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**The *Urbes Thraciarum* in Late Antiquity: An
Archaeological Assessment of the Cities of Thracia
from Diocletian to Maurice (284-602)**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Fraser Reed

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical analysis of the archaeological remains of the major urban centres of the late antique province of Thracia between the late 3rd and early 7th century. The first part presents the material evidence that has been recovered through excavation and other means from the cities of Thracia and assesses the validity of conventional interpretations of urban character and development in the region. Thereafter, the second part examines areas in which features of the Thracian cities overlap and situates the urban centres within a wider regional context.

Following the establishment of the province of Thracia in the late 3rd century, the region was dominated by three large urban centres: Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis. In the 4th century, cities that existed prior to Late Antiquity displayed a high level of continuity with previous eras, particularly in their public buildings and infrastructure. The first Christian buildings also began to appear in the cities of Thracia during the mid-4th century, although the development of a Christian urban topography truly accelerates only starting in the 5th century. Conversely, the private domestic buildings of the urban elite were some of the most varied elements of each Thracian city but no new residential buildings were built after the 4th century. Instead, the existing residences were maintained, repaired, or used for a different purpose. The division and repurposing of space was not limited to domestic areas, however, and was particularly prevalent in Thracian cities after the late 5th century. In the 6th and early 7th century, most of the public buildings are no longer in use but the cities continue to exhibit vitality and are inhabited into the later periods. Accordingly, the destructive effects of the various Gothic, Avar, and Slavic incursions on the fortified urban centres of Thracia are often overstated in modern literature.

LAY SUMMARY

This thesis is a critical analysis of the archaeological remains of the major cities of Thracia, which was a province of the Roman Empire situated in modern-day southern Bulgaria, during the period of Late Antiquity (the late 3rd to the early 7th century). The first part presents the material evidence that has been recovered through excavation and other means from the cities of Thracia and assesses the validity of conventional interpretations of urban character and development in the region. Thereafter, the second part examines areas in which features of the Thracian cities overlap and situates the urban centres within a wider regional context.

After the province of Thracia was created in the late 3rd century, the region was dominated by three cities: Philippopolis (modern Plovdiv, Bulgaria), Augusta Traiana-Beroe (Stara Zagora, Bulgaria), and Diocletianopolis (Hisarya, Bulgaria). In the 4th century, there were not many changes to the urban character of established cities since most of the main features of ancient cities such as roads, walls, entertainment buildings, and public baths had already been built. However, the one area that saw an increase in new building was the foundation of churches and other Christian architecture. Also, towards the end of Late Antiquity, some buildings began to be used for purposes other than their original function and by the end of the period many of the monumental buildings are not used at all. Nevertheless, the urban were not completely destroyed and people continued to live in Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis.

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INTRODUCTION

Thesis Aims & Parameters

In a previous examination of the defensive system along the Lower Danube, undertaken in fulfilment of an MSc dissertation, it became apparent that the heavily-militarised nature of the Lower Danube was not shared by the inland provinces south of the Stara Planina; instead of military camps and forts, the Thracian Plain was dotted with prominent urban centres. Nevertheless, most previous studies of late antique urbanism in the eastern Balkans have focused on the Danubian frontier area, largely due to the influence of the well-published results from Nicopolis ad Istrum.¹

Moreover, when the scope of research is shifted beyond the Danubian provinces, there is a paucity of comprehensive critical analyses of the urban network in Thrace. Most of the publications on this subject either focus on individual monuments and sites or else repeat the conclusions of previous studies without critical analysis or the consideration of new discoveries. Thus, what is lacking is an analytical assessment of current understandings and perceptions of the archaeological material recovered from Thracian cities in light of evolving archaeological methods, techniques, and historical perceptions.

The primary goal of this thesis, therefore, is to provide a critical analysis of the character and development of urban centres situated south of the Stara Planina that is independent of the Danubian cities. Accordingly, it explores the following questions:

- 1.) What was the character of the cities in the late antique province of Thracia?

¹ Poulter (ed.) (2007); Poulter (1995); (1992); (1984); Динчев (2002); Ivanov & Ivanov (1994).

- 2.) Was the character of the cities of Thracia different from those along the Lower Danube? And if so – why?
- 3.) Are the prevailing interpretations of Thracian cities supported by archaeological evidence?
- 4.) Is archaeology a useful method for studying Thracian urbanism?

There are, however, some limitations to the investigation that ought to be noted from the outset. The most prominent limitation is the fact that all three of the ancient cities under consideration are situated beneath modern inhabited urban centres. As a result, it is usually not possible to undertake extensive archaeological projects and many of the features of the ancient cities remain hidden. This is a common hindrance in the study of ancient cities. Nonetheless, many of the prominent monumental structures of the ancient city, such as the fortification walls, have survived and are visible without excavation. Furthermore, modern development over the previous century has prompted rescue excavations in all three locations, resulting in the discovery of many elements of the ancient urban topography. Although large sections of the ancient cities have not yet been investigated, there is still sufficient evidence to provide a provisional picture of the urban landscape.

An additional limitation that is specific to this thesis is the availability of archaeological reports. Due to excavations in Bulgaria often being undertaken under the purview of regional museums, many of the resulting archaeological reports are dispersed in various regional publications. Furthermore, these publications are not widely available even inside Bulgaria and it is often necessary to purchase the publication in person at the museum. Consequently, as many of the relevant publications as possible have been collected during research trips to Bulgaria, yet there is a possibility that some peripheral reports have not been

consulted, or that new issues may have been published subsequent to these visits. The publications that are most relevant to this thesis, however, have been secured and consulted extensively. These methodological limitations are discussed in more detail below.

Methodological Challenges

In the course of researching this thesis, it has understandably been necessary to engage with the extensive corpus of Bulgarian scholarship concerning the archaeological excavations at Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis. As with many archaeological sites, such material includes annual archaeological reports, interim publications, regional museum periodicals, conference proceedings, peer-reviewed journal articles, and monographs. Accordingly, this thesis has attempted to collate and synthesise as much of this material as possible in order to present a holistic analysis of the archaeological evidence.

Despite best efforts, however, the process has presented some difficult challenges with regards to the source material. The foremost challenge was simply accessing the relevant publications. Excavations have been ongoing at the three Thracian cities for several decades and many of the investigations were launched under the direction of the respective local archaeological museums. Furthermore, as part of such an arrangement, the results of the excavations are most often published in the annual periodicals circulated by the overseeing archaeological authority – usually either the National Archaeological Institute with Museum or one of the various regional museums.

This manner of investigation and publication has, however, perhaps inadvertently resulted in the fragmentation of archaeological data. Due to the nature of the museum publications, they often produce only short summaries of the excavated material without a

sophisticated discussion of the archaeological data. Moreover, since the museum publications are released regularly, the results from excavations conducted in one year are often presented without contextual reference to previous results – which will have been published in a separate annual report.

Such an arrangement can also be exacerbated due to the fact that all three Thracian cities considered in this thesis have been continuously inhabited and are currently covered by their modern counterparts. Accordingly, most of the archaeological discoveries have been the product of rescue excavations prompted by modern development. While the information gleaned from the rescue excavations has been invaluable for understanding individual monuments, the publication of the results has perhaps suffered somewhat from the lack of an integrated research project; each structure is presented individually without a broad perspective of the urban environment.

The accessibility of the data is further complicated by the fact that the various museum periodicals are often only available by visiting the specific museum in Bulgaria and purchasing a physical copy of the relevant volume – which is not always available to purchase. Conference proceedings and monographs published in Bulgaria, which are invaluable as they make up the bulk of the comprehensive site analyses, are similarly not widely available outside of Bulgaria. Consequently, it is sometimes very difficult for scholars in the United Kingdom or other countries outside of Bulgaria to access essential publications, particularly if they were published before the 21st century. Recent moves towards providing digital access to select publications has been encouraging, but this usually does not cover back catalogues in which most of the original site reports can be found.

The final challenge was one faced by many scholars of the ancient world: languages. The material that is most relevant for this thesis has been published in many languages, including English, German, French, Polish, Russian, and Latin. The largest proportion of non-English material, however, is naturally published in Bulgarian. The Bulgarian scholarship is also amongst the most technically intricate, dealing with the minutiae of specific excavations, and so is occasionally difficult to interpret for a non-native Bulgarian speaker. Accordingly, great care has been taken to accurately translate the numerous non-English texts and attempt to understand the nuances of languages that are at times unfamiliar.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the research undertaken for the completion of this thesis has been thorough and, through great time and effort, has managed to review an exhaustive measure of the relevant scholarship. The resulting analysis, therefore, offers a detailed and comprehensive examination of the archaeological material from Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis during Late Antiquity.

Due to some of the factors discussed above, as well as broader scholarly trends, the quality of the archaeological data recovered from Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis is at times rather poor. This is most evident with regards to the numismatic data. In many cases, the numismatic data from archaeological investigations are simply not published. The archaeological reports that do provide numismatic data, however, mention only individual coins or a small selection that the excavator has deemed relevant; few full assemblages have been published. Furthermore, the few coins that are mentioned in publication are most often presented without very important numismatic details such as findspot, surrounding context, or date of issue. As a result, it is very difficult to verify the initial conclusion of the excavator or explore other interpretations, which somewhat stymies

critical analysis. The points at which the numismatic data is lacking have been highlighted throughout this thesis and will hopefully be clarified with further investigation or the future publication of the numismatic data.

Another area of concern is the pervasive reliance on building techniques as a precise dating method. The use of *opus mixtum* with pink mortar and brick inclusions was used in the construction of many buildings throughout the three cities under consideration and has been identified by modern scholars as a characteristic late antique building technique. This seems to be a reasonable conclusion, since none of the structures built using *opus mixtum* with pink mortar that can be dated using supplementary dating material were built prior to Late Antiquity.

There is no consensus, however, on the precise range of dates in which this technique was in use; various excavators have cited it as evidence of construction in the late 3rd century, the late 3rd or early 4th century, the 4th century, or the 5th century. Thus, a methodological problem arises in the several instances where the use of *opus mixtum* with pink mortar and brick inclusions is the only factor considered when determining the construction or repair date of a building. Without supplementary dating evidence, or a definite date range established through comprehensive analysis of the masonry and mortar, the range of possible dates for the use *opus mixtum* with pink mortar is so broad and malleable that it is nearly worthless.

Nevertheless, while acknowledging these limitations, it is necessary for this thesis to continue to use *opus mixtum* with pink mortar and brick inclusions as a dating technique due to the complete lack of other dating material in many instances. That is, without the acknowledgement of the building technique, there would be no indication whatsoever of the date of construction for several structures. Due to the limitations of the dating method,

however, this thesis adopts a conservative interpretation of the use of *opus mixtum* with pink mortar with brick inclusions, in which the use of the building technique is constrained to the late 3rd or early 4th century since this date range is that which is most often supported by secondary dating methods.

Primary Literary & Historical Sources

The literary sources relevant to the study of cities in Thracia in Late Antiquity can be divided into three broad categories.² The first category are those sources that provide information regarding the name, number, and disposition of cities in the province. The most straightforward of these sources are ancient travel itineraries, such as the Antonine Itinerary and the Bordeaux Itinerary, which provide a list of stops along the ancient road system as well as the intervening distances.³ Similarly, the Peutinger Table is generally accepted to be a medieval reproduction of an illustrated Roman itinerary and displays the cities, towns, roads, road stations, and geographical features across the Mediterranean.⁴ In this category of sources should also be considered episcopal records where they are available, such as the lists of bishops who attended ecumenical councils, since they supply information concerning which sees were active at the time and occasionally their respective importance as well.⁵ Furthermore, the *Notitia Dignitatum* is a document that lists the various military,

² The sources outlined below are the most significant for the present study and those which were used most often. For a review of the entire historiography of Late Antiquity, see especially Marasco (ed.) (2003).

³ Löhberg (2006); Elsner (2000). The Bordeaux Itinerary is believed to have been written in the early 4th century and so reflects an accurate representation of the travel network at the start of Late Antiquity. Conversely, the date when the Antonine Itinerary was commissioned is not clear, but nevertheless it provides valuable information about the organisation of inter-provincial infrastructure since factors such as the location of cities do not usually change significantly.

⁴ Talbert & Elliott (2010).

⁵ See especially the *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, edited by Schwartz from 1914-1940 and by Straub from 1971.

administrative, and ceremonial offices and – significantly for this analysis – their disposition throughout the eastern and western halves of the empire. The *Notitia Dignitatum* is generally accepted to represent the arrangement in the eastern empire at the end of the 4th century.⁶

Two sixth-century sources are particularly valuable for clarifying the disposition of cities in the later periods of Late Antiquity. The *Synekdemos* of Hierokles presents a list of the administrative divisions of the empire, including the territories of individual cities that were organised below the provincial level.⁷ Finally, the source that is most-often cited when discussing the urban and military organisation of the 6th century is Procopius' *De Aedificiis*, which reports on the public building program undertaken by Justinian across the empire.⁸ Despite some issues regarding the attribution of fortification efforts to Justinian, the work of Procopius offers a valuable digest of the various urban centres in Thracia.

The second category of sources are those that provide information about the historical circumstances specific to Thracia and Thracian cities during Late Antiquity. The *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, is not only an invaluable source for the events of the mid-4th century across the entire Mediterranean, but also provides accounts of the destruction of Philippopolis by Cniva, Julian's entrance into Thracia, the revolt of the Goths in the later 4th century, and the disaster at Battle of Adrianople.⁹ Similarly, the works of Marcellinus Comes, Procopius, and Theophylact Simocatta describe the major migrations and invasions into the Balkans of trans-Danubian populations, including the Goths, Huns, Avars,

⁶ Kulikowski (2000); Goodburn & Bartholomew (eds.) (1976).

⁷ Honigmann (1939). The *Synekdemos* has unfortunately received very little attention by modern scholars. Consequently, several details such as its exact date of composition and the circumstances surrounding its publication are still debated.

⁸ Greatrex (2014); Kaldellis (2004); Roques (2000); Rousseau (1998); Cameron (1985); Downey (1947). The bibliography concerning Procopius is extensive, so the sources provided here are necessarily a select bibliography.

⁹ Kelly (2008); Drijvers & Hunt (1999); Barnes (1998).

and Slavs.¹⁰ Furthermore, the *Getica* written by Jordanes is concerned specifically with the history of the Goths and informs on their purported origin and history until the 6th century.¹¹ The fragments of Priscus' that were copied into later works also provide valuable information regarding the court of Attila as well as the short-lived reign of Basiliscus.¹²

The third category of sources describe the general events and chronology of Late Antiquity, providing valuable historical context for discussions of late antique urbanism. In addition to some of the authors mentioned previously, the works of Aurelius Victor, Zosimus, and John Malalas are particularly notable.¹³ Several fragments of Eunapius also survive, although most of the relevant information is repeated in Zosimus.¹⁴ Also, series of panegyrics in honour of various emperors throughout the late 3rd and 4th century were collected and presented in the *Panegyrici Latini*.¹⁵

Many authors with a specifically Christian approach focused on the era of Late Antiquity as well, largely due to the acceptance of Christianity during the reign of Constantine and its spread across the empire. These sources are particularly helpful for illuminating leading religious figures, ecclesiastical history, and doctrinal matters. Perhaps the most prominent of the early Church historians is Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote the Ecclesiastical History, Chronicle, and Life of Constantine.¹⁶ The historian Socrates of Constantinople continued the

¹⁰ Croke (2001) and Frendo (1988); Whitby (1988) for Marcellinus Comes and Theophylact Simocatta, respectively. For Procopius, see n. 8 above.

