of the 7th century and their engagement in the campaign of 680, see Leontine, *Konstantinos* 219-244.

50 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (358, 20-26 de Boor): τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ἄθροον καὶ παμπληθὲς τῆς παρατάξεως οἱ Βούλγαροι θεασάμενοι, τῆς αὐτῶν ἀπεγνωκότες σωτηρίας εἰς τὸ προλεχθὲν ὄχυρμα καταφεύγουσι καὶ ἑαυτοὺς ἀσφαλίζονται. ἐν τρισὶ δὲ καὶ τέτρασιν ἡμέραις ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦτου ὄχυρματος αὐτῶν μὲν ἐξελθεῖν μὴ τολμησάντων, τῶν δὲ Ῥωμαίων πόλεμον μὴ συναψάντων διὰ τὴν προκειμένην τῶν τεμάτων πρόφασιν. – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 36 (90, 5-11 Mango): οἱ δὲ Βούλγαροι τῶν τε ἰππικῶν καὶ πλοῖμων τὰ πλήθη θεασάμενοι καὶ τῷ αἰφνιδίῳ καὶ ἀνελπίστῳ καταπλαγέντες πρὸς τὰ ἑαυτῶν ὄχυρματα ἔφυγον, τέτρασιν ἡμέραις ἐκείσε ὑπομειναντες· καὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων μὴ δυνηθέντων αὐτοὺς πολέμῳ συμμίξει διὰ τὴν δυσχωρίαν τοῦ τόπου, ἀνελάμβανόν τε αὐτοὺς καὶ προθυμότεροι ἐγένοντο.

An interesting question on which the sources shed minimum light is the role of the navy within the Byzantine campaign of 680⁵¹. Since the expedition was carried out on land and sea, it was the fleet, which had to transfer the land troops from Scythia Minor to the northern bank of the Danube (fig. 2). It seems that the navy did not execute any further tasks in Byzantine strategy because of the natural conditions in and around the battlefield. We know from earlier sources that in the Late Antiquity the area of the Delta was hard to navigable for big vessels. When Emperor Valens started his campaign against the Greuthungi in 367-369, he ordered grain to be delivered to the Danube from Constantinople by transport ships that had to sail to the mouth of the river, where the cargo was loaded onto smaller vessels that were able to bring it to the harbours on the Lower Danube⁵². After Noviodunum (modern Isaccea), where the Roman Legio *I Iovia* was in camp and where a naval base was located⁵³, the Danube branches into three main distributaries which become narrower and shallower, thus building an obstacle for the movement of huge vessels⁵⁴. However, Themistius' description of a not navigable Delta should be read with some caution. As the naval battle of 386 shows, almost 20 years after Valens' campaign against the Greuthungi military ships were able to sail through the southern branch of St. George and successfully repel an attack of sailors from the same tribe led by Odotheus⁵⁵. Moreover, Roman, and Byzantine warships on the Lower Danube were smaller and did not have such a deep draught as the heavy cargo ships transporting grain⁵⁶. Since the huge transport vessels had to rely primarily on their

sails and the force of the wind, it is easy to understand why the supply of Valens' troops stationed in Scythia Minor took place during the winter when southern winds prevail in the region of the Black Sea⁵⁷.

If the Romans and their Byzantine successors wanted to operate within the marshy area of the Danube mouth, they had to construct special vessels. In Late Antiquity, the Empire had a naval base within the Delta, called in the *Notitia Dignitatum* *Plateypegiis*⁵⁸. According to Octavian Bounegru, it was named after a special type of flat-bottomed vessel appropriate for service in shallow waters within river deltas such as those of the Nile and the Danube⁵⁹. Both Menander Protector and Theophanes speak about a special type of »double-stern ship« (*amphiprymna* or *diaprymna ploia*), which in the second half of the 6th century had to operate in the area of the Lower Danube and the Delta where huge vessels were not efficient⁶⁰. In 578, the Byzantine Danubian fleet transported 60 000 Avar horsemen by cargo ships (*holkades makrai*) from Pannonia to the Lower Danube, where they were supposed to fight against the Slavs. When the Avars arrived in Scythia, they had to get onboard two-stern vessels in order to reach the territories inhabited by the Slavs⁶¹. The same type of ship had to be built by order of Emperor Justinian I in 559 when the Byzantines tried to prevent the Kutrigurs of Zabergan from withdrawing back to Scythia after they had raided the region of Constantinople⁶².

Obviously, no such vessels were present at the battlefield in 680 because the Byzantines could not reach the Bulgars due to the marshes, which laid in between, and so both

51 For Byzantine navy during Constantine IV's reign, see Leontine, Konstantinos 150-158.

52 Zosimus, *Historia nova* IV 10, 3-4 (II/2 271, 20-272, 9 Paschoud): Διανοουμένους δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐπένια τοῖς Ῥωμαίων ὀρίοις αἰσθόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς, καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ ἤδη συνειλεγμένους ἅπαντας σὺν ὀξύτητι πάσῃ, τὸ μὲν στρατοπέδον τῆ ὄχθη τοῦ Ἰστρου συμπαρατείνας, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς Μαρκιανουπόλεως, ἢ μεγίστη τῶν ἐν Θράκῃ πόλεων ἐστὶ, διατριβῶν, τῆς τε τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἐν ὄπλοις ἀσκήσεως ἐπιμέλειαν ἐποιεῖτο καὶ μάστιχα τοῦ μηδεμίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπιλείψαι τροφῆν. Ὑπάρχον μὲν οὖν τῆς αὐλῆς Αὐξόνιον ἀπεδείκνυ, Σαλούστιον ταύτης δὲ τὸ γῆρας ἀφείξ, ἤδη δεύτερον ταύτην μεταχειρισάμενον τὴν ἀρχήν· Αὐξόνιος δὲ, καίπερ ἐνεστώτος οὕτω μεγάλου πολέμου, περὶ τε τὴν τῶν εἰσφορῶν εἰσπραξίν δικαίως ἦν, οὐδένα βαρύνεσθαι παρὰ τὸ καθήκον καὶ ὀφειλόμενον ἀνεχόμενος, καὶ δλκάδων πλήθει τὴν στρατιωτικὴν σίτησιν διὰ τοῦ Εὐζείνου πόντου ταῖς ἐκβολαῖς τοῦ Ἰστρου παραδιδούς, κἀντεύθεν διὰ τῶν ποταμίων πλοίων ταῖς ἐπιχειμῆνας τῷ ποταμῷ πόλεσιν ἐναποτιθέμενος, ὥστε ἐξ ἐτοίμου γίνεσθαι τῷ στρατοπέδῳ τὴν χορηγίαν. – Themistius, *Orationes* 10 (I 206, 15-23 Schenk/Downey): διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ τῶν φρουρίων τὰ μὲν ὑποδομήσεν ἐκ καινῆς, τὰ δὲ ἀνέστησε κατατετριμμένα, τοῖς δὲ προσέθηκε τὸ ἐνδόν, ὕψους μὲν ἢ χαμαλιώτερον ἦν, πάχους δὲ ὅπου τοῦτο προσέδει, ὕδατος δὲ ἀφθονίαν, ἢ ταύτην πρότερον ἐπιέζετο, τροφῶν δὲ θησαυροῦς ἀπανταχοῦ καὶ λιμένας τῆς γεινιῶσης θαλάσσης, καὶ στρατιώτας ἐκ καταλόγου, καὶ φρουροὺς τὸν ἀριθμὸν οὐ ψευδομένους, καὶ ὄπλα καὶ βέλη καὶ μηχανήματα, ἅπαντα εἰς τὸ ἔσχατον ἐξήτασμένα. – Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 67. 105-106. – Barnea, Themistios. – Barnea, *La Danube* 578-579. – Bounegru, *La flotte militaire et commerciale*. – Chrysos, *Byzantio kai Gotthoi* 94-108. – Zečević, *Vizantija i Goti* 57-60.

53 Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 35. – Himmler, *Untersuchungen* 73.

54 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXII 8, 46 (III 32, 5-9 Seyfarth): *Omnis autem cicrumfluo ambitu Pontus et nebulosus est et dulcior aequorum ceteris et uadous, quod et concrescat aer ex umorum spiramine saepe densetur et irruentium undarum magnitudine temperatur et consurgit in breuia dorsosa limum glebasque aggerente multitudine circumuentium fluentorum.* – Themistius, *Orationes* 10 (I 207, 21-208, 5 Schenk/Downey): ἐρῶ δὲ οὐκ ἀκοήν ἀλλοτρίαν, ἀλλ' ὡν αὐτὸς γέγονα θεατῆς. ἴστε δὴπου τοῦτο ὅσοι γεγονάτε ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας ἐκείνης, ἢ καλλίστη μὲν ἐστὶ τῆς Σκυθικῆς τῆς ὑπὸ κούρου, ἥκιστα δὲ ἀσφαλῆς πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους, οὐ καθαροῦ διαρρέοντος αὐτὴν τοῦ ποταμοῦ,

ἀλλ' ἀνατεφυρμένον τῆ γῆ, καὶ τενάγουσ κόλπον ποιοῦντος εἰσέγοντα ἐπιπόλῳ τῆς ἡπείρου, οὔτε ναυσὶν ὄντα πλωτῶν οὔτε βατῶν πορευσιμοῖς.

55 Zosimus, *Historia nova* IV 35, 1; IV 38, 1-39, 3 (II/2 299, 6-15; 303, 14-305, 26 Paschoud). – Claudian, *IV Cons.* 623-637 (II/2 47-48 Charlet). – Himmler, *Untersuchungen* 151-156. – Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 106-107. – Wolfram, *Goten* 141.

56 For different types of warships, see Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 61-67. – Himmler, *Untersuchungen* 99-123. – Matei, *Considerații* 144-145. – For further details concerning ancient cargo and warships, see Höckmann, *Antike Seefahrt* 52-122.

57 Zosimus, *Historia nova* IV 10, 4; IV 11, 1 (II/2 272, 1-11 Paschoud). – On winds and hydrography of the Black Sea Region, cf. Valchev et al., *Wind Wave Climate* 233. – Caspers, *Black Sea* 808-820.

58 *Notitia Dignitatum* XXXIX 35 (88 Seeck): *Praefectus ripae legionis primae Iouiae cohortis... et secundae Herculiae musculorum Scythicorum et classis, Inplateypegiis.* – Cf. Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 27 for their suggestion for correcting the text to *et secundae Herculiae musculorum Scythicorum [et] classis in [loco] Plateypegiis.*

59 Bounegru, *Ploia platypegia*. – Bounegru, *Tipur de nave* 273-275. – Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 27. 33-35. 69. – Himmler, *Untersuchungen* 121-122. – Chiriac, *Notitia Dignitatum*.

60 Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 67-69. – Himmler, *Untersuchungen* 124-126.

61 Menander Protector, *Fragmenta* 21 (192, 18-25 Blockley): οὗτος παραγενόμενος ἐν Παιονία τῆ χώρα μετήγαγεν εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων αὐτὸν τε τὸν Βαϊανὸν καὶ τὰς τῶν Ἀβάρων δυνάμεις, ἐν ταῖς δὲ λεγομέναις ὀλκάσι μακρῆς τὰ βαρβαρικὰ διαβιβάσας πλήθει· καὶ λέγεται ἄμφι τὰς ξ' χιλιάδας ἰππέων θωρακοφόρων ἐς τὴν Ῥωμαίων διαπορθμευθῆναι. ἐνθὲνδε αὐτὸς διὰ τῆς Ἰλλυριῶν διαγαγῶν, εἶτα ἐς τὴν Σκυθῶν ἀφικόμενος, ἐμπάλιν διελθεῖν παρεσκεύασε τὸν Ἰστρον ἐν ταῖς καλουμέναις ἀμφιπρύμναις τῶν νεῶν. – Pohl, *Awaren* 67.