¹¹ Croke (1987); O'Donnell (1982); Baldwin (1979). Jordanes claims the *Getica* is a synopsis of an earlier, more extensive account of the origins of the Goths written by Cassiodorus. Since the work of Cassiodorus does not survive, it is unclear how Jordanes used the earlier material and to what extent.

¹² Blockley (1981-1983); Baldwin (1980).

¹³ Jeffreys, Croke & Scott (2017); Bonamente (2003); Bird (1984); Goffart (1971). Furthermore, although the *Epitome de Caesaribus* is traditionally attributed to Aurelius Victor, it is in fact likely written by another, unidentified author.

¹⁴ Sacks (1987); Blockley (1981-1983).

¹⁵ Nixon & Rogers (1994).

¹⁶ Inowlocki & Zamagni (2011); Kofsky (2000); Barnes (1981).

Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius thereafter, and Jerome translated the Chronicle into Latin while extending the latest scope as well.¹⁷ Additionally, the works of Sozomen and Evagrius Scholasticus address the religious history of the 4th and 5th centuries.¹⁸

Names & Transliteration

In order to avoid confusion, it is important to note several points regarding the use of names here at the outset of this thesis. When referring to sites for which both the ancient and modern names are known, this thesis prefers the use of ancient names but will also provide the modern name and country in parentheses in the first instance – e.g. Philippopolis (modern Plovdiv, Bulgaria). Due to uncertainty concerning which name was favoured in Late Antiquity, the ancient city of Augusta Traiana-Beroe is referred to by both names throughout.¹⁹ Where the ancient name of a site is unknown, the modern toponym will be provided instead.

The exception to this rule, however, are geographic features. Since the limits of ancient definitions are not always clear to a modern observer, the modern names and definitions are preferred when discussing geographic features. Ancient names are provided as well for context when they are known. Special care has also been taken to differentiate between the use of ‘Thrace’ and ‘Thracia’ throughout the text – the former is used when discussing the historical region of Thrace or the Dioceses of Thrace and the latter strictly

¹⁷ Urbainczyk (1997a); Kelly (1975).

¹⁸ Urbainczyk (1997b); Roueché (1986); Chesnut (1985); Allen (1981).

¹⁹ The name Augusta Traiana appears on coinage issued by the city and tends to be favoured prior to Late Antiquity, whereas the name Beroe (in various forms) is primarily used from the 4th century onwards. For example, the city is referenced as Beraea by Ammianus Marcellinus (31.9.1), Berone in the Peutinger Table, and ad Beroam by Jordanes (*Get.*, 102).

refers to the late antique province. Such a distinction is necessary in order to avoid the all-too-common confusion between the various definitions.

Furthermore, to ensure the readability of this thesis, instances where the Cyrillic alphabet would be used in the body of the text have been transliterated into the Latin alphabet. Bibliographic information remains in the original Cyrillic to avoid ambiguity in referencing; similarly, the bibliography is divided into separate Cyrillic and Latin sections. When transliterating from Cyrillic, I have followed the Streamlined System since it is the official system used by the Bulgarian administration and was adopted by the United Nations in 2012.

Streamlined System²⁰

Bulgarian Alphabet	Romanised Version
А, а	А, а
Б, б	В, в
В, в	У, у
Г, г	Г, г
Д, д	Д, д
Е, е	Е, е
Ж, ж	Zh, zh
З, з	Z, z
И, и	И, и
Й, й	У, у
К, к	К, к
Л, л	Л, л
М, м	М, м
Н, н	Н, н
О, о	О, о
П, п	Р, р
Р, р	Р, р
С, с	С, с
Т, т	Т, т
У, у	У, u
Ф, ф	Ф, f

²⁰ Reproduced from United Nations Economic and Social Council (2012). See also Ivanov, Skordev & Dobrev (2010).

Х, х	H, h
Ц, ц	Ts, ts
Ч, ч	Ch, ch
Ш, ш	Sh, sh
Щ, щ	Sht, sht
Ъ, ъ	А, a
Ь, ь	Y, y
Ю, ю	Yu, yu
Я, я	Ya, ya

Thesis Structure

The focus of this thesis is very much centred on the province of late antique Thracia. As no comprehensive study of Thracia during this period exists currently, however, a systematic approach has been adopted in order to fully explore the questions of urban character and development described above.

Accordingly, this thesis opens with two chapters that provide the historical and geographic context necessary for appreciating the subsequent archaeological analysis. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the historical events that occurred in and around the province of Thracia during Late Antiquity, and also includes some earlier events which have informed modern interpretations of Thracian urbanism. Moreover, this chapter is deliberately extensive in order to avoid reducing the historical record to a small number of major events, which is a practice that is common among scholars of Thrace. Similarly, Chapter 2 outlines the major geographic features of the Upper Thracian Plain and how these aspects of the landscape influenced the way in which the cities of Thrace developed.

After having established the necessary contextual foundation, Chapter 3, 4, and 5 proceed to explore the archaeological data from three prominent cities in Thracia. Naturally, these three chapters form the bulk of the thesis. The provincial capital, Philippopolis, is

investigated in Chapter 3 as it was the largest city of Thracia and provides a good illustration of a wealthy city that is intricately connected to the imperial administrative apparatus. Chapter 4 then examines Augusta Traiana-Beroe, which was the second-largest city of Thracia, since it is a good comparandum in contrast to Philippopolis. Finally, Chapter 5 inspects the archaeological material from Diocletianopolis in order to explore the character of one of the few new urban foundations of Late Antiquity.

The final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 6, is a comparative analysis of the results from the preceding chapters. It includes both an intra-provincial comparison, which highlights a manner in which archaeology can be used to explore urban character, as well as an evaluation of how the cities of Thracia differ from those in the adjacent province of Moesia Secunda. Such an approach will, therefore, enable to implications of the material presented in Chapters 3-5 to be more immediately apparent.

Entries in the Bibliography are organised into two sections based on whether the Latin or Cyrillic script is used. Both sections are listed in alphabetical order.

CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THRACIAN HISTORY

Early Roman Control of Thrace

At the outset of Late Antiquity, the region of Thrace had been under direct Roman administration for over two centuries since the death of the Odrysian client king Rhoemetalkes III in 46 CE. The resulting Roman province of Thrace features only infrequently in the surviving historical records in the first hundred years after its annexation. Although there are major military operations along the Lower Danube during the late 1st and early 2nd centuries, such as the Dacian Wars of Domitian (86-88) and Trajan (101-102 & 105-106), the campaigns were limited to the riparian provinces and did not significantly affect the territory south of the Stara Planina.

The first major event to significantly affect the province of Thrace was a prolonged raid by the Costoboci in 170/171.²¹ The primary evidence for the incursion is limited but the event has been reconstructed based on several disparate sources. The only direct reference to an incursion by the Costoboci is found in Pausanias' *Description of Greece* during a discussion of the city of Elateia, in which the author makes a tangential mention of the Costoboci overrunning Greece during his lifetime.²² The epitaph of a certain L. Julius Vehilius Gratus Julianus also mentions his service "*adversus Castabocas et Mauros*", which suggests the incursion

²¹ There is some ongoing debate regarding the exact date of the incursion. For example, Birley (1987), 164-165, 168 and Kovács (2012), 80, 86 present the standard view that the raids occurred in 170, whereas Scheidel (1990) contends that 171 is a more likely date.

²² Paus. 10.34.5. *Hist. Aug. Marcus Aurelius* 22.1 also names the Costoboci as one of the various trans-Danubian peoples arrayed against the empire, but there is no reference to a specific Costoboci incursion into Roman territory.

of the Costoboci occurred in the early 170s around the same time as the Mauri were raiding southern Baetica.²³ Finally, an oration by Aelius Aristides delivered in the spring of 171, which mentions damage sustained recently at Eleusis, has also been cited as evidence of the extent of the raids in Achaëa, but does not name the Costoboci or any specific cause of the damage.²⁴ Thus, from the limited evidence it appears the Costoboci crossed the Danube in the early 170s and travelled as far south as Eleusis, but many details of the incursion remain obscure.

The element of the Costoboci incursion that is most relevant to the present discussion - and which has been the subject of much debate - is the exact route taken by the raiders. It seems most likely the Costoboci travelled south through Moesia Superior along the Morava and Vardar river valleys, but some modern scholars have also suggested the raiders traversed and pillaged Thrace on their way towards Macedonia and Achaëa.²⁵ Regardless of whether the Costoboci entered Thrace or circumvented the province, however, the archaeological evidence demonstrates a deliberate fortification effort in the cities of Thrace and Moesia Inferior in the years immediately following the Costoboci incursion. The appearance of a hostile force so far behind the limits of the empire, therefore, demonstrated clearly to the cities of the inland provinces that they could no longer rely on their distance from the frontier for security.

Starting in the Severan era, the geo-strategic significance of Thrace becomes more conspicuous. For example, during the conflict between Septimius Severus and his rival

²³ *CIL* 6.31856. For the Mauri raids, see Richardson (1996), 231.

²⁴ Aristid. *Or.* 22.

²⁵ Funerary inscriptions for individuals killed by the Costoboci at Tropaeum Traiani (modern Adamclisi, Romania) in Moesia Inferior and Scupi (Skopje, North Macedonia) in Moesia Superior provide the main evidence for the route of the Costoboci: *CIL* 3.14214¹²; *AE* (1964), n. 252; Jovanova (2005), 156. Furthermore, scholars who have mentioned the Costoboci in Thrace include Hoddinott (1975), 169; Birley (1987), 164; Heather (2009), 97.

Pescennius Niger in 193, the epicentre of the hostilities was eastern Thrace and the area around the Sea of Marmara since it straddled the divide between the western provinces - which were largely controlled by Septimius Severus - and Pescennius Niger's power base in the east.²⁶ Furthermore, after securing sole control of the empire, Septimius Severus and his successors traversed Thrace on several occasions during imperial journeys; in addition to Septimius Severus, Caracalla crossed Thrace on his way east in 213/14 and Elagabalus in 219 on his way to Rome after his accession.²⁷ The emperors occasionally stopped in Thracian cities on the route of their journey, such as Elagabalus' stay at Philippopolis, but the presence of an imperial contingent in the area seems to have prompted building activity throughout Thrace, including at sites that were not visited.

Thrace in the Third Century

While Thrace is mentioned only sporadically until the Severan period, the region features more prominently in the historical narrative following the assassination of Severus Alexander in 235. The Balkan provinces had been a major source of manpower for the Roman army since the early imperial period, but during the 3rd century this military power base acquired a new political role: the emperors Decius, Trebonianus Gallus, Aemilian, Aurelian, Probus, and possibly Carus were all acclaimed emperor by the Danubian legions. Although there were no legions stationed in Thrace itself, army units were largely composed of recruits from neighbouring provinces, so it is likely the Danubian legions included substantial Thracian contingents.

²⁶ Herodian 2.14.6, 3.1.5

²⁷ Caracalla: Cassius Dio 78.16.7, Herodian 4.8.1, *Hist. Aug. Caracalla* 5.6; Elagabalus: Cassius Dio 80.3.2.

The influence of the Danubian legions in the 3rd century can partially be explained by several successive incursions by trans-Danubian peoples, which prompted the deployment of large armies to the Balkan provinces on multiple occasions.²⁸ The first incursions into Moesia and Thrace appear to have occurred around 238 when the Carpi and Goths crossed the Lower Danube into Moesia Inferior.²⁹ The initial incursions, however, do not seem to have had a major impact on Roman territory; although the city of Histria on the Black Sea coast may have been damaged as a result of these raids, the Goths were quickly placated by financial subsidies and the Carpi conducted peaceful negotiations with Tullius Menophilus, who was the governor of Moesia Inferior from 238 to 241.³⁰ Further unrest along the Lower Danube in 242 and in 245-247 appears to have had a similarly limited impact on the inhabitants of Thrace and Moesia Inferior.³¹

Conversely, the invasions of c. 248-251 had an immediate and direct effect on Thrace and Moesia. The events of these years are difficult to reconstruct since the sole surviving contemporary account of the attacks, written by the Athenian historian and general Dexippus, is heavily-fragmented, but later authors provide enough information to identify several major elements of the unrest. The first incursions may have occurred as early as 248, likely prompted by the emperor Philip's decision to halt all payments to the Goths, but were limited to the province of Moesia Inferior at that time. The provincial capital Marcianopolis (modern

²⁸ Additionally, the secession of the Gallic and Palmyrene Empires meant the other major military theatres - namely, the Rhine and the East, respectively - were not controlled by Rome for a time, thereby reducing the influence of the armies stationed therein.

²⁹ Heather (1996), 40.

³⁰ Histria: Dexippus fr. 14; *Hist. Aug. Max. et Balb.* 16.3.

³¹ *Hist. Aug. Gordiani* 26.4 mentions a brief campaign of Gordian III in Moesia Inferior in 242 while *en route* to the Persian frontier. Cf. Zosimos 1.20.1 and Zonaras 19.

Devnya, Bulgaria) was attacked around the same period, although the exact nature of the investing force is unclear and the besiegers were not able to capture the city.³²

The historical sources provide slightly more information about the subsequent invasion of 250/251.³³ Led by the Gothic commander Cniva, a sizeable force crossed the Lower Danube and attacked the legionary base of Novae probably in early 250. The invaders were driven off by the legionary commander Trebonianus Gallus, but they simply moved farther inland and besieged the city of Nicopolis ad Istrum instead. The arrival in the region of the emperor Decius, however, who had defeated and supplanted Philip the previous year, prompted Cniva and his army to lift the siege and retreat south to the relative safety of the Stara Planina. Decius pursued the enemy force across the mountains and was camped with his army at Augusta Traiana-Beroe when the Roman troops were attacked and defeated, apparently in a surprise assault by Cniva. As a result, Decius was forced to retreat back across the mountains and effectively ceded control of the Upper Thracian Plain to the invaders while he recovered his strength at the Danubian legionary bases.

Following the victory at Augusta Traiana-Beroe, or possibly concurrently with the attack, the Goths also laid siege Philippopolis. It seems Cniva had trouble seizing the city using normal siege tactics though and it was only through the complicity of a resident of Philippopolis that the attackers were able to gain entry and capture the metropolis. Regardless of the method used to take the city, the effects of the Gothic capture of Philippopolis were devastating; the historical sources mention the city was sacked, many of the citizens either

³² Jordanes, *Getica* 91; *SHA* Gord. 31.1.

³³ Jordanes, *Getica* 101-103; Zosimus 1.23; Zonaras 12.20.

killed or enslaved, and much of the material wealth carried off as loot.³⁴ Decius attempted to intercept the Gothic force with a rehabilitated army as Cniva retreated towards the Danube, but the emperor was defeated and killed in the Battle of Abritus in 251 and his successor - the aforementioned legionary commander Trebonianus Gallus - negotiated a peace treaty that allowed the Goths to leave Roman territory with the spoils of Philippopolis.

The 'Scythian' Naval Raids

Unfortunately, after the accession of Trebonianus Gallus, most of the available information about Thrace between c. 251 and 284 is limited to sparse mentions of raids or invasions of trans-Danubian peoples and the corresponding Roman military response. Moreover, many of the exact details of the events - including chronology and location - are still debated by modern scholars. For example, the general Aemilian, who defeated a Gothic raiding group and was proclaimed emperor by the Danubian legions, may have been commander in either Moesia or Pannonia and may have defeated the Goths in Thrace, Moesia, Asia Minor, or north of the Danube. Similarly, it is assumed that the group of "Scythians" (likely Goths in reality) who besieged Thessalonica and later raided Greece initially travelled through Thrace and ravaged the surrounding countryside, but neither the route nor the destruction of Thrace is described directly in the ancient sources or currently supported by archaeological evidence.

Particularly confusing are the so-called Scythian naval raids of c. 267-269.³⁵ At present, there is no consensus on the chronology of the events, the composition, scale, and number of the raiding parties, or even the resolution of the conflict. What can be agreed upon

³⁴ See especially the recently-published fragment, probably of Dexippus' *Scythica*, which seems to describe events of the siege of Philippopolis: Grusková & Martin (2014).

³⁵ A thorough analysis of the naval raids is provided by Brown (2011), 82-88.

is that around the year 268, several sites around the Black Sea, Aegean, and eastern Mediterranean were attacked by seaborne raiders, who likely originated from the area around the Lower Dniester and the Sea of Azov (Maeotic Sea). The historical sources often refer to the raiders as Scythians, but it is generally accepted the force consisted of a wide coalition of trans-Danubian peoples, including the Heruli, Peucini, Greuthungi-Ostrogothi, Tervingi-Visi, Gepids, and Celts. During the period of naval raids, the Maeotidae attacked Tomis and Marcianopolis in Moesia, Byzantium and Cyzicus on the Sea of Marmara, Cassandrea and Thessaloniki in the north Aegean, and Athens, Corinth, Argos, and Sparta in southern Greece; the islands of Skyros, Crete, Rhodes, and Cyprus were also affected. It is likely the invaders were eventually defeated in two battles: by Gallienus at the Battle of the Nestus River and by his successor, Claudius II, at the Battle of Naissus.³⁶

Following the Battle of Naissus, the surviving Maeotidae attempted to escape but were harried by Roman troops and took refuge in the Haemus Mountains. The Roman pursuers were apparently content to effectively besiege the raiders in the mountains and to let hunger and disease take their toll; several historical sources describe the severe impact of plague on the ranks of the invaders.³⁷ The plague spread widely across the Balkans, however, and one of the casualties was the emperor Claudius II Gothicus, who died at Sirmium in 270 and was succeeded by the cavalry commander Aurelian. Nevertheless, a significant number of the raiders appear to have survived both war and pestilence and were subsequently either settled by the Roman authorities in Moesia and Thrace or recruited into the army.

³⁶ These battles are sometimes thought to have been a single battle, and occasionally the victory is attributed to solely Claudius.

³⁷ Wolfram (1979), 54-55.

Further campaigns against the Goths were undertaken by Aurelian, who crossed the Danube and went on the offensive probably in 271. It is likely the abandonment of Dacia beyond the Danube also occurred around this time and the subsequent provincial reorganisation resulted in the transfer of the territory of Serdica in northwest Thrace to the newly-created Dacia Aureliana. The province of Thrace features in the historical record on one more occasion during the reign of Aurelian - namely, when Aurelian is murdered at Caenophrurium while travelling between Heraclea-Perinthus and Byzantium in 275 - and the final mention of Thrace prior to the Diocletianic period comes during the reign of Probus (r. 276-282), who is said to have settled a group of Bastarnae in Thrace.³⁸

The years c. 251-284 are often described as a period of widespread turmoil in Thrace as various barbarian groups are thought to have taken advantage of Roman weakness following the death of Decius to raid and plunder the eastern Balkans. What the previous outline of events demonstrates, however, is that most of the raids, battles, and unrest occur only on the periphery of Thrace. The only direct attacks on Thracian cities were against Byzantium and Anchialus (i.e. easily-accessible coastal cities), the Battle of the Nestus took place on the border between Thrace and Macedonia, and the Gothic fugitives from the Battle of Naissus took refuge in the Haemus Mountains without crossing into the interior of the province. Thus, there is no mention of any significant military activity in the central Thracian heartland. Furthermore, it is clear there was no difficulty travelling through the province since several emperors continued to use the *Via Militaris* to move their armies quickly between the

³⁸ Zosimus 1.71; *Historia Augusta Probus* 18.1-3. The Bastarnae were a trans-Danubian people who lived north of the Danube Delta. Unfortunately, there is no indication of the reasons why the Bastarnae left their own lands or the exact location(s) in Thrace in which they were settled.

east and west throughout the period. Accordingly, the perception of Thrace as a marred and depleted landscape prior to Late Antiquity may need to be reevaluated through further study.

Thrace in Late Antiquity

Upon the death of the emperor Numerian, the army acclaimed Diocles, the commander of the imperial bodyguard, as Augustus on 20 November 284.³⁹ This acclamation, and Diocletian's acquisition of sole control of the empire by defeating Carinus at the Battle of the Margus in the following year, was a watershed moment that is frequently considered by modern scholars to be the beginning of Late Antiquity. Diocletian then proceeded to appoint a fellow soldier, Maximian, as his imperial colleague and, over the next few years, the two emperors were engaged in several military campaigns along the empire's various frontiers. Diocletian in particular often moved between the Middle Danube, the Propontis, and the eastern provinces and thus likely travelled through Thrace on several occasions; the emperor is attested at Byzantium, Heraclea-Perinthus, and Hadrianopolis, but must also have visited other major sites along the main military road, such as Philippopolis, Serdica, and Naissus.⁴⁰

The Thracian Tours of 293-294

The years 293-294 are most often highlighted for the establishment of the tetrarchic administrative system that is characteristic of the ensuing decades, but these are also significant years for Thrace due to the extended imperial presence in the region. Although

³⁹ Lactant., *De Mort. Pers.* 17.1; P. Beatty *Panopolis* 2.162-4, 186-190, 197-203. The modern consensus is that Diocles was acclaimed at Nicomedia in Bithynia, e.g. Barnes (1982), 49.

⁴⁰ See Barnes (1976), 176-178 for the early campaigns of Diocletian and Maximian, and Barnes (1982), 49-52 for a full overview of Diocletian's movements throughout the empire. For Diocletian at Byzantium prior to 293: *Frag. Vat.* 281 (22 March 286), *CJ* 2.4.13 (3 April 290); Heraclea-Perinthus: *Frag. Vat.* 284 (13 October 286); Hadrianopolis: *CJ* 6.55.2 (27 February 290).

the exact dates of the investitures of the new Caesars are not entirely agreed upon, it is most probable that Diocletian elevated Galerius at Sirmium on 1 March 293, while Maximian appointed Constantius Chlorus concurrently at Milan.⁴¹ Shortly thereafter, Galerius departed Sirmium and appears to have arrived in Egypt by the end of 293, but Diocletian remained in the central and eastern Balkans until near the end of 294.⁴² This two-year period is often overlooked in modern scholarship because there is no narrative account of Diocletian's activities, but it is clear from surviving legislation that the emperor was very active throughout Thrace and Moesia and a clear itinerary of his movements can be ascertained.

After investing Galerius, Diocletian returned to the Propontis and spent time at Heraclea-Perinthus, Byzantium, and the suburb of Melantias in April of 293. He then travelled westward at the beginning of May, passing through Tzirallum, pausing briefly at Hadrianopolis, and visiting Augusta Traiana-Beroe before arriving at Philippopolis in mid- to late-May. The emperor and his retinue spent at least three weeks at Philippopolis (25 May - 17 June), visited Serdica for about a week (21-28 June), and then were back in Philippopolis by the beginning of July for another two-week period (2-15 July). By the end of July, however, Diocletian had left Philippopolis and passed through Serdica *en route* to Viminacium on the Danube, where he would spend the month of August. In September 293, the imperial court arrived at Sirmium and would remain in the city for the entirety of the next year; it seems likely that this extended visit to Pannonia is the occasion for the third Sarmatian victory. It is only in September 294 that Diocletian turns eastward and is attested at Singidunum and Viminacium later in the month. Several legislative pronouncements demonstrate the emperor

⁴¹ Barnes (1982), 62, n. 73 and Southern (2001), 146-147; cf. Seston (1946), 88 and Potter (2004), 650.

⁴² For Galerius' Egyptian campaigns, see Leadbetter (2000).

progressed swiftly along the Danube frontier thereafter, having left Viminacium at the beginning of October and travelling through Cuppae, Ratiaria, Cebrum, Varianae, Appiaria, and Transmarisca to reach Durostorum by 21 October. From here, Diocletian turned south, stopping briefly at Marcianopolis, before passing through Anchialos, Deultum, Hadrianopolis, Burtudizum, Heraclea-Perinthus, Melantias, and Byzantium in eastern Thrace. The emperor ended his journey in mid-November, having crossed the Propontis and arriving at Nicomedia for the winter.⁴³

From this itinerary, two periods of imperial presence in Thrace can be discerned: the spring/summer of 293 and the autumn of 294. The latter span saw Diocletian moving quickly through eastern Thrace, with frequent stops at several different cities, so the social and economic impact of such visits may have been diminished due to relatively short visits. Nevertheless, the emperor's presence would have had a significant effect - both positive and negative - on the municipalities. It was the responsibility of local authorities to provide food, housing, and other supplies to the emperor and his extensive retinue during any such stopover, which could result in sizeable expenses. In return, however, the emperor could bestow the city or local notables with monetary donatives or honorary privileges.⁴⁴ Accordingly, despite the relatively brisk pace, Diocletian's journey through eastern Thrace in the autumn of 284 would have been a significant event for the cities involved.

Conversely, the three-and-a-half-month period between 1 April and 15 July 293 features a leisurely journey outward from the Propontis towards the Middle Danube and included extended visits to Byzantium, Heraclea-Perinthus, Philippopolis, and Serdica.

⁴³ The itinerary is after Barnes (1982), 52-54 and Connolly (2010), 177-183.

⁴⁴ Millar (1977), 28-40.

Imperial visits of such length - that is, of several weeks at a time - reflect a need or desire to interact deliberately with the local populace and, as such, required more substantial preparations and expenditures than a simple overnight stop while in transit. Not only did the emperor and his retinue require food and supplies for a longer period, but the emperor could also be expected to occupy the grandest buildings within a city and form a temporary imperial court of sorts. Emperors normally travelled with a military escort (if not an entire army) and were also accompanied by a large entourage, including secretaries, attendants, orators, jurists, advisors, and sometimes even family and friends.⁴⁵ Thus, the journey of Diocletian through Thrace in 293 likely placed a very large financial burden on the cities in which he stayed.

Due to the protracted nature of the visits, the Thracian cities could have benefited from the spring/summer journey of Diocletian in several ways as well. The additional time spent by the emperor spent in a city would have provided an opportunity to hold games, festivals, judicial hearings, and other imperial audiences. Furthermore, along with any donatives and honours bestowed upon individuals, the emperor could commission buildings and other public works for the city. Regrettably, there is no definitive evidence at present of any such events associated with the Thracian tour of 293, but this may simply be an oversight of modern scholars due to the fragmentary source material from Diocletian's reign; a close reappraisal of evidence from the cities visited by the emperor reveals some examples that may have been overlooked. The first phase of construction of the amphitheatre of Serdica, for instance, appears to have begun during the reign of Diocletian and may have coincided with the emperor's visit.⁴⁶ Similarly, a mint was established at Heraclea-Perinthus in 292 or 293,

⁴⁵ Millar (1977), 59-131.

⁴⁶ Velichkov (2009), 123-125.

possibly during the emperor's visit, and Diocletian's residence at Philippopolis presents a convenient opportunity for the foundation of nearby Diocletianopolis. It is also possible that some of Diocletian's building efforts have been ascribed mistakenly to one of Diocletian's successors, which will be discussed in detail below, and further examination of other neglected material may reveal additional examples of Diocletian's Thracian patronage.

Finally, it is also important to note the years 293/294 have been suggested as the starting point for Diocletian's provincial and administrative reforms. It is incredibly difficult to determine the exact chronology of the division of the provinces, and debate continues regarding whether the reforms were conceived as a single holistic endeavour or were implemented gradually over the course of several years.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, if the initial stages of the reforms were implemented during Diocletian's Thracian tours, the eastern Balkans may have been among the earliest regions to be reorganised. It is also essential to emphasise at this point that this thesis examines the Diocletianic province of Thracia, which was much smaller than its antecedent and limited to the Upper Thracian Plain. Accordingly, the ensuing sections will be necessarily more focused than what has been covered previously and will eschew areas that are traditionally part of the wider Thracian region, such as Eastern Thrace, the Aegean and Black Sea coasts, and the Thracian Chersonese.

Licinius and Constantine

Several campaigns were conducted across the Danubian frontier during the Tetrarchic Period, but these excursions do not appear to have impacted the province of Thracia in a discernible

⁴⁷ Rees (2004), 24-27; Barnes (1982), 209-225; (1981), 9-10;

fashion.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the newly-formed Diocese of Thrace avoided much of the tumult resulting from instability within the tetrarchic system after the retirement of Diocletian and Maximian in 305; the diocese was firmly controlled by Galerius for over a decade after his arrival from the Persian frontier in c. 299, then was governed by Licinius following the death of Galerius in 311.

Following Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 and Licinius' defeat of Maximinus Daza in the following year, however, the two remaining emperors quickly came into conflict and civil war broke out in 316. Constantine struck first and advanced deep into the territory of Licinius, defeating his rival at the Battle of Cibalae in Pannonia Secunda. Despite the defeat, Licinius was able to retreat to Sirmium, whence he travelled east with the remains of his army in an effort to regroup. Moving along the *Via Militaris*, the eastern emperor passed through Thracia on his way to Hadrianopolis, where he raised a second army and promoted Valerius Valens, a military commander, to be his imperial colleague.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Constantine followed up his victory at Cibalae by pressing his advantage and pursuing Licinius, although he was likely slowed by Licinius' decision to destroy the bridges across the Sava River at Sirmium.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Constantine followed Licinius into Thrace and the two emperors clashed again at the Battle of Campus Ardiensis.⁵¹ Although Constantine was victorious on the battlefield, Licinius was able to withdraw with his surviving troops yet again and Constantine was required to continue to chase after his defeated rival.

⁴⁸ According to imperial titulature, between 294 and 310 the various tetrarchs claimed six victories against the Carpi and five against the Sarmatians. See Barnes (1976), 192-193; (2011), 179-180 and Corcoran (2006), 233 for a precise chronology.

⁴⁹ Valerius Valens was the *dux limitis* of Dacia. *PLRE I* Aur. Val. Valens 13.

⁵⁰ Zosmius, *New History* 45.

⁵¹ The battle is also referred to in modern publications as the Battle of Campus Mardiensis or the Battle of Mardia due to the site of the battle being referenced as "*in campo Mardiese*" in the manuscript. Campus Ardiensis, meanwhile, is due to an emendation by Grégoire – see n. 54 below.

The western emperor moved quickly to Byzantium, expecting Licinius to retreat to the Bosphorus, but in fact Licinius had retreated to Augusta Traiana-Beroe and was now positioned dangerously at Constantine's rear. Both emperors were now vulnerable - Constantine due to his strategic positioning and Licinius due to his depleted forces - and soon agreed to a peace in early 317.⁵²

Unhelpfully, historical sources provide only a cursory account of Constantine's advance into Thrace and the Battle of Campus Ardiensis. As a result, there is still some debate surrounding two key elements: the location of Constantine's camp prior to the battle and the location of the battle itself. Regarding the former, the *Anonymus Valesianus* states Constantine established himself “*apud Philippos*”, while the 10th-century *Chronicle* of the Logothete mentions εἰς Φιλιπποῦπολιν.⁵³ At first glance, *Philippos* appears to be simply the accusative form of Philippi, but close scrutiny of geographic and chronological factors demonstrates it does not make sense for Constantine to be at Philippi during the late stages of the civil war; the emperor is attested at Serdica in December of 316 and the most direct and expedient route into Thrace from there is the same road taken by Licinius, namely the *Via Militaris* through the Succi Pass and onto Philippopolis.⁵⁴ By comparison, in order to reach Philippi from Serdica, Constantine and his army would have had to travel approximately twice as far along a smaller road through the Struma valley. Furthermore, Licinius' retreat to Augusta Traiana-Beroe would have severely impacted Constantine's logistics only if his supply train ran through Thracia. Thus, based on the available evidence, it seems most likely that

⁵² Zos. 2.18.1 - 2.20.2; Anon. Val. 1.17-18; Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 41; *Epit.* 41.5.