62 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6051 (234, 7-11 de Boor): λοιπὸν ἐκέλευσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς γενέσθαι πλοῖα διάπρυμα, ὥστε ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὸν Δανούβιον καὶ ἀπαντήσαι τοῖς βαρβάροις περνοῦσι καὶ πολεμήσαι αὐτούς. τοῦτο γνόντες οἱ βάρβαροι παρεκάλεσαν διὰ πρεσβευτοῦ ἀκινδύνως ἔσαι αὐτοὺς περᾶσαι τὸν Δανούβιον. – Ziemann, *Wandervolk* 99-100. – Kislinger, *Angriff* 51-58.

armies had to stand against each other for a couple of days, a fact which had a devastating effect on Byzantine morale⁶³. The fleet that Constantine IV used against his enemy consisted of vessels, which had escorted him since the beginning of the expedition in Constantinople and had nothing to do with the former Danubian fleet, which would have come to an end due to the turmoil in the first half of the 7th century. As for the campaign of 680, at that time at least the southern branch of the Delta seems to have been navigable for battleships such as the dromons that accompanied the Emperor during the campaign and his departure to Mesembria (modern Nesebar)⁶⁴. Moreover, the navy, anchored near the battlefield, could not prevent the enemy from crossing the Danube and reaching as far as the Balkan Mountains.

The Eighth Century

Constantine IV's defeat resulted in the migration of the Bulgars to Scythia Minor and the foundation of their new state in the Balkans. This fact did not change the significant role of the Danube river and especially of its mouth in the military strategy of the Byzantines. On the contrary, further naval campaigns, the destination of which was the Danube Delta, were to follow. Yet, the beginning of the next century saw this area as a place where one of the most famous alliances between a Byzantine emperor and a Bulgarian ruler started. After ten years in exile, in 705, the former emperor Justinian II escaped from Chersonesus. Theophanes and Patriarch Nicephorus relate that the exiled emperor got on a ship in Chersonesus and headed to the Danube⁶⁵. He intended to ask for the assistance of Bulgarian Khan Tervel, whom he promised to wed his daughter to if he would help him regain the throne of Byzantium. According to Theophanes, Justinian entered the Danube and sent one of his supporters

to Tervel⁶⁶. For Ion Barnea and Petre Diaconu, the emperor's sail to the Danube Delta is proof that Byzantium had control over the area at the beginning of the 8th century⁶⁷. However, it is difficult to accept such an interpretation, if we keep in mind that Justinian, who has just escaped from his exile, would have headed straight to another area controlled by the Byzantine government⁶⁸.

With Tervel's help, Justinian II did indeed succeed in regaining the throne of Byzantium. As a sign of his gratitude, the emperor proclaimed the Bulgarian ruler a *caesar*⁶⁹ and gave him the region of Northern Thrace known as Zagora⁷⁰. Justinian soon recognized the mistake he had made and tried to re-establish his possession over this territory but was defeated in a battle near Anchialos (modern Pomorie)⁷¹. Driving Bulgaria out of Northern Thrace remained one of the tasks of Byzantine policy in the Eastern Balkans for the rest of the 8th century. However, during the reign of Emperor Constantine V, the ambitions of Constantinople went beyond the northern borders of Thrace. In the 760s and the 770s, this emperor tried to fulfil his plan to reconquer the area between the Balkan Mountains and the Danube for Byzantium⁷². The first campaign started in 760 (or in 756-757)⁷³. According to Patriarch Nicephorus, Constantine sent 500 ships to the Danube where they devastated the »land of the Bulgars« and took many war captives⁷⁴. In doing so, the emperor applied for the first time the strategy of using the fleet to divide the forces of the enemy and to divert their attention from the passes in the Eastern Balkan Mountains or Thrace⁷⁵. Constantine's tactics proved to be successful – he defeated the Bulgars at Markellai (near modern Karnobat) and forced them into negotiations⁷⁶.

The next Byzantine naval campaign followed in June 763 after the Bulgars had broken the peace and had devastated the Byzantine villages and forts near the border. For his offensive, Constantine V prepared 800 horse-carrying ships

63 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (358, 18-26 de Boor). – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 36 (90, 5-11 Mango).

64 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (358, 27-30 de Boor): τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως ἐν ποδαλγία ὄξυπαθήσαντος καὶ ἐπὶ Μεσημβρίαν βιασθέντος ὑποστρέψαι διὰ συνήθειαν λουτροῦ ἅμα πέντε δρομῶνων καὶ τῶν οικείων αὐτοῦ ἀνθρώπων. – Cf. Zuckerman, *Byzantine Dromon* 67-72, for the evolution of Byzantine navy in the 7th century.

65 Dimitroukas, *Reisen und Verkehr* II 435-436. – Head, *Justinian II*, 108-109. – Atanasov/Russev, *Onglos* 23-27 argue that Justinian's aim was to reach the rampart in Niculițel which might have been the residence of Tervel.

66 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6196 (373, 28 – 374, 4 de Boor): καὶ ἀκινδύνως ἐκ τοῦ κλύδωνος ἐκείνου ἐξῆλθε καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν Δανουβίην ποταμόν. ἀποστείλαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ Στέφανον πρὸς Τέρβελιν, τὸν κύριον Βουλγαρίας, ἐπὶ τῷ δοῦναι αὐτῷ σύναρσιν, ὅπως κρατήσῃ τὴν προγονικὴν αὐτοῦ βασιλείαν, ὑπέσχετο αὐτῷ πλείστα παρέχειν δῶρα καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ θυγατέρα εἰς γυναῖκα. – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 42 (102, 35-42 Mango): καὶ σὺν αὐτοῖς ἐκπέυσας, τὰ λεγόμενα Νεκρόπηλα παρελθὼν πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρον ποταμὸν παραγίνεται. ἐκεῖθεν ἐκπέμπει τῶν συνόντων τινὰ Στέφανον πρὸς Τέρβελιν κύριον ὄντα τῆνικαῦτα τῶν ἐκείσε Βουλγάρων, παρακαλῶν συλλαβέσθαι αὐτῷ ὥστε τὸν τῆς βασιλείας ἀπολήψασθαι θρόνον, ἅλλα τε πλείστα δῶρα ὑποσχόμενος καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ θυγατέρα εἰς γυναῖκα αὐτῷ δώσειν ἐπαγγελιάμενος. – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 116, 4 (175, 19-23 Wahlgren). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV 24, 11-15 (III 237, 3-16 Büttner-Wobst). – Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* X 17 (II 478 Chabot).

67 Barnea, *Dobrogea* 208. – Barnea/Stefănescu, *Din istoria Dobrogei* III 11-12. – Barnea, *La Danube* 584. – Diaconu, *La Dobroudja et Byzance* 218. – Diaconu,

Kilia et Licostomo 249. – See also Damian, *Prezența politică bizantină* 286 and n. 15.

68 Tăpkova-Zaimova, *Quelques observations* 80.

69 Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 42 (102-104, 58-64 Mango). – Zacos/Veglery, *Seals* I/3 no. 2672.

70 Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 117, 1 (175, 2-4 Wahlgren).

71 Heher/Preiser-Kapeller/Simeonov, *Strukturen* 108.

72 Cf. Beševliev, *Feldzüge*. – Ziemann, *Wandervolk* 213-228. – Rochow, *Konstantin V*, 93-102. – Busetto, *Presenza della flotta*. – Božilov, *Istorija* I 254-256.

73 For the chronology of this campaign and an analysis of the data in the sources, see Beševliev, *Feldzüge* 7-9. – Božilov/Gjuzelev, *Istorija na Dobrudža* II 59.

74 Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 73 (144, 11-16 Mango): μετ' οὐ πολὺ πλοῖ καὶ πεζῆ κατ' αὐτῶν ἐστράτευσεν. οἱ γοῦν τὰς ναῦς ἔχοντες ἄχρι καὶ εἰς πεντακοσίους τὸν ἀριθμὸν συντελούσας, διὰ τοῦ Εὐξείνου ἐκπέυσαντες καὶ πρὸς τῷ Ἰστροῦ γενόμενοι ποταμῷ χώρας τε Βουλγάρων ἐπίμπρασαν καὶ δοριαλώτους οὐκ ὀλίγους εἶλον. – It is not clear where the Byzantine troops disembarked. According to Božilov/Gjuzelev, *Istorija na Dobrudža* II 59-60, this happened somewhere between Dinogetia (near the commune Garvân) and Dorostolon (modern Silistra).

75 Beševliev, *Zwei Versionen* 365-367. – Busetto, *Presenza della flotta* 220. – Atanasov/Russev, *Onglos* 27 and n. 9. – For Byzantine logistics and tactics, see Haldon, *Warfare* 174-189.

76 Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 73 (144, 16-18 Mango): αὐτὸς δὲ μάχῃ συμμίζας αὐτοῖς κατὰ τὰς λεγομένας Μαρκέλλας (φρούριον δὲ τοῦτο πλησιαίτατα Βουλγάρων κείμενον) εἰς φυγὴν ἐτρέψατο καὶ πολλοὺς αὐτῶν ἔκτεινεν. – Busetto, *Presenza della flotta* 220. – On Markellai, cf. Soustal, *Thracien* 348-349.

(*chelandia*), each transporting twelve horses, and sent them to the Danube to the rear of the Bulgars, while he headed the land army to Anchialos⁷⁷. Ostrogorsky thinks that both troops united in the area of Anchialos, but it is hard to believe that the cavalry would have marched the whole way from the Danube mouth to the fields south of the Balkan Mountains while leaving the heartland of the Bulgars untouched⁷⁸. Having in mind the tactics Constantine V had already applied during his previous campaign against Bulgaria, we can assume that the purpose of the cavalry units transported to the Danube on board the *chelandia* was to divide the forces of the enemy and to weaken the strength of that army, which had to fight against the Byzantine land forces headed by the emperor himself. This tactic proved to be efficient once again – at the decisive battle near Anchialos on 30 June 763, Constantine V defeated the Bulgarian Khan Telets and took lots of prisoners of war that were murdered in Constantinople after the emperor's triumphant return⁷⁹. As for the fleet, neither Theophanes nor Patriarch Nicephorus give any further details about its mission, nor do they say whether it succeeded in disembarking in the Delta as was the case with the previous expedition. But from their accounts, it becomes clear that the Byzantines once again had to send a fleet from Constantinople to the Danube and did not rely on the assistance of an alleged local administration in the area of the mouth.