⁵³ Anonymous Valesianus 1.17. In other discussions of these events, the *Chronicle* has been attributed to a certain Leo Grammaticus, but see Wahlgren (2001), 252-255 for the difficulties of ascribing a single author to the work.

⁵⁴ CTh.9.1.1.

Constantine was based in the vicinity of Philippopolis prior to the Battle of Campus Ardiensis.

Deciphering the location of the so-called Campus Ardiensis is another difficult task, which is complicated by the fact that the name does not appear elsewhere in literary or historical sources. In the early 20th century, Henri Grégoire proposed the plain of the River Arda as the site of the battle, based on the river's proximity to Licinius' headquarters at Hadrianopolis and a persuasive emendation of the manuscript.⁵⁵ While the modern name of the river suits this suggestion, the ancient name of the river appears to have been the Artakes and thus the site of the Campus Ardiensis is likely to be found elsewhere.⁵⁶ It took nearly fifty years before Ingemar König advanced an alternative, suggesting the Battle of Campus Ardiensis could have been fought on the border of Thracia and Haemimontus near modern Harmanli, Bulgaria.⁵⁷ This is a hypothesis of convenience, however, and is based only on Harmanli's roughly equidistant position between Philippopolis and Hadrianopolis. In truth, at present there is no convincing argument for the location of the battlefield and further discoveries may be necessary to locate the Campus Ardiensis.

In the peace agreement between Licinius and Constantine after the Battle of Campus Ardiensis, Licinius ceded control of the Dioceses of Pannonia and Moesia to Constantine but retained the Diocese of Thrace.⁵⁸ Consequently, both Thrace and Thracia were suddenly

⁵⁵ Grégoire (1938a), 564-565, n. 5; (1938b), 586. Grégoire emends "*in campo Mardiense*" to "*in campum Ardiense(m)*".

⁵⁶ See Yankieva (2012) for Artakes as the ancient name of the Arda, but cf. *Barr.*, Map 51 G1, where the Arda is given the name Harpessos based on App., *B Civ.* 4.103. The geography described in Appian does not correlate to the Arda, however, since the Harpessos is only one day's march from Philippi and the Arda is much farther away. The Arda has also been considered to be the Artescos, described in Hdt. 4.92 - e.g. Smith (ed.)(1854), 228. Notably, none of the proposed ancient names for the Arda fit Grégoire's proposal.

⁵⁷ König (1987), 128-129.

⁵⁸ Anon. Val. 1.18; Zos. 2.20.1-2.

situated on the frontier between the two halves of the empire. Very little is known of Licinius' actions or movements in the years immediately following the civil war with Constantine, so it is not clear if or how Thracia may have been affected by its new position at the border. Nevertheless, a tense peace between the two emperors persisted until a second civil war broke out in 323/324, precipitated at least in part by border disputes in Thrace.⁵⁹ Constantine, who was based at Thessalonica at the outset of the war, marched his army up the *Via Egnatia* to engage his enemy near Hadrianopolis again and soundly defeated Licinius, who retreated to Byzantium as expected this time.⁶⁰ Further Constantinian victories at the Hellespont, under the naval command of Constantine's eldest son Crispus, and then at Chrysopolis in Bithynia assured Licinius' complete defeat and established Constantine's control of the entire Roman Empire.⁶¹

After the second civil war between Constantine and Licinius, Thracia disappears from much of the historical record for the remainder of Constantine's reign. The only exception may be an account of a group of Sarmatians who were settled on Roman territory, including in Thrace, after Constantine's trans-Danubian campaign in 334.⁶² The figure cited in the *Anonymous Valesiana* of 300,000 settlers is likely a literary exaggeration, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that a large number of Sarmatians were admitted to the empire since

⁵⁹ Anon. Val. 1.21 briefly describes a Gothic invasion into Thrace and Moesia that was dealt with by Constantine, whereas Zos. 2.21 records Constantine dealing with a Sarmatian attack. In both cases, which may have been a single event confused by later authors, tension arose due to Constantine infringing on Licinius' territory during the unrest. See also *FHG*₄, 199, in which the Anonymous Continuator of Dio describes Licinius ordering the coins commemorating Constantine's Sarmatian victory to be melted down. Another justification for the second civil war that is traditionally given is Licinius' Christian persecution, as in Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 10.8.8ff.; *Vit. Const.* 1.49-56; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 1.3. This justification likely represents the official Constantinian *casus belli*, which may have been applied only retrospectively.

⁶⁰ Anon. Val. 1.23-25; Zos. 2.22.1-7.

⁶¹ Anon. Val. 1.26-29; Zos. 2.24-26; 2.28.

⁶² Anon. Val. 1.32; Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 4.6; Amm. Marc. 17.12.18-19. See also Barnes (1981), 250.

the group included men and women as well as people of various ages. Despite the presumably large number of people initially brought into the empire, it is clear they were not permitted to settle as a single cohesive community; the Sarmatians are said to have been dispersed throughout Thrace, Macedonia, Scythia, and Italy. The inexact geographic terminology makes it difficult to ascertain exactly where the Sarmatian *émigrés* were relocated, and for the purposes of this overview it is not possible to determine whether they resided in Thracia or elsewhere in the Diocese of Thrace.⁶³

Beyond the historical record, the reign of Constantine is traditionally believed by modern scholars to have been a period of significant urban building based on archaeological evidence. In Thracia, for example, the late antique repairs to the walls of Philippopolis are attributed to Constantine. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, however, the dating evidence for this structure is often imprecise and their construction could reasonably be attributed to Diocletian, Galerius, or Licinius as well. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions, there is little indication that Constantine initiated major secular building programmes after his defeat of Licinius.⁶⁴ Although the emperor built extensively at Trier and Rome during the first decade of his reign, the vast majority of his building efforts in the later years of his life were devoted to ecclesiastical architecture.⁶⁵

Another Constantinian development that is poorly understood but which must have been impactful for Thracia was the foundation of Constantinople. Despite the proximity, no

⁶³ When the first part of the *Anonymus Valesianus* was written (c. 390), both Thrace and Macedonia could refer to either dioceses or provinces, Italy could be the praetorian prefecture or one of the two dioceses of Italy, and Scythia Minor was a province within the Diocese of Thrace. It is also possible the author was referring to the broader historical regions and did not have specific administrative divisions in mind.

⁶⁴ Lenski (2016), 179ff; Johnson (2006), 278-282. The most notable exception is, of course, Constantinople.

⁶⁵ Curran (2000), 70-115; Wightman (1971). Trier was Constantine's primary residence from 306-312, so some level of urban development is to be expected. Conversely, none of the cities of Thracia were home to Constantine for any significant period of time.

studies of the economic and social impact of the foundation of Constantinople on the adjacent Thracian provinces have been undertaken at present. Nevertheless, the expansion of the former city of Byzantium into an imperial capital reoriented much of the focus of the empire towards the Bosphorus, resulting in the Thracian Plain becoming something of an extended hinterland for the new foundation.⁶⁶ Additionally, the importance of the *Via Militaris* - and the cities and stations along the road - was likely further enhanced since it became a major route not only for the movement of armies, but also likely for imperial administrators and the clergy travelling outward from Constantinople to the Balkan territories. Accordingly, more investigation is necessary to fully appreciate the extent of the influence of the new capital.

The Heirs of Constantine

Even before Constantine's death, the emperor appears to have been planning for his succession and by 335 had appointed four Caesars: his three sons Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans as well as his nephew Dalmatius.⁶⁷ Although Constantine maintained his ultimate authority throughout the empire, each Caesar was allotted a portion of territory and the Diocese of Thrace (along with the Dioceses of Macedonia and Dacia) was assigned to Dalmatius. This arrangement did not long outlive Constantine, however, as when the aging emperor died in 337, Dalmatius quietly disappeared and authority in Thrace was assumed by Constantius II thereafter.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ It is worth remembering that, despite the later dominance of Constantinople, it was not the sole capital of the empire during the reign of Constantine, but rather one of several regional imperial residences. Indeed, many of Constantine's successors continued to travel widely on campaigns, and it is only during the reign of Theodosius that Constantinople gains its preeminent status.

⁶⁷ Anon. *Vales.* 1.35; *Epit. de Caes.* 41.20.

⁶⁸ Barnes (1981), 261-262.

The reign of Constantius II was a comparatively uneventful period for Thracia. After agreeing to a division of the empire with his brothers at a meeting in Pannonia, Constantius II returned to the east and prepared for war with the Sassanians.⁶⁹ The Persian war was Constantius II's main preoccupation for over a decade until the assassination of Constans in 350, at which point Constantius II travelled west to avenge his brother and check the usurper Magnentius. After the Battle of Mons Seleucus in 353, in which Magnentius was defeated, Constantius II spent most of his time over the next four years in the vicinity of Mediolanum and then was based at Sirmium from 357-359. In 360, however, the emperor was faced with two simultaneous threats: the renewal of hostilities along the Persian frontier and the acclamation of his cousin Julian as Augustus by the army in Gaul. Constantius II chose to address the Persian threat first and campaigned in the east in 260 and 261, but by late 261 was travelling west to confront Julian before falling ill and dying while *en route*. Thus, while Constantius II must have passed through Thracia during his various journeys, there is no evidence he spent any appreciable time in the province.

The only instances in which Thracia appears in the historical record during the reign of Constantius II relate to ecclesiastical matters. In 343, the Council of Serdica was intended to be convened in order to address several key issues between eastern and western bishops, such as the Arian controversy and the status of certain bishops who had previously been deposed.⁷⁰ Around 80 eastern bishops gathered at Philippopolis, just inside the territory of Constantius II, prior to the council and travelled to Serdica as a single group, accompanied

⁶⁹ Dignas & Winter (2007), 88-90.

⁷⁰ The bibliography for the Councils of Serdica and Philippopolis are extensive, but for a thorough overview see Hanson (2005), 293-306 and Barnes (1993), 71-81. See also Delcogliano (2017) for dating the Council of Serdica to 343.

by imperial representatives.⁷¹ Upon arriving in Serdica, however, the eastern contingent took issue with the intention of their western counterparts to permit the deposed bishops to attend the council as normal and, failing to come to a satisfactory compromise, withdrew to Philippopolis.⁷² Once back in Thracia, the eastern bishops published a creed and an encyclical, which denounced the Council of Serdica, anathematised Nicene orthodoxy, and reaffirmed the authority of eastern church councils to adjudicate eastern church affairs.⁷³ Conversely, the western bishops remained in Serdica and published 20 canons and their own encyclical, which excommunicated several leading eastern bishops.⁷⁴ The failure of the Council of Serdica thus deepened the division between eastern and western sees and the Succi Pass between Thracia and Dacia Mediterranea was the physical boundary between Eastern and Western Churches until Nicene Christianity was formally endorsed at the First Council of Constantinople in 381.⁷⁵

Despite the scale of the so-called Council of Philippopolis, the assembly left no discernable trace in the archaeological record. For example, a recent estimate suggests the eastern bishops spent at least a month in Philippopolis prior to leaving for Serdica, yet there is no indication of where the roughly 80 clerics resided during this period.⁷⁶ The entire eastern contingent was housed in a section of the imperial palace in Serdica, so it is possible they had

⁷¹ The imperial representatives were the *comites* Strategius Musonianus and Hesychius, the latter being also *caestrensis sacri palatii* - see Athanasius, *Apol. Sec.* 3.36; *Hist. Ar.* 15.

⁷² Barnes (1993), 72 makes the important observation that the eastern bishops also had a significant negotiating disadvantage since they were in the minority at Serdica; there were roughly 80 eastern bishops to the 90 western bishops. Thus, the numerical imbalance may have also contributed to their decision to return to Philippopolis.

⁷³ The eastern creed is quoted by Hilary of Poitiers, *De Synodis* 34-37 and is reproduced together with the encyclical in Hilary of Poitiers, *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina* A 4.1-3.

⁷⁴ Athanasius, *Apol. Sec.* 3.36-50.

⁷⁵ Socrates of Constantinople 2.22; Sozomen 3.13.

⁷⁶ Decoglianò (2017), 310.

similar lodgings in Philippopolis, but no such structure has been identified at present.⁷⁷ Another possibility is that the eastern bishops were perhaps lodged in ecclesiastical buildings made available to them; the visitors evidently had the support of the local religious establishment since the signature of Eutychius, bishop of Philippopolis, appears on the eastern encyclical.⁷⁸ Very few investigations of the religious architecture of Philippopolis in the early 4th century have been undertaken, however, and almost no material evidence from this period has been recovered.⁷⁹ Finally, no epigraphic evidence of the eastern bishops, their imperial escorts, or the results of the Council of Philippopolis has seemingly survived to the present, although this may change in future with additional archaeological investigation.

Thracia appears again very briefly in the later years of Constantius II's reign when Liberius, bishop of Rome, refused to denounce Athanasius. The emperor was sympathetic to the Eusebian faction and hostile to Athanasius' *homoousian* doctrine, so Liberius' noncompliance was punished by exile to Augusta Traiana-Beroe in Thracia in 355.⁸⁰ The banishment lasted only two years, yet it demonstrates that Augusta Traiana-Beroe - and perhaps Thracia by extension - was considered by Constantius II to be a safe place to harbour a leading proponent of Nicene orthodoxy. It is likely going too far to claim Thracia was a staunchly Arian or Eusebian province, but the so-called Council of Philippopolis, Eutychius' signing of the eastern encyclical, and the banishment of Liberius strongly suggests it was at the very least a comfortably anti-*homoousian* region in the mid-4th century.

⁷⁷ Hanson (2005), 295. See Chapter 3, Private Buildings for the private residences of Philippopolis.

⁷⁸ Hilary of Poitiers, *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina* A 4.3. There are several cities named Philippopolis in the empire, but the signature of Eutychius appears among other Thracian bishops, namely those of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, Kabyle, and Anchialos, clearly indicating he was bishop of Thracian Philippopolis; see Honigsmann (1947), 143-144 for reading "Gabula" in the manuscript as Kabyle rather than Gabula in Syria.

⁷⁹ See Chapter 3, Religious Buildings for the earliest religious buildings in Philippopolis.

⁸⁰ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.13-14.

Julian, Jovian, and Procopius

The death of Constantius II in 361 settled the civil war with Julian before the two emperors ever met in battle. Julian was notified at Naissus of his cousin's death and quickly advanced to Constantinople to cement his position as emperor; having already secured the Succi Pass into Thracia, the new emperor encountered no resistance on the road and travelled along the *Via Militaris* via Philippopolis.⁸¹ This would be Julian's only visit to Thracia. Nevertheless, Julian did not neglect the Balkan territories and is said to have ordered the repair of city fortifications in Thrace.⁸² There is no datable material evidence for the repair of city walls in Thracia under Julian, however, so it is likely the fortification efforts were focused elsewhere in the Diocese of Thrace or the repairs were very minor.⁸³ While resident in Constantinople, the emperor also responded positively to a petition from the Thracians requesting a tax remittance and cancelled a certain portion of their outstanding debts.⁸⁴ No further mention is made of Thracia after Julian departs Constantinople for the east, where he was to die while on campaign against the Sassanians in 363.