A similar scenario of dividing the enemy's forces took place in 774 when Constantine V put to sea on the red *chelandia* and headed a sea expedition against Bulgaria the aim of

which once again may have been the Danube Delta⁸⁰. By sending a fleet of 2000 *chelandia* – a number that seems to be very much exaggerated⁸¹ – the Emperor tried to divert the attention of the Bulgars from the passes in the Eastern Balkan Mountains, which the cavalry units of the land army had to take control of. The only source informing us about this campaign, the chronicle of Theophanes, says that near Varna the Emperor became fearful and turned back to Constantinople without having achieved anything⁸². The reason may have been a strong headwind, which destroyed the Byzantine fleet twice during Constantine's maritime campaigns against Bulgaria in 766⁸³ and 775⁸⁴ when a severe north wind crushed the ships near the coast south of Mesembria⁸⁵. We can suppose that the Byzantines had chosen the Delta as their destination, because the coast near Obzor, Shkorpilovtsi, Varna and Kranevo was fortified with ditches that were meant to protect the Bulgarian heartland from attacks from the Black Sea⁸⁶ and because the lagoons of the lakes Sinoe, Golovița and Razelm could hardly offer good possibilities for an entire fleet to land⁸⁷.

The Ninth Century

The wars that the Bulgarian Khan Krum waged against Byzantium in 813 and 814 caused not only the destruction of many settlements in Thrace but also resulted in the deportation of thousands of Byzantine prisoners of war to what the Byzantine historians called »Bulgaria beyond the Danube«⁸⁸.

- 77 Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 76 (148, 7-12 Mango): οὐ τὸ θρασὺ καὶ αὐθαδὲς Κωνσταντῖνος θεασάμενος ναῖς ἰππαγωγούς ἄχρι καὶ εἰς τὰς ὀκτακοσίας κατασκευάσας, καὶ ταύτας ἰππικῶν στρατῶν πληρώσας διὰ τοῦ Εὐξείνου πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρον ἐξέπεμψεν. αὐτὸς δὲ στρατὸν ἕτερον ἐπαγόμενος πρὸς Ἀγχιάλον πόλιν παραγίνεται. – Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6254 (432, 29 – 433, 1 de Boor): τῆ δὲ ἰσ' τοῦ Ἰουνίου μηνὸς ἐξῆλθεν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τὴν Θράκην ἀποστείλας καὶ πλωίμων διὰ τοῦ Εὐξείνου Πόντου ἕως ὧς χελανδίων ἐπιφερομένων ἀνά ἰβ' ἴππων. – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 122, 10 (191, 113-115 Wahlgren). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XV 6, 17-18 (III 271, 12-18 Büttner-Wobst). – Beševliev, *Zwei Versionen* 363-365. – Busetto, *Presenza della flotta* 220-221. – On transport capacity of 8th-century Byzantine *chelandia* based on Theophanes' account, see Zuckerman, *Byzantine Dromon* 83-85. – Pryor/Jeffreys, *Dromon* 304-333.
- 78 Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte* 140.
- 79 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6254 (433, 4-14 de Boor). – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 76 (148-150, 12-22 Mango). – Božilov, *Istorija* 1 257-258.
- 80 On the red *chelandia*, cf. Heher/Simeonov, *Ceremonies by the Sea* 221-225.
- 81 For numbers in Byzantine sources, see Treadgold, *Numbers*. If we take into consideration Theophanes' information on the transport capacity of one *chelandia* carrying 12 horses during the previous campaign, in 774 the emperor should have had 50 000 horsemen available, which would have been quite a formidable number even for Byzantine armed forces in the first half of the 6th century when Justinian sent 16 000 soldiers against the Vandals in North Africa, cf. Procopius of Caesarea, *Bella* III 11, 2-13 (I 360, 27-362, 14 Hauri/Wirth). – Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army* 47-64.
- 82 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6265 (446, 27-447, 2 de Boor): Τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει μηνὶ Μαΐῳ ἰνδικτιώνος ἰβ' ἐκίνησε Κωνσταντῖνος στόλον χελανδίων β' κατὰ Βουλγαρίας καὶ εἰσελθὼν καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὰ Ῥούσια χελανδία ἀπεκίνησε πρὸς τὸ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν Δανουβίον ποταμὸν καταλιπὼν καὶ τοὺς τῶν βαρβαρικῶν θεμάτων στρατηγούς ἕξω τῶν κλεισουργῶν, εἰ πως δυναθῶσι τῶν Βουλγάρων εἰς αὐτὸν ἀσχολουμένους εἰσελθεῖν εἰς Βουλγαρίαν. ἔλθόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἕως τῆς Βάρνας, ἔδειλίας καὶ ἐμελέτα ὑποστρέψαι. – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XV 7, 4-5 (III 278, 16-279, 2 Büttner-Wobst). – Busetto, *Presenza della flotta* 221-222.
- 83 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6257 (437, 19-23 de Boor): τῆ δὲ κα' τοῦ Ἰουνίου μηνὸς τῆς δ' ἰνδικτιώνος ἐκίνησε κατὰ Βουλγάρων καὶ ἀπέστειλεν ἐπὶ Ἀχελὸν β'χ' χελανδία ἐξοπλισὰς αὐτὰ ἐκ πάντων τῶν θεμάτων. τούτων δὲ ἐν ταῖς

- ἀκταῖς προσορμισθέντων, καὶ τοῦ βορρᾶ πνεύσαντος, συνετριβήσαν μικροῦ δεῖν ἅπαντα, καὶ ἐπνίγη λαὸς πολὺς. – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 82 (156, 4-16 Mango): πλωίμων δὲ ἐξοπλισὰς συντελοῦν περὶ τὰ διασχίλια καὶ ἐξακόσια σκάφη, ναυτικὸν δὲ πλῆθος καὶ στρατιωτικὸν ἕκ τε τῶν πλωίμων στρατηγίδων καὶ ἑτέρων χώρων ἐμβάλων ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀπέστειλεν, ὥστε παραγενέσθαι περὶ τε Μεσήμβρειαν καὶ Ἀγχιάλον τὰ πολιόμενα καὶ προσπελάζειν Βουλγάρους [...] ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ πλωίμων πρὸς ταῖς ἀκταῖς τῆς ἐκείνῃ θαλάσσης καθωρμίζετο (ἄλιμος γὰρ ὁ τόπος καὶ τοῖς πλέουσι δυσφορώτατος), πνεῦμα βίαιον καὶ σκληρὸν κατ' αὐτῆς πνεῦσαν (βορέας δ' ἦν ἄνεμος) τὰς τε ναῦς πρὸς ταῖς ἀκταῖς περιτρέψας συνέτριψε καὶ πλήθη τῶν εἰσπλεόντων οὐκ ὀλίγα τῷ ῥοθίῳ κατεπόντισεν. – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 122, 13 (192, 134-136 Wahlgren). – Georgios Monachos, *Chronicon* IX 34 (II 758, 1-8 de Boor). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XV 7, 19 (III 275, 17-276, 4 Büttner-Wobst).
- 84 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6265 (447, 29-448, 4 de Boor): ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ὡς λύσας τὴν πρὸς τοὺς Βουλγάρους εἰρήνην ἐξώπλισε πάλιν στόλον πολὺν. καὶ εἰσαγαγὼν εἰς αὐτὸν βαρβαρικὸν χιλιάδας ἰβ' ἀπέλυσε τοὺς στρατηγούς τῶν πλωιμάτων πάντας σὺν αὐτῷ. αὐτὸς δὲ φοβηθεὶς ἔμεινε εἰς τὸ βαρβαρικόν. εἰσελθόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἕως τῆς Μεσημβρίας, καὶ ἀνέμου σφοδροῦ βορρᾶ πνεύσαντος, πάντα μικροῦ δεῖν συνετριβήσαν, καὶ πολλοὶ ἀπώλοντο· καὶ ὑπέστρεψε μὴδὲν ποιήσας.
- 85 Busetto, *Presenza della flotta* 221 wrongly localizes the place of the shipwreck around the Danube mouth.
- 86 Rašev, *Ukrepitelni saorazhenija* 20-27. – Rašev, *Starobalgarski ukreplenija* 31-50. – Rašev, *Asparuhovijat* val. – Georgiev, *Beležki*.
- 87 On the evolution of the lagoons, cf. Bony et al., *Danube Delta Lobes*.
- 88 Scriptor Incertus III (43-44, 150-153 Iadevaia): Καὶ λαβόντες οἱ Βούλγαροι τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν πᾶσαν εἰς πλῆθος οὖσαν ἀναριθμητοῦ, καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἀποσκευὴν αὐτῶν, μετώκισαν αὐτοὺς εἰς Βουλγαρίαν ἐκείθεν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ ποταμοῦ. – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 131, 9 (235-236, 70-77 Wahlgren): ἐπὶ τούτου ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Κρούμιος, ἄρχων Βουλγαρίας, κατὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν, καὶ τραπεῖς Μιχαὴλ καὶ Λέων ὁ Ἀρμένιος τυραννήσας αὐτὸν καὶ βασιλεύσας, ἐλθὼν ὄπισθεν αὐτοῦ Κρούμιος περικύκλωσε τὴν πόλιν. λογχευθεὶς δὲ παρὰ Λέοντος τοῦ Ἀρμένιου καὶ ὑποστρέψων ἐν Βουλγαρίᾳ ἐπέμψεν εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Μάμαντα ἀφελόμενος τὰ ἐκεῖσε χαλκὰ ζῶδα. ἀπελθὼν δὲ καὶ ἐν Ἀδριανουπόλει παρέλαβεν αὐτὴν καὶ μετέστισε χιλιάδας ἀνδρῶν δέκα χωρὶς γυναικῶν καὶ τούτους κατώκισε πέραν τοῦ Δανουβίου. – Syn-

According to sources, one of them was the future Emperor Basil I who was captured together with his family in the vicinity of Adrianople and was sent to Bulgaria⁸⁹. Apart from the story of his early years in captivity and the persecutions of Byzantine Christians by the heathen Bulgars, we know very few details about these prisoners of war and their life in Bulgaria⁹⁰.

There is only one source, which tells the story of them returning to Byzantium. According to Symeon Logothetes, during the reign of Emperor Theophilus (829-842) the Byzantine captives planned for their escape from Bulgaria⁹¹. For this purpose, they sent a man called Cordyles to Constantinople. In the capital he met the emperor who promised his assistance and sent ships to the Danube; they were charged with the task of transporting the refugees from there back to Byzantium⁹². Earlier theories, such as those of Bănescu, Barnea, Brezeanu, Tăpkova-Zaimova and Venedikov, assumed that the prisoners of war settled down in modern Budjak and thus they got on the vessels in the area of the Delta⁹³. The first one to challenge this hypothesis was Petre Panaitescu. In his article on Bulgarian domination in the region north of the Danube in the 9th and 10th centuries, he paid attention to the socio-economic background of the Byzantine war captives. Having in mind their agricultural skills, the Romanian historian doubted them being settled in the steppe zone of

Budjak and suggested a location of their dwellings in modern Muntenia⁹⁴. Two scholars, Dan Gh. Teodor and Kamen Stanev, tried to use archaeological data complementary to the information from the written sources and also localized the settlements of the captives in Muntenia⁹⁵. However, their views on the place where the Byzantines boarded the ships differ; while Teodor argues for embarkation near the mouth of Ialomița, Stanev localizes this event in the area close to the Danube mouth⁹⁶. Unfortunately, the text of Symeon Logothetes says nothing about the place of these events, but a site within the Delta seems to be more plausible for several reasons. Brezeanu and Stanev have already stressed that an operation away from the sea would have been far more dangerous than one in the area of the Delta⁹⁷. Another argument for placing the embarkation near the Danube mouth is the communication between Bulgars and Hungarians during the operation. The war captives crossed an unnamed river, but a Bulgarian *komēs*⁹⁸ also crossed over trying to stop them and was defeated⁹⁹. After a second attempt to cross over had failed, the Bulgars called their northern neighbours, the Hungarians, to help them stop the Byzantines¹⁰⁰. In a further battle, the war captives succeeded in driving the Hungarians back and got on the ships, which carried them into Thrace where some became high imperial officials such as Tzantzēs who was appointed a *strategos* of Macedonia¹⁰¹.

axarium CP 414-415 (Delehay). – A good historiographical overview may be found in Tanașoca/Teoteoi, L'extension. – On »Bulgaria beyond the Danube«, cf. Mladjov, Trans-Danubian Bulgaria. – Grecu, Bulgaria în Nordul Dunării 223-234. – Brezeanu, La Bulgarie d'au delà de l'Ister. – Koledarov, Politická geografija I 36-41. – Teodor, Quelques aspects. – Bănescu, Les frontières. – Sophoulis, Byzantium and Bulgaria 112-128. – For Bulgarian domination to the north of the Danube, see also Božilov, Anonimăt na Haze, whose view on the northeastern border, following the Dnieper River, the author of the present paper does not share.