The reign of Julian's immediate successor, Jovian, lasted only eight months and was too brief to have had any effect on Thracia, but the choice of emperor thereafter had a very real and direct impact on Thracia and the wider Roman Empire.⁸⁵ While the survivors of Jovian's army were stationed at Nicaea, an assembly of military and civil officials conferred to choose a new emperor, ultimately deciding to elevate a tribune named Valentinian in

⁸¹ Amm. Marc., 22.2.2.

⁸² Amm. Marc., 22.7.7.

⁸³ See Chapters 3, 4, and 5 for the city walls of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis respectively.

⁸⁴ Julian, *Letters* 27. It is not exactly clear who the Thracians in question are - that is, whether Julian is addressing one of the provincial governors or the vicar of the entire Diocese of Thrace.

⁸⁵ Potter (2004), 506-509.

February of 364. During the formal acclamation of the new emperor, however, the army insisted that a second emperor should be chosen as well, and after a few days' deliberation Valentinian chose his brother Valens as his imperial colleague. In a similar circumstance to the imperial partition following the death of Constantine I, the brothers travelled to Naissus and divided the empire between them. As the senior emperor, Valentinian took control of the praetorian prefectures of Gaul and Italy-Africa-Illyricum, while Valens retained the prefecture of the East. Thus, the Diocese of Thrace fell within Valens' sphere of control.⁸⁶

Following his accession, Valens wintered in Constantinople and prepared to march east to assess the Persian and Armenian frontiers. Accordingly, it was while the emperor was travelling from Constantinople to Antioch in September of the following year (365) that he was informed of a coup launched by Julian's cousin Procopius. The ostensible new emperor based his claim on kinship with the Constantinian dynasty and was swiftly able to buy the loyalty of two military units that had been sent by Valens to deal with an expected Gothic attack on Thrace.⁸⁷ Procopius also quickly seized several prominent officials, including Nebridius the Praetorian Prefect of the East, and lured the military commander of Thrace to Constantinople before imprisoning him. As a replacement, Procopius appointed a certain Andronicus as Vicar of Thrace, thereby securing control of the diocese.⁸⁸

Thereafter, the inhabitants of Thrace are noted as having been ardent supporters of Procopius, and when Valentinian I's *magister militum* of Illyricum advanced into Thrace and besieged Philippopolis in 366, the city garrison resisted determinedly. Even after the defeat and death of Procopius in Phrygia, it was only when the head of their would-be emperor was

⁸⁶ Amm. Marc. 26.5.1-3; Zos. 4.3.1.

⁸⁷ Potter (2004), 509-512; Lenski (2003), 68-115.

⁸⁸ Them., *Or.* 7.

brought to Philippopolis *en route* to the court of Valentinian that the city surrendered.⁸⁹ Although the reason for the obstinacy of the defenders is not clear, it may have been due in part to the tax remittance granted by Julian only a few years earlier. One of the main grievances against Valens' regime was the over-eagerness of the emperor's father-in-law, Petronius, to collect outstanding debts, and it stands to reason that the Thracians may have become disaffected if Petronius ignored Julian's prescript and attempted to recover the taxes that had been remitted. Nevertheless, Valens punished the supporters of Procopius with little remorse and several supporters of Procopius were executed, including the Vicar of Thrace Andronicus. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Philippopolis are singled out by Ammianus as having received particularly harsh treatment, although there is no indication in either the historical or archaeological record of the nature of their punishment.⁹⁰ The lack of archaeological evidence may, however, perhaps be due in part to modern interpretations and the lack of precise dating material; few archaeological reports consider the siege of 366 when analysing material from the mid- to late-4th century and usually associate any such finds with the Gothic Wars instead.

The Gothic War (376-382)

After defeating the revolt of Procopius, Valens conducted two punitive campaigns (in 367 and 369) across the Danube against the Goths, who had sent troops to support the usurper.⁹¹ Thereafter, the emperor relocated to Antioch and was primarily concerned with affairs along

⁸⁹ Amm. Marc. 26.10.6.

⁹⁰ Amm. Marc., 26.10.6.

⁹¹ Kulikowski (2007), 115-118; Lenski (2003), .

the eastern frontier from 370 to 378, including a dispute with the Sassanians over Armenia.⁹² In 375, Valens' brother and co-emperor, Valentinian, died from an apparent aneurysm while on campaign against the Quadi and was succeeded by his two sons - Gratian and Valentinian II.⁹³

The most defining feature of Valen's reign, however, was the Gothic War that began in 376 after the mistreatment of Gothic migrants by Roman authorities escalated into open warfare. Due to the ensuing disastrous Roman defeat at the Battle of Hadrianopolis in 378, in which Valens was killed along with much of the eastern army, many ancient and modern historians have discussed the Gothic War at length.⁹⁴ Consequently, the circumstances and chronology of the war are fairly well-established and do not demand much debate here; hence, what follows is only a brief summary of the Gothic War - although with particular attention devoted to incidents taking place in Thracia.

By the summer of 376, several groups of trans-Danubian people had arrived at the banks of the Danube to request admittance into the empire. The largest of these bands, composed primarily of Tervingi Goths and led by two individuals named Alavivus and Fritigern, was granted permission to cross the Danube and were to be settled within the empire.⁹⁵ Other groups, however, were denied entry; most notably, Valens blocked the

⁹² Greatrex (2000), 36-41; Blockley (1987), 225-229.

⁹³ For the death of Valentinian, see Amm. Marc., 30.6.3; Zos. 4.17.1-2. On the accessions of Gratian and Valentinian II, see McEvoy (2013), 49-60. It should be noted also that Gratian had been elevated to the rank of *Augustus* by his father already in 367, but was only 6 years old at the time and had remained very much the junior (and silent) partner in the west until Valentinian's death.

⁹⁴ Kulikowski (2007), 123-153; Heather (1991), 122-192; and Wolfram (1990), 117-139 are the principal modern studies of the entire war. Furthermore, there are several contemporary ancient sources, including Book 31 of the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, Orations 14-16 of Themistius, and some surviving fragments of Eunapius. These contemporary accounts are also supplemented by the later writings of Zosimus, Jordanes, and Theodoret. Finally, den Boeft, J. et al. (eds) (2017), the recently-published commentary of Book 31, is a useful critical analysis of Ammianus' perspective of the Gothic War.

⁹⁵ Amm. Marc., 31.4.1-7.

passage of the Greuthungi Goths led by Alatheus and Saphrax as well as a group under the command of Farnobius.⁹⁶

The Roman officials responsible for overseeing the Tervingi crossing were Lupicinus, the *comes rei militaris per Thracias*, and the *dux* Maximus.⁹⁷ It is likely the crossing was effected at Durostorum (modern Silistra, Bulgaria) and was a protracted affair, taking several days to ferry the large number of people across a rain-swollen Danube.⁹⁸ Yet upon reaching the south bank of the river, the Tervingi were subjected to divers abuses at the hands of the Roman magistrates, including the withholding of provisions intended to feed the newcomers and the exploitation of the ensuing famine to enslave Gothic children in exchange for dogmeat.⁹⁹ As a result, the Tervingi became understandably distressed and Lupicinus decided to relocate the Goths farther inland in order to forestall any thoughts of violent reprisal. Soldiers were drawn away from local garrisons in order to enforce the transfer of the Tervingi, however, which prompted both the Greuthungi led by Alatheus and Saphrax as well as those led by Farnobius (who had been forced to stay on the left bank of the Danube) to take advantage of the depleted frontier patrols and cross into Scythia Minor.¹⁰⁰

When the Tervingi arrived in the vicinity of Marcianopolis, Lupicinus invited Alavivus and Fritigern to a banquet within the city. The Gothic leaders entered Marcianopolis with their retinues, but the main host of Tervingi was compelled to remain at a distance from the city and were not permitted to obtain food or other provisions from the urban markets, which

⁹⁶ Amm. Marc., 31.4.12-13.

⁹⁷ Amm. Marc., 31.4.9. See *PLRE I*, 519-520 (Lupicinus 3) and *PLRE I*, 585 (Maximus 24).

⁹⁸ The site of the crossing is never stated explicitly, but Wolfram (1990), 119 presents a convincing case for Durostorum due to geographic factors and the city's situation at the northern terminus of the road leading from Marcianopolis.

⁹⁹ Amm. Marc., 31.4.9-11; Eunap., Fr. 42 (= 42 *FHG*₄).

¹⁰⁰ Amm. Marc., 31.5.1-3.

led to violence and bloodshed on both sides. Reports of the fighting reached Lupicinus while the banquet was underway and he promptly ordered the murder of the Gothic entourage, although he granted permission to Fritigern to return to his camp in an attempt to calm the Tervingi. Rather than quell the tumult, however, Fritigern led the Tervingi to overt armed war.¹⁰¹

The ensuing conflict took place primarily in the riparian provinces of Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda, although forays into Haemimontus and Thracia became more common in the later stages of the war. Lupicinus, for example, was defeated in battle near Marcianopolis shortly after the outbreak of war, which enabled the Goths to range throughout the Lower Danube provinces thereafter.¹⁰² Furthermore, the generals sent by Valens and Gratian in the following year were headquartered at Marcianopolis as well, and the next major battle - the Battle of the Willows - likely occurred not far from the city.¹⁰³ The farthest extent of Gothic influence, however, is provided by the case of a group of Gothic auxiliaries based at Hadrianopolis. The Gothic soldiers had previously been in loyal service to the Roman army, but upon being mistreated by the local population, decided instead to violently rebel; Fritigern's purported quip regarding keeping peace with walls was supposedly uttered in reference to the unsuccessful attempt to besiege Hadrianopolis.¹⁰⁴

Yet since neither side could claim a decisive victory in the Battle at the Willows, the Roman generals adopted a different strategy thereafter; rather than engaging the Goths in a

¹⁰¹ Amm. Marc., 31.5.5-8.

¹⁰² Amm. Marc., 31.5.9.

¹⁰³ Amm. Marc., 31.7.5-16. The site of the battle is named by Ammianus as "*oppidum Salices*", which modern scholars often associate with the road station Ad Salices that appears in the Antonine Itinerary. Heather (1991), 144, however, recognises that this road station was located in Scythia Minor near the Danube Delta, which seemingly contradicts Ammianus' description of it being near Marcianopolis.

¹⁰⁴ Amm. Marc., 31.6.4.

pitched battle, soldiers were deployed to fortify and hold the passes through the Haemus Mountains in an attempt to contain the Goths in Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor.¹⁰⁵ The new strategy appears to have worked for a time, but the Roman army was eventually withdrawn after Fritigern recruited a force of Huns and Alans in late 377 to augment his Gothic troops and it became clear he would be able to force the mountain passes regardless.¹⁰⁶ While most of the Roman army was able to successfully retreat towards Constantinople, the Goths surprised a unit at Deultum in Haemimontus and won a hard-fought victory with heavy casualties on both sides.¹⁰⁷ The Goths also advanced into Thracia against one of Gratian's generals, Frigeridus, who had established a camp near Augusta Traiana-Beroe, but the shrewd commander retreated to Dacia before the Goths could engage his troops in battle. Nevertheless, Frigeridus secured the empire's first significant victory when he defeated a band of Goths and Taifali under the command of Farnobius and was able to successfully fortify and hold the Succi Pass, which prevented the Goths from moving west into Dacia Mediterranea.¹⁰⁸

Thus, by late 377 the Goths were able to move more freely throughout Thrace than they had ever been able to previously, although the exact extent of their movements is still unclear. Ammianus states they ranged as far south as the Rhodope Mountains, for instance, but there is no mention in any ancient source of Gothic movement in Thracia west of Augusta Traiana-Beroe.¹⁰⁹ It is perhaps due to this omission that Heather claimed the Goths were

¹⁰⁵ Amm. Marc., 31.8.1.

¹⁰⁶ Amm. Marc., 31.8.4-5.

¹⁰⁷ Amm. Marc., 31.8.9-10.

¹⁰⁸ Amm. Marc., 31.9.1-4.

¹⁰⁹ Amm. Marc., 31.8.6.

restricted to the eastern reaches of the Thracian Plain, asserting “the damage extended no further west than the eastern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains.”¹¹⁰

Archaeologists, however, have been quick to highlight widespread damage to rural sites as evidence of Gothic devastation and the Anglo-Bulgarian surveys of the territories of Nicopolis ad Istrum and the fort at Dichin provide a clear picture of the damage to rural sites in Moesia Secunda, where the investigators concluded that traditional Roman villa life ended as a result of the Gothic War.¹¹¹ An equivalent systematic analysis of rural sites in Thracia does not currently exist, but modern scholars have cited coin hoards and the apparent destruction of extramural buildings in the vicinity of Philippopolis as evidence of a Gothic presence deep inside Thracia during the war.¹¹² That being said, the dating of the cited archaeological evidence is imprecise; the latest coins in the hoards were issued during the reign of Constantius II (r. 337-361) and the destruction of the extramural buildings is dated only to the late fourth century. There is, therefore, no definite link to the Gothic War and the conclusion that the Goths reached as far as Philippopolis should be treated with some caution.

The campaign season of 378 finally saw Valens leave Antioch to deal with the Gothic threat in person, arriving with his army in Constantinople at the end of May.¹¹³ During this time, the Goths are said to have been distributed primarily between Nicopolis ad Istrum and Augusta Traiana-Beroe, presumably using the roads over the Shipka and Vratnik passes as

¹¹⁰ Heather (2005), 175.

¹¹¹ See Poulter (2019b), 774-775 for Dichin and Poulter (2007), 51-97 for Nicopolis ad Istrum.

¹¹² Topalilov (2014), 225-228.

¹¹³ Wolfram (1990), 124.

lines of communication across the Stara Planina.¹¹⁴ As a result of the Goths' diffusion, however, one of Valens' senior generals, Sebastianus, was able to win a series of minor victories against various dispersed Gothic units.¹¹⁵ Emboldened by Sebastianus' success, Valens advanced with his army towards Hadrianopolis, while Fritigern concentrated the Gothic forces at Kabyle before marching south towards the Roman army. The two armies clashed near Hadrianopolis on 9 August and the Goths won a decisive victory, in which Valens, many of the senior Roman commanders, and much of the eastern Roman army were killed.¹¹⁶

The main contemporary account of the Gothic War, namely the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, ends almost immediately after the Battle of Hadrianopolis. As a result, the events of the later stages of the war must be pieced together from other sources, which are often fragmentary or vague. For some reason, it took several months for Valens' successor to be chosen, with Theodosius being acclaimed emperor at Sirmium only in January of 279.¹¹⁷ The Gothic forces under Fritigern were thus able to rove throughout the Diocese of Thrace unopposed during this period; most of the Thracian cities were able to avoid major damage due to their strong fortifications, but the people and property in the surrounding countryside are said to have suffered greatly.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Amm. Marc., 31.11.2. See Madzharov (2009), 251-256 for an overview of the mountain roads; the Shipka Pass connected Nicopolis ad Istrum with Augusta Traiana-Beroe, while the Vratnik Pass connected Nicopolis ad Istrum with Kabyle.

¹¹⁵ Amm. Marc., 31.11.3-4.

¹¹⁶ Amm. Marc., 31.11-12.

¹¹⁷ Sivan (1996) discusses the complex circumstances surrounding Theodosius' accession.

¹¹⁸ Eunap., Fr. 42 (= 42 *FHG*₄). Amm. Marc., 31.16.7 mentions the Goths spread as far as the Julian Alps after their victory at Hadrianopolis, but this seems to be an exaggeration or misinterpretation by Ammianus since there is no evidence of Gothic presence beyond the Diocese of Dacia. Moreover, some modern scholars have interpreted Eunap., Fr. 47.1 (= 50 *FHG*₄) as referring to the surrender of Nicopolis ad Istrum to the Goths, but Blockley (1983), 142, n. 107 I think rightly identifies that there is no mention of the Nicopolitans handing over the city - rather, the fragment refers only to their self-reliance and repudiation of imperial aid.