89 There are good reasons to doubt Basil being born so early, that is why some historians date his birth in captivity in the 830s, cf. PmbZ I 1, # 832, p. 277.

90 Cf. Adontz, Basile I, 478-486. – Moravcsik, Sagen und Legenden 70-77. – Božilov, Istoriija I 339-342. – On Byzantine captives in Bulgaria in the first half of the 9th century, cf. Hristov, Prisoners of War. – Stanev, Deportiranite romei. – Venedikov, La population byzantine 261-277. – On archaeological findings (ceramics, tools, and weapons) in Eastern Wallachia attributed to the Byzantine prisoners of war, see Teodor, Quelques aspects 9-14. – Teodor, Nouvelles considérations 97-102. – Madgearu, Byzantine Military Organization 13-14.

91 Recent studies have pointed out that attributing the authorship of the so-called *Logothetenchronik* to Leo the Grammarian, Theodosius Melissenus and Georgius Monachus Continuatus should be considered anachronistic, cf. Wahlgren, Symeon the Logothete (with further bibliography).

92 Symeon Logothetes, Chronicon 131, 10-11 (236, 77-83 Wahlgren): ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις Θεοφίλου τοῦ βασιλέως ἦν στρατηλάτης ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ ὁ Κορδύλης προσαγορευόμενος. εἶχε δὲ καὶ υἱὸν Βάρδα νόνματι ἠνδριωμένον πάνυ, ὃν κατέλιπεν ἀντ' αὐτοῦ ἄρχειν τῶν Μακεδόνων τῶν ὄντων πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ Δανουβίου. αὐτὸς δὲ μετὰ μηχανῆς τινοῦ ἦλθεν εἰς Θεόφιλον· ὃν ὑποδεξάμενος χαίρων καὶ γνώους, ὃ θέλει, ἀπέστειλε πλοῖα ἀναλαβεῖσθαι αὐτούς καὶ ἔλθειν ἐν τῇ πόλει.

93 Bănescu, Les frontières 6-7. – Barnea, Dobrogea 209. – Barnea/Ștefănescu, Din istoria Dobrogei III 13. – Barnea, La Danube 585. – Brezeanu, La Bulgarie d'au delà de l'Ister 122. – Tăpkova-Zaimova, Quelques observations 80. – Tăpkova-Zaimova, Otvăddunavska Bălgarija 64. – Venedikov, Ustrojstvo 93.

94 Grecu, Bulgaria în Nordul Dunării 228 (Panaitescu subscribed the article as Alexandru Grecu).

95 Teodor, Quelques aspects 5-15. – Teodor, Nouvelles considérations 96-101. – Stanev, Deportiranite romei 186-188.

96 Teodor, Quelques aspects 13-14. – Teodor, Nouvelles considérations 99-100. – Stanev, Deportiranite romei 186-187.

97 Brezeanu, La Bulgarie d'au delà de l'Ister 129. – Stanev, Deportiranite romei 187 and 190, n. 40.

98 On the function of *komēs*, who was in this case a Bulgarian and not a Byzantine official, cf. Tăpkova-Zaimova, Otvăddunavska Bălgarija 64. – Some scholars think that the *komēs* came from the area south to the Danube to stop the captives, cf. Grecu, Bulgaria în Nordul Dunării 227. – Brezeanu, La Bulgarie d'au delà de l'Ister 22. – Mladjov, Trans-Danubian Bulgaria 90. – Spinei, Romanians 58 (a possibility, which Božilov, Istoriija I 341 also would not exclude). The text of the source is ambiguous, but it is quite possible that the *komēs* had his seat in modern Wallachia. – Barnea, Periochē 83 identifies the *archōn Bulgarias*, attested on some seals, with the *komēs* in the chronicle of Symeon Logothetes and attributes to him the function of being in charge for the Byzantine fleet based in the Danube mouth. The *archōn Bulgarias* is the Bulgarian ruler Boris-Michael and from the narrative of the Byzantine chronicle it becomes clear that the *komēs* was one of his administrators, cf. Jordanov, Corpus 43-60. Thus, both had nothing to do with Byzantine functionaries within the Delta.

99 Symeon Logothetes, Chronicon 131, 11-12 (236, 85-90 Wahlgren): ἐποίησαν οὖν βουλὴν ὁ λαὸς σὺν γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις ἐξελεῖν ἐν Ῥωμανίᾳ. ἐξελεθόντος δὲ Μιχαὴλ Βουλγάρου ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ ἤρξαντο διαπερᾶν σὺν ταῖς ὑποστάσεσιν αὐτῶν. μαθὼν δὲ ὁ κόμης τοῦτο ἀντεπέρασε πολεμῶσιν αὐτούς. ἀπογόντες οὖν οἱ Μακεδόνες ἐποίησαν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν τὸν τε Τζάντζην καὶ τὸν Κορδύλην καὶ συμβαλόντες πόλεμον ἀπέκτειναν πολλούς, τινὰς δὲ καὶ ἐκράτησαν. – Brezeanu, La Bulgarie d'au delà de l'Ister 128-129.

100 For Hungarian presence in the region north to the Danube Delta, see Spinei, Great Migrations 47.

101 Symeon Logothetes, Chronicon 131, 11-12 (236-237, 91-108 Wahlgren): οἱ δὲ μὴ δυνηθέντες περᾶσαι Βουλγάρου προσερρήσαν τοῖς Οὐγγροῖς, ἀναγγεῖλντες αὐτοῖς πάντα τὰ τῶν Μακεδόνων. ἦλθον δὲ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τοῦ βασιλέως πρὸς τὸ ἀναλαβεῖσθαι αὐτούς καὶ ἀγαγεῖν ἐν τῇ πόλει. παρευθὲ δὲ ἀνεφάνησαν Οὐννοὶ τῷ πλήθει ἄπειροι. οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες αὐτούς μετὰ δακρύων ἐβδὼν λέγοντες· ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰγίου Ἀδριανοῦ βοήθει ἡμῖν· καὶ παρετάσσοντο πρὸς συμβολὴν πολέμου. οἱ δὲ Τοῦρκοι εἶπον πρὸς αὐτούς· δότε ἡμῖν τὴν ὑπαρξὴν ὑμῶν πᾶσαν καὶ ἀπέλαθε, ὅπου καὶ βούλεσθε. οἱ δὲ τοῦτο οὐ κατεδέξαντο, ἀλλὰ παρατεταγμένοι ὑπῆρχον ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ ἤρξαντο εἰς τὰ πλοῖα αὐτῶν εἰσερχέσθαι. θαασάμενοι δὲ τοῦτο οἱ Τοῦρκοι συνέβαλον πόλεμον ἀπὸ ὥρας πέμπτης μέχρις ἑσπέρας, καὶ τραπὲν τὸ ἔθνος κατεδίωκον αὐτούς οἱ Μακεδόνες. καὶ τῇ ἐπιούσῃ ἡμέρᾳ βουλομένων αὐτῶν ὑποχωρῆσαι ἀνεφάνησαν πάλιν Οὐννοὶ πρὸς τὸ πολεμῆσαι αὐτούς. ἀναστὰς δὲ Μακεδὼν νεώτερος ὀνόματι Λέων ἐκ γένους τῶν Γομοστῶν, ὃς μετὰ ταῦτα γέγονεν ἑταιρειάρχης, καὶ ἕτεροι ὀνομαστοὶ τῶν Μακεδόνων ἔτρεψαν αὐτούς καὶ ἐξήλσαν καὶ ὑποστρέψαντες εἰσήλθον εἰς τὰ πλοῖα καὶ ἀπεσώθησαν πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα καὶ φιλοτιμηθέντες παρ' αὐτοῦ ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Μακεδονίαν εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν χώραν.

If we accept that the unnamed river was the Ialomița in Muntenia, it is hard to explain how the Bulgarian *komēs* could not cross the river but succeeded in calling the Hungarians who lived in the area behind the Byzantines. Placing the events within the Delta would explain the sequence of events in a better way – the refugees may have crossed one of the Danube branches to reach the ships sent from Constantinople. Thus, the Bulgars could not prevent them from getting on the vessels after having been defeated, but they could easily contact the Hungarians living in Budjak to the north of the river.

The episode with the transportation of Byzantine war captives from the area of the Lower Danube to Byzantium is not the last case when the Empire used ships sent from Constantinople for military operations in the Danube Delta. In 893, Leo VI transferred the Bulgarian markets from Constantinople to Thessaloniki. By doing so, the Emperor harmed the trade interests of his northern neighbours¹⁰². After Simeon's request for their return to the capital remained unanswered, he attacked Thrace and defeated the imperial army¹⁰³. The Byzantines were at that time at war with the Arabs, thus lacking troops to launch a large-scale offensive in the Balkans. Although the land army under the command of Nicephorus Phocas marched against Bulgaria, the main attack against the enemy had to be carried out by the Hungarians in the North. According to Symeon Logothetes and Theophanes Continuatus, Leo VI sent the *droungarios* Eustathius to the Danube, charged with the transfer of the Hungarian cavalry to the south of the river where it was meant to attack Simeon from the rear¹⁰⁴. We find some interesting details about these events in *De administrando imperio* written by Constantine Porphyrogenitus¹⁰⁵. The Bulgarians tried to organize their defence in the area of the Delta by building mantlets that had to prevent the Hungarians from getting to the southern

riverbank. The mantlets seem to have worked at the beginning because the first attempt of the Hungarians to cross the Danube failed. Therefore, the Hungarians were forced to wait for assistance – when the Byzantine navy arrived, three sailors leapt down from one of the ships and cut the mantlets down¹⁰⁶. Božilov assumes that these mantlets stretched from one Danube bank to the other¹⁰⁷, but this makes it difficult to explain why the Hungarians who were standing on the opposite side of the river could not overcome such an obstacle by just cutting its northern end down and instead had to wait for Byzantine help. All of this does point to another explanation – the mantlets could have been built in vulnerable places on the southern bank of the Danube, where the Hungarians may have passed through without using Byzantine vessels.