Following his accession, Theodosius took up residence at Thessalonica and focused on reconstituting some semblance of an army to oppose the Goths. Very little is known about the ensuing campaigns of Theodosius, although his primary goal seems to have been reestablishing control of Thrace as soon as possible. A general named Modares, who was Gothic but loyal to the Romans, is said to have defeated at least a portion of the Gothic forces, but there are no details about the circumstances or consequences of the victory.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Goths seem to have been pushed out of Thrace over the course of 379, possibly as a result of Modares' victory, and operated primarily within the dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia in the following year.¹²⁰ The most notable event of the campaigning season of 380 was when a Gothic war party, possibly led by Fritigern, defeated Theodosius' new recruits near Thessalonica and subsequently plundered Macedonia and Thessaly.¹²¹

The first signs of the end of the war occurred in 381 when the western generals Bauto and Arbogast succeeded in pushing the remaining Goths out of Illyricum and back into Thrace, although it would take an additional year for final peace terms to be negotiated.¹²² In exchange for an obligation to serve with the Roman army when called upon by the emperor, the peace treaty of 382 settled the Goths as a semi-autonomous group within the empire -

¹¹⁹ Zos., 4.25.2-4. Eunap., Fr. 45.1 (= 51 *FHG*₄) was interpreted by Müller (1851) to refer to Modares' attack, but this seems a tenuous conclusion since many key details of the ploy are not mentioned.

¹²⁰ Them., *Or.* 14.181b mentions the Goths had managed to cross the border between Thrace and Illyricum, namely the Succus Pass. Furthermore, Zos. 4.34.2-5 and Jord., *Get.* 27.140 reference raids into Pannonia and Moesia Prima. For a discussion of the possible settlement of the Greuthungi led by Alatheus and Saphrax in Pannonia, see the discussion in Heather (1991), App. B, 334-344.

¹²¹ Zos., 4.31 describes a Gothic attack on the levied soldiers and the resulting ruin of Macedonia and Thessaly, while Jord., *Get.* 27.140 mentions only that Fritigern set out with the intention to attack Macedonia and Thessaly - that is, it does not recount a battle or whether Fritigern was successful. Notably, this is the final mention of the Gothic leaders Fritigern, Alatheus, and Saphrax in the surviving sources; their final fates are uncertain.

¹²² Zos., 4.33.1-3 for Bauto and Arbogast. It is not clear from the surviving sources which part of Thrace the Goths were pushed into, although the Goths' subsequent settlement in Moesia Secunda may suggest the trajectory was through the riparian provinces.

primarily in Moesia Secunda, but possibly also in Dacia Ripensis and Macedonia.¹²³ There were, therefore, no major battles in Thracia after Modares' victory in 379 and no documented Gothic settlements as a result of the peace treaty.

In the Shadow of Constantinople

With the conclusion of the Gothic War, the focus of the historical record shifts away from Thrace and events from the rest of the empire predominate once again. In 388, Theodosius marched west and defeated the usurper Magnus Maximus, who had been recognised by Theodosius as emperor of Hispania, Gaul, and Britannia only five years earlier after the assassination of Gratian. Theodosius was then required to put down another western pretender following the alleged suicide of Valentinian II, defeating the would-be emperor Eugenius and his general Arbogast at the Battle of the Frigidus in September of 394. Yet the emperor was not able to relish his victory for long, since in January of 395 Theodosius died at Milan from an illness and was succeeded by his two sons - the 18-year-old Arcadius in the east and 10-year-old Honorius in the west.

The reigns of Theodosius' successors in the east firmly established the primacy of Constantinople as the sole eastern capital city, particularly the long tenure of Arcadius' son Theodosius II (r. 408-450). Consequently, while Thrace had always occupied a strategic position between Europe and Asia, in the early 5th century the Thracian provinces south of the Stara Planina also became the direct hinterland of the imperial capital. There are very few glimpses of Thracia from this period, but the references that survive reflect the gravitational

¹²³ Only a very brief summary of the treaty is provided here, as a full discussion is not necessary for the purposes of this thesis. See especially Heather (1991), 157-192 and Kulikowski (2007), 152-153 for a full discussion of the treaty and its terms.

pull of Constantinople; Thracia is only ever mentioned in relation to events affecting the capital. Thus, when the Gothic commander Alaric is attested in Thrace in 395, he was leading his army against Constantinople before eventually turning aside and marching into Macedonia and Greece instead. Similarly, Silvanus, a bishop of Philippopolis in the early 5th century, is named only because he came to the attention of the bishop of Constantinople and was subsequently transferred to the see of Alexandria Troas. Regrettably, there is no information about Silvanus' three-year episcopate in Philippopolis other than the fact that he did not like the cold.¹²⁴

The Hunnic Ascendancy

The foremost topic in any discussion of Thrace and the Balkans in the mid-5th century is the impact of the Hunnic Empire. The invasions of Attila in the 440s garner the bulk of scholarly attention, but the influence of the Huns can be discerned as early as the 370s; the main impetus for the Gothic appeals for admittance into the empire seems to have been the appearance of the Huns on the eastern frontier of Gothic territory.¹²⁵ Over the next few decades, the Huns then filled the gap left by the departed Goths and forged an empire that dominated the regions north of the Lower Danube.

By the 420s, the Huns had strengthened their position to such an extent as to pose a serious threat to the empire. While the eastern army was engaged in a war with the Sassanians in 422, the Hunnic leader Rugila invaded Thrace and advanced as far as Constantinople before being appeased by promises of annual payments of gold.¹²⁶ The exact route of the

¹²⁴ Socrates of Constantinople, *HE* 7.36-37.

¹²⁵ Wolfram (1990), 73.

¹²⁶ Sinor (1990), 186-187.

invasion is not specified, so it is unclear which areas of Thrace may have been affected, but the most direct route from the Lower Danube to Constantinople was the road running along the west coast of the Black Sea from Marcianopolis to Anchialos and then to Constantinople. It seems plausible, therefore, that Rugila's army passed through eastern Thrace - namely, the provinces of Haemimontus and Europa - and did not significantly affect Thracia.

Rugila was the primary ruler of the Huns until his death in c. 434, after which his nephews Bleda and Attila took over the leadership of the Hunnic Empire. The new Hunnic rulers successfully negotiated the Treaty of Margus with Theodosius II shortly after their accession and then redirected their attention to raiding the Sassanian Empire through the Caucasus.¹²⁷ The Huns were thus engaged in the east for several years, but Bleda and Attila returned to the Middle Danube in 440 and attacked the empire after claiming the terms of the previous treaty had been breached. Their invasion was immediately successful and the Huns were able to capture several cities in Moesia Prima and Pannonia Secunda, including Margus, Viminacium, Singidunum, and even Sirmium. Bleda and Attila did not immediately press their advantage, however, and agreed to a cessation of hostilities that lasted several years.¹²⁸

When Theodosius II decided to stop the payments that were part of the previous treaty with Bleda and Attila, the Huns decided to go on the offensive again and their second invasion of the eastern Balkans was truly devastating. Very few details about the movements and engagements of the war are available, but it seems the first targets were the provinces along the Lower Danube, where the Huns defeated the *magister militum* Arnegisclus at the

¹²⁷ Heather (2005), 300-301.

¹²⁸ Heather (2005), 301-302.

Battle of the Utus.¹²⁹ Marcianopolis and Ratiaria were subsequently captured and sacked. Unlike the Goths in the 4th century under Fritigern, the Hunnic armies travelled with complex siege machinery and were therefore able to capture strong fortified centres with relative ease.¹³⁰

After their successes in the riparian provinces, Priscus reports that the Huns travelled inland and advanced along the *Via Militaris* towards Constantinople.¹³¹ Most of the cities along this route were captured and sacked by the Huns, including Naissus, Serdica, Philippopolis, and Arcadiopolis, although Hadrianopolis and Heraclea-Perinthos are said to have successfully resisted the Hunnic assault. The Huns were unable to overcome the massive fortifications of Constantinople, but their successful campaign through Thrace forced Theodosius II to negotiate a very unfavourable peace, which included sizeable payments of gold and the establishment of a buffer zone between Singidunum and Novae.

Although the literary and historical sources provide few specifics about the cities of Thracia during the Hunnic invasion, archaeologists have been quick to identify evidence they believe to be clear indications of the destructive impact of the war. At Philippopolis, for instance, the Hunnic invasions have been used to explain the destruction of the agora and the Eastern Baths, while at Augusta Traiana-Beroe, they are traditionally viewed as responsible for damage to the urban road network, the baths, and the Stoletov Building.¹³² As will be discussed in detail later in this thesis, however, this may be an oversimplification of the archaeological data and it is possible the observed damage was caused by other means.

¹²⁹ Heather (2005), 308-309.

¹³⁰ Heather (2005), 303.

¹³¹ Priscus fr. 9.4, fr. 6.14-15.

¹³² A full discussion of the archaeological evidence from these buildings is found below at Chapter 3, Public Buildings – Eastern Baths and Chapter 4, Private Buildings – Stoletov Building.

Despite the Hunnic victories in the Balkans, the Hunnic invasion of 447 would be the last time Attila or the Huns posed a serious threat to the Balkan territories. Rather, Gaul and Italy were the focus of the next major Hunnic offensives, and by 453 Attila was dead. The cohesion of the Hunnic Empire deteriorated after the death of Attila, although his son, Dengizich, crossed the Danube with part of the Hunnic army to attack Moesia Secunda. Dengizich was defeated, however, and killed in battle against the generals Ostrys, Anagastes, and Basiliscus.

Thracian Goths, Theodoric Strabo & Basiliscus

As a result of the disintegration of Hunnic hegemony, the various ethnic groups that had been previously dominated by the Huns were once again able to operate independently. One of these groups were the Goths, and it seems that over the course of the 450s and 460s several separate Gothic bands were admitted into the empire and settled in Thrace. The size, distribution, and chronology of the settlements are highly obscure, but multiple Gothic leaders had significant Gothic followings in Thrace in the 460s, which may denote distinct settler groups.¹³³ Prominent Gothic military leaders are attested in Thrace as early as the 410s, which may suggest a much longer Gothic presence in Thrace, but it is not clear from the surviving evidence that the earlier commanders were accompanied by larger companies of Gothic followers; the only exception may be Flavius Areobindus, who is said to have had the title *comes foederatorum* in 422 and presumably led a unit of Gothic *foederati*.¹³⁴

¹³³ Heather (1991), 241-242.

¹³⁴ Heather (1991), 262.

The picture of the Thracian Goths becomes clearer after the death of the *magister militum* Fl. Ardaburius Aspar in 471, who had been a distinguished member of the Constantinopolitan elite since the reign of Theodosius II and played an instrumental role in the elevation of both Marcian in 450 and Leo in 457. In the later years of Leo's reign, however, Aspar's influence at court was challenged by Zeno and the Isaurian faction, and in 471 Leo ordered the murder of Aspar and his sons. Upon learning of the assassination plot, the Thracian Goths - who had been allies of Aspar - openly rebelled in protest, and by 473 they had unified behind the Gothic leader Theoderic Strabo. Initial negotiations between Leo and Theoderic were unproductive and the Goths subsequently besieged Arcadiopolis (Lüleburgaz, Turkey) until the defenders surrendered due to starvation. Philippopolis was also targeted by a Gothic detachment, but the attackers only succeeded in damaging some extramural buildings.¹³⁵ These successes prompted renewed negotiation efforts and a peace agreement was soon reached, which would see the Goths paid 2000 pounds of gold annually, Theoderic recognised as the only ruler of the Goths, and also made a *magister utriusque militiae praesentalis*. In return, Theoderic and the Thracian Goths were obliged to provide military service in future conflicts other than expeditions against the Vandals.¹³⁶

The events of 471-473 thus provide a couple of important pieces of information regarding the Thracian Goths. It seems likely, for instance, that the Thracian Goths were based primarily in the Maritsa drainage basin since their two targets during the revolt were Arcadiopolis and Philippopolis. Furthermore, the enormous annual payment negotiated in the peace agreement may have represented the yearly cost for the upkeep of a body of

¹³⁵ Malchus, fr. 2. See also Heather (1991), 267, n. 63.

¹³⁶ Malchus, fr. 18; Heather (1991), 264-270.

soldiers; Heather estimates 2000 pounds of gold could pay the wages of between 12 000 and 18 000 soldiers.¹³⁷ Accordingly, it is possible that the Thracian Goths were paid as Roman soldiers in exchange for military service - that is, they constituted a body of *foederati* troops. The Thracian Goths, therefore, were a sizeable armed force within easy striking distance of Constantinople.

In January 474, the emperor Leo died and was succeeded by his grandson, Leo II. The new emperor was the 7-year-old son of Leo I's daughter Ariadne and her husband, the Isaurian general Zeno, who subsequently became co-emperor with Leo II in February. Leo II died only a few months after his accession, however, leaving Zeno as the sole reigning emperor in the east by the end of the year. Several prominent members of the Constantinopolitan elite, led by Leo I's wife Aelia Verina, were not happy with this situation and launched a successful coup in late 474 or early 475 that forced Zeno to leave the capital and elevated her brother Basiliscus to be emperor.¹³⁸

In addition to prevalent anti-Isaurian sentiment in Constantinople, Basiliscus was also supported by Theoderic Strabo and the Thracian Goths, who seem to have been one of the main armed groups propping up the new regime. Although it is not clear where the Thracian Goths were settled, it seems Basiliscus could count some of the residents of Philippopolis as supporter since an inscription from the Small Basilica appears to name the would-be emperor.¹³⁹ There is no indication of who sponsored the inscription, but it is at least some indication that Thrace was a region that sided with Basiliscus.

¹³⁷ Heather (1991), 253-254.

¹³⁸ Heather (1991), 272ff.

¹³⁹ See Chapter 3, Religious Buildings – Small Basilica.

Despite the backing of the Thracian Goths, by August 476 Zeno had returned to Constantinople and ousted Basiliscus. This development left Theoderic Strabo and his followers in an awkward position, leading the Gothic commander to attempt to negotiate with the emperor, but Zeno chose instead to shift imperial support to a different Gothic ruler - namely, Theoderic the Amal.¹⁴⁰ Theoderic the Amal was the leader of the Pannonian Goths, who were a group of similar size to the Thracian Goths but situated north of the Stara Planina in Moesia Secunda, and Zeno's goal seems to have been to play the two factions off against each other. Towards this end, in c. 478, Theoderic the Amal led his followers south from Marcianopolis in what was meant to be a joint maneuver with the Roman army against Theoderic Strabo, but the Pannonian Goths were seemingly abandoned by Zeno and the two Gothic leaders subsequently agreed to a mutual non-interference pact.¹⁴¹ Thus, while the Pannonian Goths later travelled through Thrace to attack Constantinople, they likely did not despoil the surrounding landscape due to the agreement with the Thracian Goths.

Having averted confrontation with the Pannonian Goths, Theoderic Strabo soon came to terms with Zeno and re-established the privileged status of the Thracian Goths.¹⁴² The uneasy peace did not last, however, as Theoderic Strabo once again backed an unsuccessful usurper in 479 and accordingly he lost the concessions negotiated in the previous year. The Thracian Goths supposedly attacked the cities of Thrace in response, although no evidence of this damage has yet been identified in the archaeological record.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Heather (1991), 277.

¹⁴¹ Malchus, fr. 18. The two Gothic forces are said to have met near the Haemus Gates, which were situated at the east end of the Stara Planina. Thus it seems the Thracian Goths may have controlled some amount of territory in Haemimontus.

¹⁴² Heather (1991), 289-290.

¹⁴³ It should be noted that the dating of archaeological material from the mid 5th century is particularly poor. Thus, the failure to identify physical evidence of the attacks by the Thracian Goths may simply be due to the material being mis-identified as Hunnic damage.

Zeno is then said to have impelled a group of Bulgars - a semi-nomadic steppe people - to attack Thrace in c. 480, but Theoderic Strabo defeated them and then marched on Constantinople in 481. Yet the massive fortifications of the capital proved to be insurmountable, and Theoderic Strabo died shortly afterwards while leading his people towards Greece.

The reign of Theoderic Strabo was the apogee of Gothic influence in Thrace. After his death, command of the Thracian Goths passed to Theoderic's son Recitach, who ruled uneventfully until c. 484 when he was murdered by Theoderic the Amal in a suburb of Constantinople. No further independent rulers of the Thracian Goths are attested after Recitach and it seems most of the former followers of Theoderic Strabo joined the ranks of his erstwhile rival, Theoderic the Amal. Thus, while some Goths certainly remained in Thrace, many left the region in c. 488 when Theoderic the Amal (soon-to-be Theoderic the Great) marched on Italy.

The Building Programmes of Anastasius & Justinian

When Zeno died in 491, his widow Ariadne married the aged Anastasius, securing the latter's position as the next emperor. As a skilled financial administrator, Anastasius undertook several bureaucratic and economic initiatives as emperor, such as widespread building programmes. No specific evidence of Anastasian construction in the cities of Thracia has been identified at present, but this disparity may be a result of modern analytical prejudice rather than being indicative of Anastasius' disregard for Thracia.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ See below, p. 56.

Nevertheless, for much of his reign, Anastasius was occupied with major conflicts in Isauria and along the Persian frontier, which resulted in the transfer of much of the Thracian army to the east.¹⁴⁵ As a result, the Bulgars took advantage of the depleted military presence along the Lower Danube to launch attacks into Moesia Secunda and Thrace in 493, 499, and 502.¹⁴⁶ Attempts to determine the impact of the Bulgar raids have been frustrated, however, by the brevity of the historical testimony and there is currently next to no indication which parts of Moesia or Thrace were affected. The only hint at the reach of the Bulgars is a particularly bloody battle near the Tzurta River in 499, which has been very tentatively identified as a tributary of the Maritsa.¹⁴⁷ Thus, it is possible the Bulgars ranged south of the Stara Planina in 499, although this conclusion is largely speculative.

Another episode that is usually said to have affected Thrace at this time was the revolt of Vitalian in 514-516. As *comes foederati*, Vitalian was supported by the inhabitants and army of Thrace due to their dissatisfaction with both Anastasius' tax programme and his doctrinal positions.¹⁴⁸ Yet despite several references to Thrace as the usurper's power base, the revolt of Vitalian does not appear to have included the province of Thracia. For example, all of the major battles occurred in the vicinity of Odessos in eastern Moesia Secunda. Furthermore, John Malalas specifies that Vitalian controlled "Thrace, Scythia and Moesia as far as Odessos and Anchialos".¹⁴⁹ Since Anchialos (modern Pomorie, Bulgaria) was situated only c. 20 km south of the very eastern end of the Stara Planina, Vitalian seems to have been established primarily near the west coast of the Black Sea with only limited reach into Haemimontus. The

¹⁴⁵ For the reign of Anastasius, see especially Haarer (2006).

¹⁴⁶ Marc. C. 493; 499; 502. Cf. Jord. *Rom.* 356; Zon. 14.3.26; 14.4.8-10.

¹⁴⁷ See Croke (2001), 53 for the identification of the Tzurta.

¹⁴⁸ Lee (), 56-57.

¹⁴⁹ John Malalas 402; Evagrius Scholasticus 3.43.

references to Thrace in relation to the revolt of Vitalian, therefore, should not immediately be assumed to include the entire diocese.

Due to Anastasius' administrative skill, his successors Justin (r. 518-527) and Justinian (r. 527-565) are said to have benefited from a significant treasury surplus upon their respective accessions. The traditional view among historians has long been that these funds were used, in addition to the spoils of several successful wars, by Justinian in particular to fund an extensive building programme across the width and breadth of the Roman Empire.¹⁵⁰ This conclusion is largely based on the work *De Aedificiis*, written by Procopius of Caesarea, which is an unfinished panegyric composition that provides a very extensive overview of structures purportedly built by Justinian.¹⁵¹ The scope of the work, known in English as the *Buildings*, spans nearly every region controlled by Justinian, although some sections are written in decidedly more detail than others; the provinces of Thrace, for instance, appear largely as simple lists of sites at which building was undertaken.

While the *Buildings* has been a valuable resource for the study of 6th-century sites, several discrepancies arise upon comparison of the text with archaeological and epigraphic material. In some instances, Procopius exaggerated the extent to which Justinian strengthened particular sites, as was demonstrated by Croke and Crow.¹⁵² Furthermore, archaeological evidence has also indicated that several sites that are listed in the *Buildings* as being reinforced by Justinian were actually repaired and fortified by Anastasius. Such is the case, for instance, at Tomis and Histria in Scythia Minor.¹⁵³ Procopius also recounts that Ratiaria in Dacia

¹⁵⁰ For instance, see Evans (2005), 49-58; Brown (1971), 154; Downey (1950), 262.

¹⁵¹ Cameron (1985), 84-87.

¹⁵² Croke & Crow (1983).

¹⁵³ Croke & Crow (1983), 147.

Ripensis was repaired by Justinian, but epigraphic evidence attests to construction at the legionary base during the reign of Anastasius.¹⁵⁴ These select examples are sufficient to demonstrate the inconsistencies in the *Buildings* and perhaps illustrates that the repair and fortification of sites actually started as early as the reign of Anastasius. Thus, while Justinian undoubtedly did endeavour to strengthen many sites during his reign, the *Buildings* ought to be approached with some caution as a definitive source for his building programme and, ideally, archaeological data should be sought to support the textual evidence.

¹⁵⁴ Velkov (1985), 886-889.

CHAPTER 2

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THRACE

This chapter was originally conceived as a way to investigate the impact that individual natural and constructed features had on the urban centres of Thracia. Yet, it quickly became apparent that discerning whether the proximity of a single, specific feature of the landscape influenced an aspect of city life was unproductive. Rather, the effects of various features are often closely intertwined. The detailed study of these influences and effects is a task far larger than can be covered here in a single chapter, and likely ought to be a thesis unto itself, but even a preliminary consideration will be valuable for understanding the place of the Thracian cities in their surrounding landscapes.

Accordingly, rather than focus on every individual natural or constructed feature of the landscape, the aim of this chapter is to examine elements that are particularly prominent in late antique Thracia. Specifically, the chapter explores the role of the nearby mountains, water resources, and ecclesiastical structures.

Mountains

Thracia was surrounded on three sides by mountain ranges and, as a result, mountains were perhaps the most prominent geographic feature in the province. To the north, the section of the Stara Planina between the valley of the River Vit and the Vratnik Pass north of Sliven served as the towering border between Thracia and Moesia Secunda. The province of Thracia also included the Sredna Gora range east of the Topolnitsa River, which runs parallel to the Stara Planina until its easternmost extremity in the vicinity of Yambol. A section of the Sredna

Gora also extends southward from roughly the Topolnitsa Reservoir to the Maritsa River, where the mountains meet the Rhodopes. This southward extension served as the western boundary of Thracia and the southern limit of the province was the northern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. Thus, life in Thracia was quite literally framed by the surrounding mountainous landscape.

The impact of the Thracian mountains on the character and development of the cities within the province was significant. The mountains served as important defensive barriers, shielding the centre of the province from incursions coming from the north, west, and south. A small number of narrow passes provided the only means of crossing the mountains and these passes were often well-defended, making unwanted travel very difficult. A notable example of such a well-fortified pass is the Ihtiman Pass (Succi), which is the route through which the major arterial road – the *Via Militaris* – crosses the Sredna Gora at the border between the provinces of Dacia Mediterranea and Thracia.¹⁵⁵ The Troyan Pass (also known as the Beklemeto Pass) served a similar function for the Oescus-Philippopolis road as it traversed the Stara Planina and, farther to the east, the Novae-Nicopolis ad Istrum-Beroe road crossed the mountains at the Shipka Pass, although there are several smaller passes at the eastern end of the Stara Planina as well.¹⁵⁶ In the south, the Rhodope Mountains were crossed by a number of different roads but they do not appear to have been nearly as well-defended as the passes over the Stara Planina.¹⁵⁷

Considering the security provided by the surrounding mountains, one might expect the cities of Thracia to not be overly concerned with defence, but the archaeological data

¹⁵⁵ Маджаров (2009), 82-86.

¹⁵⁶ Маджаров (2004); Wendel (2005), 180-196.

¹⁵⁷ Маджаров (2009), 256-320.

suggests otherwise. All three of the major cities were supplied with significant fortifications by the end of the Tetrarchic period. The walls at Philippopolis and Augusta Traian- Beroe, for example, are massive and the initial construction at Diocletianopolis also included a complete circuit wall, indicating the founders were conscious of the need to properly protect the city from the outset of the foundation efforts. Furthermore, the barrack buildings at Diocletianopolis are an unambiguous indicator of military concern.

An emphasis on defence, while counter-intuitive for a province with such prominent natural protection, makes a great deal of sense when considering how the mountains surrounding Thracia direct movement through the landscape. The mountains are not impassable barriers; rather, they are difficult barriers that funnel travel into a small number of strategic corridors. Thus, when a military force does enter the province from any direction except for from the east, it will necessarily use one of the mountain passes. For example, the Avars under Bayan I crossed the Stara Planina by means of the Shipka Pass north of Augusta Traiana-Beroe during their invasion of 588.¹⁵⁸ The mountains equally affected the movement of Roman forces, as evidenced by Comentiolus' desire to re-open the Trojan Pass connecting Oescus with Philippopolis.¹⁵⁹ Conversely, the Huns appear to have been the only foreign force to successfully enter Thracia from the west when they used the imperial infrastructure against the Romans and advanced along the Via Militaris, capturing numerous cities along the way.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Whitby (1988), 171.

¹⁵⁹ Theoph. Simoc. 8.4.3-8.

¹⁶⁰ The Ihtiman Pass was not only a barrier against foreign foes; in Julian's struggle against Constantius II, the pass played a key strategic role separating Dacia from Thrace and keeping the rivals separated. Furthermore, immediately after Constantius' death, Julian was quick to take the pass and advance into Thrace. Amm. Marc. 21.12; 22.2.

The concentration of movement into a few narrow avenues thereby requires any city near the mountain passes to be adequately protected since they will be directly in the enemy's line of advance and prone to attacks. Both Diocletianopolis and Augusta Traiana-Beroe are in such a position; the former is situated just west of the Stryama Gorge, which is the main route through the central Sredna Gora, and the latter lies south of several smaller passes through the eastern Sredna Gora. Both cities, therefore, needed to be well-fortified in case the highland defences failed and a force broke through the mountains. This concern was identified well before Late Antiquity, since Augusta Traiana-Beroe was provided with city walls in the 2nd century, but the fortification of Diocletianopolis in the Tetrarchic period indicates the defence of cities is clearly a continuing concern.

The major exception, of course, is when enemies were able to circumvent the mountains and enter the province from the east. This was usually accomplished either by moving south from Marcianopolis, thereby traversing the Stara Planina at its eastern end where it is much less precipitous, or by following the *Via Militaris* from Hadrianopolis.¹⁶¹ Thus, while Thracia was well-defended by its geography, it was certainly not impervious to raids or invasions.

In addition to defence, the mountains of Thracia may have also had a significant impact on the industrial activity of nearby cities. Unfortunately, few studies have been published regarding the mineral wealth of the region in the Roman period and Late Antiquity. While there are certainly fewer proven mineral deposits in Thracia, the Sredna Gora range contains several sources of iron ore.¹⁶² Further archaeological investigation is required to

¹⁶¹ This was, apparently, the favoured tactic of the Avars. Furthermore, the Goths led by Fritigern moved southwards from Marcianopolis in this direction as well.

¹⁶² Nenov (2008).

ascertain whether these deposits were exploited in Late Antiquity, but Augusta Traiana-Beroe was in an excellent location to serve as a supply and distribution hub for mining operations in the eastern Sredna Gora and the hilly regions on the border between Thracia and Haemimontus. This is an entirely hypothetical suggestion at this point, however, since no archaeological evidence for significant iron processing or trade has been found so far in Augusta Traiana-Beroe. While frustrating, such a scarcity of material is not surprising; much of Augusta Traiana-Beroe remains unexcavated under the modern city of Stara Zagora, and what has been excavated largely consists of the major urban infrastructure or attractive elements. As a result, the ancient city's walls, gates, churches, and mosaics have received most of the scholarly attention and funding to date, while the more mundane questions regarding quotidian life, employment, industry, and trade have not been considered sufficiently. For example, archaeologists have not yet identified a single shop of any kind within Augusta Traiana-Beroe – something which should be ubiquitous and would reveal important information about the daily activities of the city. Future investigations of the remains of Augusta Traiana-Beroe will hopefully redress these gaps in the archaeological record and contribute to a more complete understanding of the impact of the nearby mining enterprises on the city's character and development.

While there is frustratingly little evidence for metalworking in Thracia, recent investigations into lime production in the region of Augusta Traiana-Beroe have proved more fruitful. Near the village of Ostra Mogila in the eastern Sredna Gora range, at a distance of about 15 km from Augusta Traiana-Beroe, the archaeological remains of an ancient lime kiln have been identified.¹⁶³ The remains consist of an elliptical firing chamber sunk directly into

¹⁶³ Камшишева (2016).

the ground, a vaulted brick stoke hole, and two projecting stone walls. Unfortunately, continued looting activities have seriously damaged the archaeological evidence from the site, making it difficult to determine the exact size of the kiln, but the excavators have nevertheless been able to recover some data about the structure. The firing chamber appears to be cone-shaped, measuring 2.92 m x 2.52 m at the base and expanding in diameter as the height of the walls increase. The walls of the firing chamber are only preserved up to a height of 2.72 m, so it is not possible to determine the exact volume of the entire kiln, but the excavators suggest the upper portion could have been up to 3.40 m in diameter. This is a reasonable assumption, since the diameter of lime kilns in the Roman Empire was frequently around 3 m.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, the interior of the firing chamber was plastered several times, which suggests it was used to produce lime on more than one occasion. The dating evidence suggests the kiln was constructed after the mid-3rd century, thus its extended use could well stretch into Late Antiquity.

A second ancient lime kiln in the eastern Sredna Gora was identified 3 km south-east of the village of Elhovo – about 11 km south of Ostra Mogila and 15 km south-west of Augusta Traiana-Beroe. The kiln was discovered during the investigation of an adjacent building complex, which has been described as a *villa rustica*. It is likely the two sites are associated, but regrettably both now lie beneath the Chatalka Reservoir, hindering further analysis. The initial study of the kiln, however, determined it to have consisted of a round firing chamber with a brick channel cut through the floor. Moreover, the kiln was of typical dimensions – the diameter of the chamber was 3.00 m and it had a depth of 4.00 m. Similar to the kiln at Ostra Mogila, the installation near Elhovo appears to have been constructed

¹⁶⁴ Dix (1982), 333.

after the mid-3rd century. Furthermore, the walls of the firing chamber near Elhovo appeared to have been heavily-charred, indicating it also saw a prolonged period of use. The villa was certainly operating until at least the reign of Honorius (393-423), so it is not unlikely the lime kiln was in use until the late-4th/early-5th century as well.¹⁶⁵

For the purpose of this study (i.e. how the landscape affects nearby cities), it is important to consider the goal of these kilns. If the kilns of the eastern Sredna Gora were used for only a single firing, it is likely they would have been used to support the construction of nearby structures – such as the adjacent villa at Chataalka – and such an arrangement would have had little impact on the character or development of neighbouring Augusta Traiana-Beroe. As discussed above, however, the archaeological evidence indicates both kilns operated over a prolonged period, thereby implying the kilns were used for multiple firings. The implication of continued use is more interesting to the current analysis since such an arrangement would have produced more material than was necessary for construction efforts in the immediate vicinity. As a result, the kilns at Ostra Mogila and Elhovo may, in fact, have supplied external consumers farther afield – such as in Augusta Traiana-Beroe. Both sites are within a single day’s travel on foot from Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and even slower means of travel used to transport the lime (e.g. ox carts, loaded mules, mule carts) could have made the journey reasonably quickly.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the raw materials required for the production of lime on a larger scale would have been readily available; a Roman limestone quarry was likely in operation at the modern village of Starozagorski Bani, which is only 3 km away from Ostra

¹⁶⁵ Nikolov (1984).