Thus, the way for the Hungarian horsemen was opened and they crossed the Danube on Byzantine ships. In three battles, the Hungarians defeated Simeon and made him retreat behind the walls of Dorostolon (or in Mundraga, according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus¹⁰⁸), from where he organized his counterattack using the assistance of the Pechenegs¹⁰⁹. The combined assault of the Bulgarians and the Pechenegs on the Hungarian settlements in Budjak was so ferocious that it caused the migration of the Magyars under the leadership of Arpad to Pannonia¹¹⁰.

The Tenth Century

The Hungarian migration to the West caused the establishment of the Pechenegs in the region to the north of the Danube Delta. Thus, they became the next possible ally of Byzantium with the potential to be used against Bulgaria. The Byzantines did not have to wait long, since the wars of Simeon provided them with a good excuse to organize

102 On trade between Byzantium and Bulgaria from the 8th to the 10th century, cf. Ferluga, *Handel nach dem Norden* 619-629. – Simeonova, *Tärgovija*.

103 Theophanes Continuatus VI 1, 9 (357, 12-23-358, 1-7 Bekker). – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 133, 15-16 (275-276, 82-100 Wahlgren). – John Scylitzes, *Synopsis* 175-176, 75-95 (Thurn). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XVI 12, 15-18 (III 442, 9-17 Büttner-Wobst). – For a historical background, see Tougher, *Leo VI*, 172-180. – Božilov, *Simeon Veliki*.

104 Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 133, 17 (276, 100-105 Wahlgren): οὗς ἰδὼν ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ θυμωθεὶς ἀπέστειλε Νικήταν τὸν ἐπιλεγόμενον Σκληρὸν μετὰ δρομῶνων ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ Δανουβίῳ δοῦναι δῶρα τοῖς Τούρκοις καὶ πρὸς πόλεμον κινήσει κατὰ Συμεῶν. ὁ δὲ ἀπελθὼν καὶ συντυχῶν ταῖς κεφαλαῖς Ἀρπάδῃ καὶ Κουσάνῃ καὶ συνθεμένων πολεμῆσαι λαβῶν ὄψιδας ἦλθε πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα. – Theophanes Continuatus VI 1, 9 (358, 7-12 Bekker). – John Scylitzes, *Synopsis* 176, 1-6; 177, 14-19 (Thurn). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XVI 12, 19-23 (III 442, 17-443, 1-11 Büttner-Wobst). – Leo VI, *Taktika* XVIII 40 (452, 215-220 Dennis): καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἡμετέρων δυνάμεων κατὰ Σαρακηνῶν ἀσχολουμένων Τούρκους ἡ θεῖα πρόνοια ἀντὶ Ῥωμαίων κατὰ Βουλγάρων ἐστράτευσε, πλοῖμου στόλου τῆς ἡμῶν βασιλείας τὸν Ἰστρον αὐτοῦς διαπεράσαντός τε καὶ συμμαχήσαντος, καὶ τὸν κακῶς κατὰ Χριστιανῶν ὀπλισθέντα Βουλγάρων στρατὸν τρισὶ μάχαις κατὰ κράτος νενικήκotas. – *Annales Fuldenses* ad A. 896 (129 Kurze): *Pacem ergo Greci eodem anno cum Avaris, qui dicuntur Ungari, facientes; quod eorum concives Bulgari in pravum vertentes hostili expeditione contra eos insurgunt et omnem regionem illorum usque portam Constantinopolitanam devastando insecuntur. Quod ad ulciscendum Greci astucia sua naves illorum contra Avaros mittunt ac eos in regnum Bulgarorum ultra Danuvium transponunt. Illi transpositi manu cum valida gentem Bulgarorum ingressi maximam partem cedendo neci tradiderunt.* –

Dimitrov, *Bulgaria and the Magyars*. – Božilov/Gjuzelev, *Istorija na Dobrudža* II 60-62.

105 For the work and its author, see Belke/Soustal, *De administrando imperio* 41-60.

106 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 51 (250-252, 110-120 Moravcsik/Jenkins): Οὗτος οὖν ὁ Συμεῶν, ὁ ἀρχων Βουλγαρίας, μαθὼν τὴν τοῦ πλωῖμου πρὸς τὸν ποταμὸν ἄφιξιν, καὶ ὅτι μέλλει τὸ πλωῖμον τοὺς Τούρκους κατ' αὐτοῦ περᾶσαι, ἐποίησεν λέσας, ἦτοι πλοκοῦς ἰσχυροῦς πᾶνυ καὶ στερεμνίους, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι τοὺς Τούρκους ἀντιπερνᾶν, δι' ἣν ἐπίνοιαν καὶ ἐκωλύθησαν οἱ Τούρκοι τὸ πρῶτον περᾶσαι. Ὁ οὖν προρρηθεὶς Μιχαὴλ ὁ Βαρκαλᾶς μετὰ καὶ ἄλλων δύο πλωῖμων ἀναλαβόμενοι τὰ σκουτάρια καὶ σπαθία αὐτῶν, ἀνδρείω καὶ βωμαλέω ὀρμήματι ἐκπηδήσαντες τοῦ χελανδίου, κατέκοψαν τὰς λέσας, ἦτοι τοὺς πλοκοῦς, καὶ ἦνοιξαν τὸν πόρον τοὺς Τούρκους. – *Ahrweiler, Byzance et la mer* 88. – *On Iesai*, cf. LBG II/1 928. – Litavrin, *Kekavmen* 429, n. 356.

107 Božilov/Gjuzelev, *Istorija na Dobrudža* II 62.

108 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 40 (174-176, 7-12 Moravcsik/Jenkins): Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα παρὰ Λέοντος, τοῦ φιλοχρίστου καὶ ἀοιδίμου βασιλέως, προσκληθέντες διεπέρασαν, καὶ τὸν Συμεῶν πολεμήσαντες κατὰ κράτος αὐτὸν ἦττησαν, καὶ ἐξέλασαντες μέχρι τῆς Πρεσθλάβου διήλθον, ἀποκλείσαντες αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ κάστρον τὸ λεγόμενον Μουνδράγα, καὶ εἰς τὴν ἴδιαν χώραν ὑπέστρεψαν. – *On Mundraga*, cf. Beševliev, *Mundraga* 17-21.

109 On Bulgaria and the Hungarians in the late 9th century, cf. Dimitrov, *Bulgaria and the Magyars*. – Todorov, *Value of Empire* 317-321.

110 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 40 (176, 13-27 Moravcsik/Jenkins). – Regino Prumiensis abbas, *Chronica* ad A. 889 (131-133 Kurze). – Spinei, *Great Migrations* 52-53.

a coalition against him. In 917, Empress Zoe Carbonopsina undertook a large-scale campaign in the Balkans. Peace was signed with the Arabs, so the army from Asia Minor crossed the Straits and headed to Bulgaria. Apart from that, the Byzantines tried to win the assistance of Simeon's neighbours, which included the Serbian ruler of Raška Petar Gojniković, and the Pechenegs¹¹¹. The *stratēgos* of Chersonesus, John Bogas, offered the government in Constantinople to persuade the Pechenegs to join the alliance against Simeon¹¹². Their leaders agreed and the Byzantine navy was sent to the Danube under the command of Romanus Lecapenus¹¹³. According to the Byzantine historians, the negotiations failed because John Bogas and Romanus Lecapenus argued in the presence of the Pechenegs, who broke the alliance with Byzantium¹¹⁴. The fleet had to sail back to Constantinople, which caused some troubles to its commander, Romanus Lecapenus, as he was accused of not having helped the Byzantine troops who retreated after the battle of Achelous in August 917¹¹⁵.

The trans-border location of the Danube Delta and its good waterway connections were the reason why the region was involved not only in military campaigns but was also a centre of intense trade activity¹¹⁶. Describing the so-called »Route from the Varangians to the Greeks« in his work *De administrando imperio*, Constantine Porphyrogenitus remarks that one of the Danube arms called Selina (modern Sulina) was the border between the Pechenegs and Bulgaria; after crossing it the Varangian sailors, who were under the constant threat of being attacked by the Pechenegs, had nothing more to fear on their way to Constantinople¹¹⁷. Another source, the *Russian Primary Chronicle (Povest' vremennych let)*, describes a place on the Lower Danube where trading took place on the eve of Svyatoslav's Balkan campaigns

in the late 960s¹¹⁸. This was the so-called Pereyaslavets or Preslavitsa, identified by the fortress excavated near the Romanian commune of Nufăru¹¹⁹, where the Byzantines established one of their *kommerkia* in the 11th century¹²⁰. The *Russian Primary Chronicle* has preserved what is believed to have been Svyatoslav's answer to his mother Olga's appeal to come back to Kiev: »I do not care to remain in Kiev, but should prefer to live in Pereyaslavets on the Danube, since that is the centre of my realm, where all riches are concentrated; gold, silks, wine and various fruits from Greece, silver and horses from Hungary and Bohemia, and from the Rus' furs, wax, honey, and slaves«¹²¹. The same source informs us that when Svyatoslav landed on the Danube bank in 968 and 969, he took the town of Preslavitsa after having fought against Bulgarian troops¹²².

De thematibus and the Byzantine Lists of Precedence

The reports by the Byzantine historians on imperial maritime activity around the Danube Delta from the 8th to the late 10th century attest that military campaigns in that part of the Balkans were carried out or were at least supposed to have been carried out by naval forces sent from Constantinople and not by a fleet based in one of the Danube branches. There is another group of sources that remain silent about Byzantine administration in the area of the Danube Delta before 971. The first author is Constantine Porphyrogenitus. In his work *De thematibus* he describes the Byzantine administration in the Balkans, Asia Minor, and Italy and on the Chersonesus. In the Balkans, he mentions only *themata* located in the southern part of the peninsula – Thrace, Mac-

111 Božilov, Simeon Veliki. – Todorov, Value of Empire 323-325.

112 For further details on this person, see Zuckerman, Pontic Policy 221-223. – PmbZ II 3, # 22911.

113 Symeon Logothetes, Chronicon 135, 21 (305, 156-161 Wahlgren): ἀπεστάλη δὲ τότε καὶ Ῥωμανὸς πατρικίος, δρουγγάριος ὢν τοῦ πλοῖμου, μετὰ παντὸς τοῦ στόλου ἐν τῷ Δανουβίῳ ποταμῷ βοηθήσων Λέοντι τῷ Φωκῆ, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἰωάννη ὁ Βωγᾶς καταγαγεῖν Πατζινάκας, ὡς εἰρηται, κελυθεύοντος τοῦ δρουγγαρίου Ῥωμανοῦ διαπεράσαι τούτους κατὰ Βουλγάρων, ὥστε συμμαχησαί Λέοντι τῷ Φωκῆ. – Theophanes Continuatus VI 3, 10 (389, 20-22 Bekker). – John Scylitzes, Synopsis 204, 18-25 (Thurn). – John Zonaras, Epitome XVI 17, 1-3 (III 464, 10-17-465, 1-2 Büttner-Wobst).

114 A more plausible reason for the failure of the Pecheneg assistance may have been the activity of Bulgarian diplomacy, which probably tried to break up the dangerous alliance between Constantinople and the horsemen from the steppes. According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus and Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus, the Bulgars were interested in maintaining good relations with their north-eastern neighbour, cf. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 5 (52, 3-13 Moravcsik/Jenkins). – Nicholas Mysticus, Letter 9 (58, 109-112 Jenkins/Westerink): καὶ τοσοῦτον τὸ πρᾶγμα σπουδάζεται Βουλγάρους, ὥστε καὶ γάμου κοινωγία τῶν οἰκείων παιδῶν σπουδάζειν ἐνώσει καὶ συνδήσει τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς συμμαχίαν Πατζηνακτικῶν. – Božilov, Bălgarija i pečenezite 52. – Spinei, Great Migrations 116. – Mladjov, Trans-Danubian Bulgaria 92-95.

115 Dimitrov, Western Black Sea Coast 321-323.

116 Paraschiv-Talmațchi/Talmațchi, Considerations. – Grecu, Bulgaria în Nordul Dunării 225-226.

117 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 9 (62, 92-99 Moravcsik/Jenkins): πάλιν ἀποκοινοῦντες ἔρχονται εἰς τὸν Σελινᾶν, εἰς τὸ τοῦ Δανουβίου ποταμοῦ λεγόμενον παρακλάδιον. Καὶ ἕως οὗ διεῖθθησι τὸν Σελινᾶν

ποταμόν, παρατρέχουσι αὐτοῖς οἱ Πατζινάκται. Καὶ ἐὰν πολλάκις ἡ θάλασσα μονόζυλον εἰς τὴν γῆν ἀπορρίψη, σκαλώνουσιν ὅλα, ἵνα τοῖς Πατζινάκταις ἀντιπαραταχῶσιν ὁμοῦ. Ἀπὸ δὲ τὸν Σελινᾶν οὐ φοβοῦνται τινα, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῆς Βουλγαρίας γῆν ἐνδυσάμενοι, εἰς τὸ τοῦ Δανουβίου στόμιον ἔρχονται. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Δανουβίου καταλαμβάνουσιν εἰς τὸν Κωνσταντῖνον, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Κωνσταντῖνου εἰς τὸν Κωνσταντῖνον. – Cf. the commentary in Litavrin/Novosel'cev, *Ob upravlenii imperiej 291-332*, especially notes 57-58 on pp. 328-329. – Litavrin, Drevnjaja Rus. – Kostova, Settlement Patterns 31-32. – For further details about the route, see *Povest' vremennych let* 29-31 (Lichačev). – Ferluga, Handel nach dem Norden 625; 629-642. – Howard-Johnston, *De Administrando Imperio*. – Simeonova, Putešestvie.

118 Cf. Andronic, Români.

119 The main bibliography may be found in Madgearu, Byzantine Military Organization. – On the identification, cf. Damian/Andonie/Vasile, Nufăru. – For other identifications concerning the location, such as Noviodunum (Isaccea), see Kostova, Settlement Patterns 34. – For coin circulation in the medieval settlement in Nufăru, see Mănucu-Adameșteanu, Circulația monetară. – For Byzantine artefacts, see Mănucu-Adameșteanu et al., Descoperiri.

120 For the seals, see Oikonomides, Presthlavitzza.

121 *Povest' vremennych let* A.M. 6477 (50 Lichačev): Рече Святославъ къ матерени своєй и къ бояромъ своимъ: »Не люблю ми естъ в Кіевѣ быти, хощю жити в Перєяславци на Дунаи, яко то естъ середѣ земли моеѣ, яко туъ всѣ блага сходятъ: отъ Грекъъ злато, поволоки, вина и овошье разнородныя, изъ Чехъ же, изъ Угоръ серебро и комонн, изъ Русъ же скорѣ и воскъ, медъ и челядь«. The English translation is the one of Cross/Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle* 86. – For Varangian artefacts found in Nufăru, see Damian/Vasile, Varangians.

122 *Povest' vremennych let* A.M. 6475 and 6479 (48 and 52 Lichačev). – Cross/Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle* 84 and 87. – Barnea, La Danube 586.

edonia, Thessalonike, Strymon (actually a *kleisura*), Hellas, Peloponnesus, Cephalenia, Nicopolis and Dyrrhachion¹²³. We find the same data in the Byzantine *Lists of Precedence* edited by Nikolaos Oikonomides. Both *Taktikon of Uspenskij* (842-843)¹²⁴ and *Taktikon of Benešević* (934-944)¹²⁵ and the so-called *Kletorologion of Philotheos* (899)¹²⁶ mention only the *stratēgoi* of Thrace, Macedonia and Chersonesus but they say nothing about a *stratēgos* of Lykostomion or of an alleged *thema* in the northern part of Dobruja in the 9th or 10th century¹²⁷. The situation changes when we look at the *Taktikon*, which Oikonomides discovered in Spain and edited under the name of *Taktikon Escorialensis*. It dates back to the middle of the 970s and attests a *stratēgos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis (the new name of the former Bulgarian capital Preslav conquered by John Tzimiskes in 971) and a *thema* called *Mesopotamia tēs Dyseōs*, located in the northern part of Dobruja¹²⁸.

Geographical Position and Climate

It is easier to understand the political history of the Lower Danube in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages if we consider the geographical position of the Danube Delta, which seems to have been crucial for Roman and Byzantine defence strategies at the Lower Danube¹²⁹. The Roman province of Scythia Minor is a natural continuation of the steppe region lying in the North and is characterized by a continental climate and very low winter temperatures¹³⁰. The cold climate

during the winter is a topic we find in the works of some Late Antique authors. In one of his speeches to Emperor Julian, Libanius speaks of the thin ice on the Danube as the only reason for the Empire's safety in earlier ages¹³¹. We can find the explanation for this statement in the work of a 5th-century theologian. Pseudo-Caesarius says in his *Dialogues* that the severe frost caused the river to freeze. According to him, the ice could have been so thick that it allowed the passing over of thousands of horsemen¹³².

Some may call it simply rhetorical, but the information we get from the works of different historians reporting on the environmental conditions in the northern and north-western region of the Black Sea confirms the remarks of Libanius and Pseudo-Caesarius. In his description of the Black Sea, Ammianus Marcellinus says that the sea itself froze up because of the high amount of sweet water pouring into it from the rivers of what is nowadays Eastern Europe and Russia¹³³. As a child, the Byzantine historian Theophanes played on the pieces of an iceberg, that had built up due to the severe cold in the northern and north-western regions of the Black Sea, eventually floating towards the Bosphorus and crushing the seaside walls of Constantinople¹³⁴. There is one account in the *Church history* of Philostorgius that reveals what happened when invaders, coming from the North, succeeded in taking advantage of the frozen Danube Delta. According to him, unnamed Barbarians crossed the frozen river in the winter of 384/385 and conquered the easternmost Roman town of the Limes, Halmyris (modern Murighiol)¹³⁵. Thanks to the Latin Life of two Early Christian Saints, Epictetus and Astion,

123 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus* II 1-9 (84-94 Pertusi). – The hypothesis of Barnea, Dobrogea 206-207, shared by Rădulescu, Români 79-80 and Damian, *Prezența politică bizantină 287-288*, that Constantine IV established the *thema* of Thrace comprising territories on the Lower Danube from which the later *thema* of Paristrion developed, bases on a misinterpretation of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus* II 1 (84, 19-23 Pertusi): Διασαπίσης δὲ τῆς σαγῆνης, ὡς εἶπομεν, καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐκπορθησάντων τὰς πόλεις, εἰς μικρὰ τμήματα διηρέθη ἡ τῆς Θράκης ἀρχή· ἡ τε γὰρ Βουλγαρία καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰστρος καὶ τὸ περιώνυμον ὄρος τὸ διήκον ἄχρι τοῦ Πόντου, τὸ καλούμενον Αἶμος τῆς Θράκης εἰσι μέρη, νυκὶ δὲ ἀλλότρια χρηματίζουσι. The toponyms in the passage are an attempt to explain the names of the Late Roman provinces of Moesia II Inferior, Scythia Minor and Haemimontus within the diocese of Thrace through toponyms familiar to the reader of the 10th century, cf. Ditten, *Thrakien* 164-165; 177-179. Moreover, the text clearly says that since Constantine's reign the territories between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains were beyond the authority of Constantinople, cf. the critical remarks of Madgearu, *Continuitate și discontinuitate culturală 146-147* on Barnea's hypothesis. – On the foundation of the *thema* Thrace, cf. Lillie, *Thrakien und Thrakesion*. – Soustal, *Thrakien* 76. – Leontsine, *Konstantinos* 145-150.

124 *Taktikon Uspenskij* 49, 8-9; 57, 13 (Oikonomides).

125 *Taktikon Benešević* 247, 8-9, 30 (Oikonomides).

126 *Kletorologion of Philotheos* 101, 15-16, 30 (Oikonomides).

127 On this topic, see Damian, *Prezența politică bizantină 289-293*.

128 *Taktikon Escorialensis* 263, 29; 265, 9; 267, 10 (Oikonomides). – Oikonomides, *La Mésopotamie de l'Occident*.

129 For an overview on climate in Byzantium, see Teleles, *Meteorologica phainomena*. – Teleles, *Climatic Fluctuations*.

130 Cf. *DNP Suppl.* 11, S. 622-623. – For a discussion on the modern landscape of Dobruja and the ancient geography of Scythia Minor, see Oračev, *Prinosi* 32.

131 Libanius, *Orations* LIX 90 (IV 253, 8-12 Foerster): γνοίη δ' ἂν τις, εἰ παραθεῖη τῇ νῦν ἀπὸ Σκυθῶν ἀδεία τὰς προτέρας καταδρομάς, πρὸς ἃς ἀντιβλέπειν μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, μίας δὲ εὐχῆς τυγχάνουσιν ἐγγίγνετο σώζεσθαι. αὐτῇ δὲ ἦν μὴ παγήνηαι βέβαιον ἐν Ἰστροῦ κρύσταλλον, ὥστε καὶ ἐπελθεῖν ὑπάρχειν.

132 Pseudo-Caesarius, *Eroutapokriseis* 67 (57, 11-19 Riedinger): θεὰ δὲ μοι ἐναργέστερον ὑπόδειγμα περὶ τοῦ στερεώματος, οὐ τέχνη βροτῶν, ἀλλὰ θεία βουλή συνιστάμενον καὶ οἰοεὶ διδασκαλεῖον ἡμῖν προκείμενον, τὸν ἓνα τῶν τεττάρων ἐκ τῆς ἐν παραδείσῳ κρήνης βρόντων ποταμῶν, τὸν Φησῶνα παρὰ τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς γραφῇ, παρ' Ἑλληνῶν δὲ Οἶστρον, παρὰ δὲ Ῥωμαίοις Δανούβιον, παρὰ δὲ Γόθθοις Δούναυν προσαγορευόμενον· χειμῶνος πηγνυμένου καὶ εἰς λιθώδη ἀντιτυπίαν μερισταμένης τῆς μαλακῆς τοῦ ρείθρου φύσεως, ὡς οἶαν τε φέρον ἐπιπορευόμενων πολεμίων καὶ πρὸς τὰ Ῥωμαίων Ἰλλυρία τε καὶ Θράκη μέρη διαφοιτούντων πλῆθος, οὕτω τοι καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος παγὲν στερέωμα ὑποκλύζεται μὲν τῷ ὑποκριθέντι ρείθρῳ, ὑπερστέγει δὲ ἵππον καὶ ἀναβάτην ἐν χιλιάσιν δέκα πολλακίς ὀρώμενον.

133 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXII 8, 48 (III 32, 13-16 Seyfarth): *Quidquid autem eiusdem Pontici sinus aquilone caeditur et pruinis, ita praestrigitur gelu, ut nec annium cursus subteruolui credantur nec per infidum et labile solum gressus hominis possit uel iumentum firmari, quod uitium numquam mare sincerum, sed permixtum aquis amnicis temptat.* – Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon* ad 401 (8 Croke): *Maris Pontici superficies ita gelu frenata est, ut per triginta dies solute tandem glacies instar montium per Propontidem superne portata decurreret.*

134 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6255 (434, 6-435, 5 de Boor). – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 74 (144-148, 1-49 Mango). – Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* 122, 11 (191-192, 116-132 Wahlgren). – Georgios Monachos, *Chronicon* IX 34 (II 758, 11-759, 6 de Boor). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XV 7, 1-7 (III 272, 8-273, 11 Büttner-Wobst). – Teleles, *Meteorologica phainomena* I 342-351.

135 Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* X 6, 2 (I 402, 52-53 Bleckmann/Stein): ἀλλ' ἡ μὲν Ἄλμυρις κρυσταλλωθέντος τοῦ Ἰστροῦ ὑπὸ τῶν διαβάντων αὐτὸν βαρβάρων ἀλίσκεται. – Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, *Historia ecclesiastica* XII 29 (PG 146, 840 A-B). – Teleles, *Meteorologica phainomena* I 126-127 (with a different chronology). – On chronology, cf. Madgearu, *Barbarian Invasions* 175. – Wolfram, *Goten* 141 assumes that these Barbarians may have been Goths. – On Halmyris, cf. Suceveanu et al., *Halmyris* I 79-114. – Zahariade/Alexandrescu, *Inscriptions from Halmyris* 1-20. – Zahariade, *Environmental Archaeology* 39-51.

who were killed in Halmyris at the very end of the 3rd century¹³⁶, as well as numerous inscriptions on votive altars commissioned by Roman veterans, we have some data about the maritime activity in the area of the town¹³⁷. Archaeological findings such as ceramics, especially amphoras produced in Italy, North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and the West Pontic towns, attest to the role of Halmyris' harbour in trade activity at the easternmost point of the Danube border of the Byzantine Empire before the 7th century¹³⁸. Although the settlement had a harbour, its inhabitants were obviously helpless in times of great cold when the water of the river froze, and the Byzantine ships could do nothing against the horsemen who wanted to cross the Danube.

Bearing in mind the information about the environment of the Danube Delta in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages we can see how vulnerable Byzantine defence was in the north-easternmost region of the Balkans. The combination of a marshy area, shallow waters and sometimes extremely low winter temperatures could become a real threat for a province the borders of which were the next station for people coming from the North Black Sea region¹³⁹; to mention a few, the Goths in 376¹⁴⁰, the Huns in 394/395¹⁴¹, the Kutrigurs in 539/540¹⁴² and 559 (crossing the frozen Danube)¹⁴³ and the Avars in 562/563¹⁴⁴, not all of whom had the intention of crossing the Limes with the permission of Constantinople. It seems that Barbarians also realized where the Achilles' heel of Byzantine defences on the Lower Danube laid, if we consider the words of the Turkic Khagan Turxanthos to a Byzantine mission in 576. His remarks are quoted by Menander Protector: »As for you, Romans, why do you take my envoys

through the Caucasus to Byzantium, alleging that there is no other route for them to travel? You do this so that I might be deterred from attacking the Roman Empire by the difficult terrain. But I know very well where the river Danapris flows, and the Danube and the Hebrus, and from where our slaves, the Uarkhonitai, crossed into Roman territory. I know your strength. For the whole world is open to me from the farthest East to the very western edge«¹⁴⁵.

Byzantium was aware of the threat that might come from the North and easily reach as far as the hinterland of its own capital. Thus, the Empire organized a complex defence system in the eastern part of the Diocese of Thrace (Scythia Minor, Moesia Inferior and Haemimontus), the first line of which was preserved for the Danubian fleet¹⁴⁶. As we have seen, the Byzantines had a naval base within the Delta called in the *Notitia Dignitatum* Plateypegiis and had at their disposal special ships built to operate in the marshy area of the Danube mouth. Furthermore, we know from the *Codex Theodosianus*¹⁴⁷ and Justinian's *Novellae*¹⁴⁸ that both Emperor Theodosius II and Justinian I tried to reorganize the forces of the Byzantine Danubian fleet in the 5th and the 6th century to improve its efficiency¹⁴⁹. But the role of the fleet should not be taken out of the context of Byzantine defence strategy in the Balkans. The fact that only one Barbarian assault was stopped by the Danubian fleet, when the *potamiai nēes* arranged in three lines by Promotus defeated the boats of the Greuthungi led by Odotheus during a night assault in 386, shows that relying only on the strength of naval forces alone was not enough for an effective defence of the river¹⁵⁰. Thus, the support by land troops stationed in the forts at the final

136 Vita SS Epicteti et Astionis 9, 25, 33 (AASS Julii II, 542 D, 545 F-546 B, 547 F): *et descendentes navim, in Scytharum fines ingressi sunt, atque in Almiridensium civitatem devenerunt, ubi nullus erat, qui eos vel eorum patriam posset agnoscere... Igitur cum in urbe Almiridensium sancti Martyres hæc tormenta pro Christi nomine tolerarent, quidam peregrinus quodam die videns beatissimum Astionem ante tribunal iudicis consistentem, et cognoscens, quis cuiusque generis haberetur, festinanter navigans in partibus Orientis descendit... Et egressi cum tribus pueris de domo sua, navim protinus conscenderunt, et navigare cœperunt, ut in Scytharum terram, atque in Almiridensium civitatem devenirent... Rogo igitur te, frater charissime, festina descendere ad portum, et suscipe eos in domum tuam, atque per omnia consolare eos, eo quod propter me valida sunt tristitia macerati: sed et in postremo de Salvatoris nostri fide, atque diversis magnalibus facias eos monere. Hæc et plura horum audiens Vigilantius, dedit gloriam Deo: et statim cum festinatione ad fluvium descendit. Et ecce, circa horam tertiam cernit naviculam parvam subito applicuisse ad portum. Cumque egressi de navi epibatæ a fuissent, cœperunt a circumstantibus ibidem viris sollicite inquirere, si aliquis eorum aliquando audisset ibidem, aut vidisset juvenem, Astion nomen habentem.* – Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* X 6, 1 (I 400-402, 47-52 Bleckmann/Stein). – Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, *Historia ecclesiastica* XII 29 (PG 146, 840 A-B). – On the Vita, cf. Madgearu, *Data pătimirii*.

137 Zahariade/Alexandrescu, *Inscriptions from Halmyris* 28-38.

138 Topoleanu, *Ceramica* 128-158. – Topoleanu, *Pottery from Halmyris*. – Suceveanu et al., *Halmyris I* 190-237.

139 Barnea, *La Danube* 577-579.

140 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXXI 4, 9 (IV 254, 33-256, 16 Seyfarth). – Wolfram, *Goten*: 125-127.

141 Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII 25, 1 (383, 14-16 Bidez). – Zahariade, *Scythia Minor* 28. – Madgearu, *Barbarian Invasions* 176.

142 Procopius of Caesarea, *Bella* II 4, 8-9 (I 163, 23-164, 9 Haury/Wirth). – Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* 82-83 (Witakowski). – Meier, *Zeitalter Justinians* 662-663, n. 56.

143 Agathias, *Historiae* V 11, 5-6 (177, 17-28 Keydell). – Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6051 (233, 4-234, 7 de Boor). – Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* IX 33 (II 269, 10-12 Chabot). – Ziemann, *Wandervolk* 99-100. – Kislinger, *Angriff*.

144 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* V 1 (196, 1-18 Bidez/Parmentier). – Menander Protector, *Fragmenta* V 4 (50-52, 1-22 Blockley). – Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* III 282-302 (69-70 Cameron). – Pohl, *Awaren* 40-43.

145 Menander Protector, *Fragmenta* XIX 1 (174, 75-85 Blockley): «Ὑμεῖς δέ, ὦ Ῥωμαῖοι, τί δῆτα ἄρα τοὺς κατ' ἐμὲ πρέσβεις διὰ τοῦ Καυκάσου ὁδοιποροῦντας ἐπὶ τὸ Βυζάντιον ἄγετε, ὡς ἐμὲ φάσκοντες μὴ εἶναι ἕτεραν ἀτραπὸν, δι' ἧς αὐτοῖς ἔσται ἡ πορεία; ταῦτα δὲ ἐπιτελεῖτε, ὡς ἀπίστοιμι διὰ τὰς δυσχωρίας ἐπιθέσθαι τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείᾳ. πλὴν ἔγωγε ἐξέπισταμαι μάλα ἀκριβῶς ὅσοι τε ὁ Δάναπρις ποταμὸς, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ Ἰστρος ἔνθα καταρρεῖ καὶ ἴνα ὁ Ἔβρος, ὅπῃθεν τε ἐπεραιώθησαν ἐς τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν τὸ ἡμέτερον δουλικὸν οἱ Οὐαρχωνῖται. οὐκ ἄγνοω τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς δύναμιν. ἐμοὶ γὰρ ὑποκέκλιται πᾶσα ἡ γῆ, ἀρχομένη μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἡλίου πρώτων ἀκτῶν, καταλήγουσα δὲ ἐς τὰ πέρατα τῆς ἐσπέρας.» – Pohl, *Awaren* 66-67.

146 For the Roman/Byzantine Danubian Limes, see Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae*. – Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema*. – Gajewska, *Topographie*. – Poulter, *Danubian Frontier*. – For the Danube fleet and its role in protecting the Limes, see Himmler, *Untersuchungen*. – Matei, *Considerații* 143-158. – On different techniques applied in building harbours in Scythia Minor, cf. Munteanu, *Porturile fluviale* 214-231.

147 *Codex Theodosianus* VII 17, 1 (343, 1-20 Mommsen).

148 *Novellae* XLI (262, 14-21 Schöll). – John Lydus, *De magistratibus* II 29, 1-2 (II 35-36 Schamp).

149 Bounegru/Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales* 35; 108.

150 Zosimus, *Historia nova* IV 35, 1 and 38-39, 1-3 (II/2 299, 6-15 and 303-305 Paschoud). – Claudian *IV Cons.* 619-637 (II/2 47-48 Charlet). – Himmler, *Untersuchungen* 151-156. – Barnea, *La Danube* 579. – Even in this battle the last line of Byzantine defence was built by land troops stationed on the southern riverbank.

part of the Danube was crucial for the Limes to maintain its function¹⁵¹. Winters may have been cold, and the fleet may not have been always able to stop the Barbarians but if the Empire had control over the hinterland, it could still re-establish its authority on the southern bank of the Danube¹⁵². The Avar and Slavic campaigns in the late 6th and in the first half of the 7th century resulted not only in the collapse of Byzantine defences in Moesia and Scythia Minor, but also caused a decline in urban life in the regions between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains. One example may be enough to illustrate the destiny of Late Antique towns in the Northern Balkans since the 7th century. It was already mentioned that after crossing the Danube the Bulgars of Asparukh settled in the former province of Scythia Minor and, according to Byzantine historians, reached »the so-called Varna near Odessos«¹⁵³. At the site of the ancient town, which was once a seat of the *Quaestura exercitus* responsible for sea communications in the region¹⁵⁴, archaeologists have found the remains of only three cottages dating back to the 10th and 11th century; archaeological evidence covering the entire period from the late 7th to the early 10th century was found to the West of Odessos¹⁵⁵. The lack of Byzantine garrisons in the forts on the southern bank of the Danube Delta during Constantine IV's campaign against Asparukh in 680 seems to explain why the Byzantines could not prevent the Bulgars from crossing the river and raiding the territories as far as Thrace although the fleet was lying at anchor in the area of the battle¹⁵⁶.

Conclusion

Having in mind the data we have analysed and the political history of the Northern Balkans at the end of the Late Antiquity one can see that **it was almost impossible for a Byzantine naval base in the area of the Danube Delta to withstand the turmoil of the Migration Period starting with the Goths in the 4th and ending with the Bulgars in the 7th century (to use Božilov's words¹⁵⁷), and to remain under imperial control before John Tzimiskes' campaign of 971.** This assumption does not mean that the region of the Lower Danube and its mouth was outside the sphere of interest of Byzantium¹⁵⁸. The vicinity of Constantinople where one part of the imperial navy had its base made it easy for the Byzantines to reach the Delta within a short period of time¹⁵⁹; moreover, they still had control over the Black Sea ports in Eastern Thrace such as Anchialos and Mesembria. Thus, it was not difficult for a navy to reach the Delta and surprise the northern neighbour, which, apart from that, obviously lacked any maritime forces in the Black Sea and was no threat for imperial ships¹⁶⁰. The strategy to divide the forces of its enemy by sending a fleet to the North, combined with the Bulgars having concentrated on building defences on the shore rather than constructing boats or ships, can explain why the main task of Byzantine vessels was to transport imperial armed forces (cavalry) or the troops of its allies in the steppes. The only time when the Empire had to rely on warships during a campaign in the North was in 971. However, at that time the main threat did not come from the Bulgarians but from the Rus' whose *monoxyla* forced Emperor John Tzimiskes to prepare battle-ships equipped with Greek fire, which laid at anchor in the Golden Horn and were sent to Dorostolon¹⁶¹. John Scylitzes

151 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXVI 6, 11 (IV 28, 4-9 Seyfarth). – Harhoiu, *Observații generale* 350.

152 *Codex Theodosianus* VII 16, 2 (342, 1-11 Mommsen). – Zosimus, *Historia nova* IV 35, 1 and IV 38-39, 1-3 (II/299, 6-15 and 303-305 Paschoud). – Claudian, *IV Cons.* 619-637 (II/2 Charlet). – Themistius, *Orationes* 10 (I 206, 15-24; 207, 1-19; 210, 8-11 Schenkl/Downey).

153 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (359, 5-12 de Boor): οἱ δὲ Βούλγαροι τοῦτο θεασάμενοι ἐπέδιωκον ὀπίσω αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς πλείστους ξίφει ἀνείλον, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐτραυμάτισαν. καὶ καταδιώξαντες αὐτοὺς μέχρι τοῦ Δανουβίου καὶ τούτων περάσαντες καὶ ἐλθόντες ἐπὶ τὴν λεγομένην Βάρναν πλησίον Ὀδύσσου καὶ τοῦ ἐκεῖσε μεσογαίου, τὸν τόπον ἐωρακότες ἐν πολλῇ ἀσφαλείᾳ διακειμένον, ἐκ μὲν τῶν ὄπισθεν διὰ τοῦ Δανουβίου ποταμοῦ, ἔμπροσθεν δὲ καὶ ἐκ πλαγίων διὰ κλεισούρων καὶ τῆς Ποντικῆς θαλάσσης. – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 36 (90, 17-23 Mango): οἱ δὲ Βούλγαροι ἐπιδόντες ἐπέδιωκον καρτερῶς, καὶ ὄσους μὲν τοῦ λαοῦ κατελάμβανον ἀνήρουν, πλείστους δὲ καὶ ἐτραυμάτιζον. περαιωθέντες δὲ τὸν Ἴστρον ἐπὶ τὴν λεγομένην Βάρναν πλησίον Ὀδύσσου καὶ τοῦ ὑπερκειμένου μεσογαίου, τὸ ὄχυρόν καὶ ἀσφαλὲς τοῦ τόπου πάντοθεν ἐκ τε τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ τῆς ἄγαν δυσχωρίας θεασάμενοι ἐνταῦθα σκηνοῦσι. – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV 21, 18 (III 227, 18-228, 2 Büttner-Wobst). – Pletnjov, *Varna* 103-134. – Pletnjov/Rusev, *Istorija na Varna* II 72-90.

154 *Novellae* XLI (262, 14-21 Schöll). – John Lydus, *De magistratibus* II 29, 1-2 (II 35-36 Schamp). – Gkoutzioukostas/Moniaros, *Quaestura Iustiniana Exercitus*. – Torbatov, *Quaestura Iustiniani Exercitus*. – Haldon, *Warfare* 68. – Barnea, *La Danube* 581-582.

155 Dimitrov, *Varna* 57-76. – Pletnjov, *Varna* 143-181, especially 153. – According to Lazarenko, *Numizmatični dani* 150-160, who built his hypothesis on numismatic data, Odessos had already suffered because of Barbarian assaults during the first half of the 7th century (perhaps in 614), when it may have been burned down by the Avars.

156 Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6171 (358, 11-20 de Boor). – Nicephorus Patriarches, *Breviarium* 36 (88-90, 1-5 Mango). – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV 21, 10 (III 226, 15-17-227, 1-3 Büttner-Wobst).

157 Božilov, *Istorija* I 218.

158 Stănescu, *Byzance et les Pays roumains* 394-395.

159 Bannikov/Morozov, *Istorija voennago flota* 285-293. – Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer* 102-107. – According to Dimitroukas, *Reisen und Verkehr* II 433-434, it took the ship bringing Pope Martin I to his exile three weeks to cover the sea route from Constantinople to Chersonesus. As the scholar remarks, it may have been the weather at that time of the year (the early spring of 654) that caused such a long travel. In the Late Middle Ages vessels powered by oars could reach the Bay of Burgas which lays more or less in the middle of the way from the Bosphorus to the Danube Delta within three days, cf. Todorova, *Istorijata* 37 and n. 53.

160 For the maritime activity in Early Medieval Bulgaria, see Rašev, Moreto. – Oračev, *Majstorstvo*. – Božilov, *Istorija* I 32-33. – Further details basing on accounts on Slavic *monoxyla* (dugouts) in Medieval sources can be found in Strässle, *Monoxylon*. – Havliková, *Slavic Ships*.

161 Leo the Deacon, *Historia* VIII 1 (129, 14-21 Hase): τὴν γοῦν μετ' ἐμπειρίας καὶ κόσμου τῶν τριηρῶν εἰρεσίαν καὶ ἄμιλλαν ὁ βασιλεὺς θεασάμενος (ἐτύγχανον δὲ ὑπὲρ τὰς τριακοσίας, συνάμα λέμβοις καὶ ἀκατίοις, ἃ νῦν γαλέας καὶ μονέρια κοινῶς ὀνομάζουσι), φιλοφρονησάμενος τε τοὺς ἐρέτας καὶ τὸ περὶ αὐτὰς στρατιωτικὸν ἀργυρίου διανομῆ, ἐς τὸν Ἴστρον ἐκπέμπε, τὸν τούτου πόρον φρουρήσοντας, ὡς μὴ ἐνὸν εἴη τοῖς Σκυθαῖς, ἐς τὴν σφῶν πατριδα ἐκπλεῖν καὶ τὸν Κιμμέριον Βόσπορον, εἶγε πρὸς φυγὴν ἀποκλίνοιν. – John Scylitzes, *Synopsis* 295, 7-10 (Thurn): ἐπεμελήθη δὲ καὶ τοῦ στόλου διὰ Λέοντος τοῦ μετὰ ταῦτα πρωτοβεστιαρίου, δρογγαρίου τότε τῶν πλωτῶν τυχάνοντος, τὰ μὲν παλαιὰ ἐπισκευάσας, κατασκευάσας δὲ καὶ ἄλλα καινὰ καὶ στόλον ἀξιόλογον καταστησάμενος. – John Zonaras, *Epitome* XVII 2, 16 (III 527, 7-9 Büttner-Wobst). – For the campaign, see Busetto, *Giovanni Tzimisce e Svjatoslav*. – Madgearu, *War of 971*. – Andronic, *Români*.

says that the emperor did not take the risk of attacking the town without the assistance of the fleet and waited for its arrival before he began the assault¹⁶².

Although the Barbarian incursions of the late 6th and the 7th century caused an enormous loss of territories in the Balkans, which slipped away from Byzantine administrative control, the Empire could easily strike back¹⁶³. One of the reasons why its tactics could lightly change from defensive to aggressive actions was the imperial navy. It is hard to believe that the campaign of 680, which is impressive in many ways, would have been carried out without the assistance

of the fleet. In the 8th and 9th century we can see that it was not a problem for Byzantine ships to reach the Danube Delta and operate in the back of Byzantium's northern neighbour. However, all these campaigns had their starting point in the capital of the Empire from whence the emperors sent their fleet. Taking this into account **one can assume that the existence of a Byzantine maritime province in the area of the Danube Delta before John Tzimiskes' campaign in 971**, who also started his operation against the Rus' by dispatching the battleships lying at anchor in the Golden Horn to Dorostolon, **seems to have been beyond the bounds of possibility**.

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162 John Scylitzes, *Synopsis* 300, 68-71 (Thurn): οὐ μέντοι γε καὶ πολιορκίας ἦσαν, δεδιώς, μὴ πως ἀφυλάκτου τοῦ ποταμοῦ τυγχάνοντος ἀποδρᾶσαι μετὰ τῶν νηῶν δυνηθεῖεν οἱ Ῥῶς, αὐλισάμενος δὲ προσέμενε τὸν Ῥωμαϊκὸν στόλον. – On Byzantine naval tactics, cf. Dolley, *Naval tactics* 324-339.

163 For an overview of Byzantine naval campaigns in the Black Sea region before the year 1000, see Madgearu, *Marea Neagră* 11-32.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung

The Region of the Danube Delta in the 7th to 10th century and the case of the so-called Lykostomion Maritime Province

Based on a detailed examination of the written sources, the presence of the Byzantine fleet in the Danube Delta between the 7th and 10th centuries is reconstructed. These findings are combined with new results from geoarchaeology to gain a more realistic picture of the real influence of Byzantine naval power in the region and to contrast this with the often-contradicting national research traditions in Romania and Bulgaria.

Die Region des Donaudeltas vom 7. bis 10. Jahrhundert und die sogenannte maritime Provinz Lykostomion

Auf der Grundlage einer detaillierten Untersuchung der schriftlichen Quellen wird die Präsenz der byzantinischen Flotte im Donaudelta zwischen dem 7. und 10. Jahrhundert rekonstruiert. Diese Erkenntnisse werden mit neuen Ergebnissen der Geoarchäologie kombiniert, um ein realistischeres Bild des tatsächlichen Einflusses der byzantinischen Seemacht in der Region zu gewinnen und dieses mit den oft widersprüchlichen nationalen Forschungstraditionen in Rumänien und Bulgarien zu kontrastieren.