¹⁶⁶ Assuming an average travel time of 30 km/day on foot or by mule cart, and around 12 km/day for an ox cart. Thus, someone on foot/with a loaded mule could go to Augusta Traiana-Beroe and come back in a single day. Road incline may have made the trip a bit more difficult/longer.

Mogila.¹⁶⁷ Thus, with an ample and accessible supply of limestone, and being located in close proximity to Augusta Traiana-Beroe, it is not unlikely the surplus lime produced by the kilns at Ostra Mogila and Elhovo was intended for an urban market.

The impact of these two lime kilns in particular on the urban character of Augusta Traiana-Beroe is most probably negligible, but I believe they are representative of a wider – and more significant – trend in the eastern Sredna Gora. The region has been producing lime for a long time. The question of lime production in Thracia has received little to no attention, thus further directed investigation of the topic will likely reveal additional kilns in the eastern Sredna Gora. If there are other installations similar to what has been discovered at Ostra Mogila and Elhovo – that is, lime kilns used over an extended period and thereby producing a surplus of lime – then it may be that the eastern Sredna Gora was a regional leader in the production of lime.

Water Resources

Despite being landlocked, Thracia boasts a wealth of water resources. The Maritsa River (ancient Hebros) flows from its source in the Rila Mountains and runs southeast through the heart of the Thracian Plain for roughly 340 km.¹⁶⁸ It eventually turns south at Hadrianopolis and continues for an additional 140 km until it empties into the north Aegean near the ancient city of Ainos. Moreover, six major tributaries of the Maritsa stretch across Thracia, resulting in the entire province being situated within the Maritsa drainage basin. The largest right

¹⁶⁷ Каминшева (2016).

¹⁶⁸ The river is alternatively named the Evros or the Meriç in Greece and Turkey, respectively.

tributaries in Thracia are the Vacha and Harmanliyska, which flow down from the Rhodopes, and the left tributaries include the Topolnitsa, Stryama, Sazliyka, and Tundzha.¹⁶⁹

The numerous benefits of rivers such as these were well-known in antiquity. Among many other uses, rivers provide fresh water for drinking, cleaning, or bathing; they facilitate the irrigation of otherwise unfavourable agricultural land; they serve as a source of fish and birds for consumption; and they afford expedient vectors for communication, trade, and travel. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the urban centres of Thracia were in close proximity to such valuable resources. Philippopolis, for example, developed on the right bank of the Maritsa, and Augusta Traiana-Beroe was situated adjacent to the upper reaches of the Sazliyka tributary. Furthermore, Diocletianopolis, although not directly connected to one of the main waterways of the province, had smaller streams outside both the east and west walls. Thus, all of the major urban centres of Thracia were well-provisioned with that most-cherished resource – fresh water.

While the urban centres of Thracia were well-placed with respect to access to rivers, the impact of these natural features on the character and development of the cities is difficult to determine. For example, the extent to which the river environments of Thracia were exploited for food is unclear since faunal remains from excavations at urban sites in the region are often overlooked; fish bones in particular are exceptionally difficult to recognize during excavation due to their small size. As a result, an analysis of a faunal assemblage from a Thracian riverine city is greatly anticipated.

¹⁶⁹ The Arda, Luda Reka, and Ergene are additional major tributaries of the Maritsa farther downstream but are located in the provinces of Rhodope and Europa.

The nearest assemblage that could be used as a model for the dining habits of citizens from Thracia are the faunal remains from Nicopolis ad Istrum. Located near the present-day village of Nikyup, Bulgaria, Nicopolis ad Istrum was a prominent city north of the Stara Planina and, more significantly for this comparison, was adjacent to the Rositza River – a major tributary of the Yantra. Moreover, the 1985-1992 Anglo-Bulgarian excavations therein produced detailed reports of the faunal assemblages recovered from the site, including the mammal, reptile, bird, and fish remains.¹⁷⁰

Domestic animals comprise the overwhelming majority of recovered material from Nicopolis ad Istrum and provide little information about the city's interaction with its riverine environment, but the remains of wild animals do offer some interesting insights. The ichthyofaunal remains, for example, demonstrate clearly the inhabitants of Nicopolis ad Istrum exploited the nearby river as an ample source of food; excavators recovered a total of 975 fish bones from layers dated securely to Late Antiquity, which is the largest such assemblage in Bulgaria and the neighbouring regions.¹⁷¹ The size of the assemblage is largely attributable to the use of sieving by the excavators from the outset, which is usually absent from other projects in the region.

In total, 22 different species of fish were identified in the ichthyofaunal remains. Moreover, butchery marks were found on several of the bones, indicating the fish were used

¹⁷⁰ Poulter (ed.) (2007). Only from the British excavations in the southern part of the site, but this sector was the main occupied area during Late Antiquity so it ought to serve as an appropriate comparison.

¹⁷¹ Beech & Irving (2007), 226, Table 12.1. For the purposes of this analysis I have considered the fish bones from three periods, as defined by the excavators: Late Roman (250-450), Early Byzantine (450-600), and Late Roman-Early Byzantine (250-600). The Mid-Late Roman period (175-450), which extends into Late Antiquity, was not considered due to the earliest limit being well outside the era under examination. Furthermore, excavations produced only seven bone fragments from the Mid-Late Roman period, representing a negligible sample size. Moreover, the species of the majority of the fish bones (586 of 975, or 60.1%) cannot be determined.

specifically for food. The analysis of the bird bones collected from the site indicate that waterborne birds were also consumed.¹⁷² Clearly then, the citizens of Nicopolis ad Istrum exploited the riverine environment to their own nutritious and culinary betterment.

Whether or not the citizens of Augusta Traiana-Beroe enjoyed a similar diet cannot be determined at present, but the case of Nicopolis ad Istrum provides a helpful example of what can be achieved. A dedicated study directed at clarifying the relationship between Augusta Traiana-Beroe and the river ecology would be invaluable as it could provide significant insight into the daily lives of the citizens of late antique Augusta Traiana-Beroe.

Ecclesiastical Buildings¹⁷³

The cities of late antique Thracia are described in written sources as important ecclesiastical centres. Philippopolis, for example, was the seat of the provincial metropolitan, and was also the city in which Arian bishops chose to hold a counter-synod in 343/4 as a response to the Council of Serdica.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, Augusta Traiana-Beroe was an episcopal seat as well and Diocletianopolis was certainly an episcopal see by the 5th century, although it is possible a bishop of the city was present at the Council of Serdica in 343 or the Council of Ephesus in 431.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Boev & Beech (2007), 243. The authors even muse that: “The numerous meanders and the marshland within the river valleys would have provided an excellent habitat for a variety of avifauna...”

¹⁷³ Reed (2018). The analysis concerning the interplay between cities and surrounding ecclesiastical centres presented below was originally given as a paper at the First International Roman and Late Antique Thrace Conference and I must express my thanks for the opportunity to test the waters.

¹⁷⁴ Soc. *HE* II, 20; VII, 36-37; Soz. *HE* III, 11; Mansi III, 140.

¹⁷⁵ *ACO* II.1, 340; Besevliev (1964). A bishop of Diocletianopolis is present at Serdica and Ephesus, but it is not evident that this is Diocletianopolis in Thrace. The first definite attestation of a bishop of Diocletianopolis in Thrace is the bishop Epictetus at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Furthermore, the archaeological evidence recovered from excavations within the cities lends additional support to the conception of these urban centres as major religious sites. In Philippopolis, excavators have discovered the remains of four Christian basilicas, with construction dates ranging from the mid-4th century to the mid-6th century.¹⁷⁶ A martyrium was also located outside of the east gate of the city, and another *extra-muros* early Christian complex may have served as a monastery.¹⁷⁷ The situation is similar in Augusta Traiana-Beroe, in which at least two Christian basilicas have been identified as well as a martyrium and another monastery complex.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps the most interesting results come from Diocletianopolis, where ten separate churches have been identified, ranging in date from the 4th to the 6th century.¹⁷⁹ Significant ecclesiastical construction, therefore, took place in each of the major urban centres of Thracia in Late Antiquity.

There are, however, problems with interpreting the religious importance of a site based on the apparent number of ecclesiastical buildings. An obvious example is Diocletianopolis. The city boasts the highest number of ecclesiastical buildings in Thracia during Late Antiquity, but it is clear from the historical sources that the see of Diocletianopolis was certainly subordinate to the metropolitan bishop of Philippopolis. As a result, in order to understand better the respective religious significance of the cities of late antique Thracia, this section broadens the scope of analysis to examine the situation at a regional level. By considering the landscape surrounding the urban centres and drawing

¹⁷⁶ Vosparchieva (2002); Кесякова (1999), 66-75; Чанева-Дечевска (1999), 253-254.

¹⁷⁷ Topalilov (2007); Vosparchieva (2001).

¹⁷⁸ Nikolov (1987), 104-107; Николов (1965).

¹⁷⁹ Маджаров, К. (1993), 124-141; Madzharov, M. (1989).

comparisons with other ecclesiastical centres in the province, it is possible to contextualize properly the status of Thracian cities within the regional religious organization.

In addition to major urban centres such as Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis, many smaller settlements throughout Thracia were also occupied between the 4th and 6th century. The various site reports and excavation results from these smaller settlements are often difficult to consult, but the results of most have been collected in a recent volume of the *Tabula Imperii Romani*, specifically K-35/2 - Philippopolis.¹⁸⁰ This analysis, therefore, uses the results presented in the *TIR* K-35/2 to analyse the settlement pattern and distribution of ecclesiastical building in late antique Thracia.

Specifically, data has been collected about sites that were occupied during Late Antiquity, including cities, fortresses, road stations, villas, other smaller settlements, and isolated buildings. A single type of site is not favoured over another in order to achieve a complete picture of settlement patterns across the province. Moreover, the sites included in the investigation must have demonstrated some archaeological evidence of occupation during the period of study. The most common form of such evidence is, not surprisingly, pottery and other ceramic material dated to Late Antiquity, but also includes coins, inscriptions, construction method, and the typological dating of structures.

From the total number of sites with evidence of occupation in Late Antiquity, the locations with ecclesiastical buildings were then determined. The ecclesiastical buildings identified in Thracia comprise primarily churches, but also include smaller chapels, martyria, and monastery complexes. In some cases, the exact purpose of a structure is unclear, such as whether a basilica was an episcopal basilica or a martyrium. Nevertheless, this is a largely

¹⁸⁰ *TIR* K-35/2.

irrelevant concern for the present discussion; it is important that the building had a religious function, regardless of what the exact function was. A closer analysis of the exact nature of the ecclesiastical buildings of Thracia will likely yield further interesting results, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present discussion.

There is, however, a notable problem with using the data compiled in the *TIR* K-35/2. Specifically, the problem is one of dating. The chronological extent of the analysis is purposefully extensive because there are very few cases in the *TIR* K-35/2 in which sites are dated precisely. What is more common is the categorization of sites or structures into broad periods without definition, such as a basilica at Dorkovo that is dated from the 2nd – 6th century or the “early Christian” basilica at Matentisa.¹⁸¹ Accordingly, it is difficult to examine processes in fine detail based on the data presented in the *TIR* K-35/2 and information such as precise dates of occupation are not available. Sites included in the analysis, therefore, must have demonstrated

As a result of this constraint, this investigation necessarily focuses on long-term processes and addresses broad trends occurring in late antique Thracia. Nevertheless, the scope of the material in the *TIR* K-35/2 is impressive and provides a good starting point for an investigation of the landscape of Thracia in Late Antiquity.

Based on the data available in the *TIR* K-35/2, a total of 236 sites in the territory of the province of Thracia demonstrate evidence of occupation in Late Antiquity. The major urban centres of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis account for a small number of these locations, but the vast majority are much smaller and more modest sites. More significantly for this analysis, out of the total of 236 sites in Thracia, only 34

¹⁸¹ *TIR* K-35/2, 112, 217.

(14.4%) have any evidence of ecclesiastical construction. A summary of the sites with religious building in Thracia is presented in **Table 1** at the end of the chapter.

Taken on their own, these figures are interesting but convey very little significant information. It is not immediately clear, for instance, whether having 14.4% of occupied sites with religious buildings is abnormal. Thus, in order to contextualize properly the results from Thracia, it is necessary to compare the results to similar data from another province. Consequently, a similar analysis was conducted on the material in the *TIR K-35/2* from Moesia Secunda. Moesia Secunda provides a good comparison since it is geographically adjacent to Thracia and also part of the Diocese of Thrace. Furthermore, the province's proximity to the Danubian border and its intense militarization are factors that may have influenced the character and development of the provincial organization in ways that are not relevant to an inland province such as Thracia, which may then become apparent in an analysis of landscape patterns.

Accordingly, after analysing the data in the *TIR K-35/2* from Moesia Secunda, a total of 432 sites were identified with archaeological evidence of occupation in Late Antiquity. Thus, nearly twice as many late antique sites have been investigated north of the Stara Planina. This is unsurprising, since the Danubian provinces have been the focus of a great deal of archaeological interest in recent decades due to a fascination with the military organization of the Lower Danube.¹⁸² The more significant figure is the number of sites with evidence of ecclesiastical building; from a total of 432 late antique sites in Moesia Secunda, only 37 (08.6%) had a religious building of some sort. The sites from Moesia Secunda are presented

¹⁸² Poulter (2013); Băjenaru (2010); Poulter (2007); Mirković (2005); von Bülow & Milčeva (1999); Zahariade (1999); Biernacki & Pawlak (1997); Sarnowski (1990); Poulter (1983).

in **Table 2**. Thus, while there may be a larger absolute number of late antique sites that have been identified along the Lower Danube, there is a greater proportion of ecclesiastical construction in the province of Thracia.

Furthermore, the geographic location of the sites with ecclesiastical building within the province of Thracia reveals an interesting distribution pattern. As expected, there is a distinct concentration of ecclesiastical buildings in the major urban centres. Most sites have evidence of only a single church, and a small number of cases have evidence of two, but the only locations with three or more religious buildings are the cities of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis. The contextual evidence, therefore, suggests the level of attention devoted to ecclesiastical development within the urban centres was exceptional compared to the surrounding landscape. The higher number of churches and other religious buildings at urban sites may be a reflection of a higher population, but this again does not explain the reason for the remarkable number of churches at Diocletianopolis. Unfortunately, the reason for such attention is a matter for another investigation.

Even looking beyond the walls of the major urban centres, it is evident the cities of Thracia played a role in the shaping of the ecclesiastical landscape of the province. The largest grouping of sites with religious buildings is found in close proximity to Philippopolis, including sites such as the Red Church at Perushtitsa and a series of overlapping churches at Stamboliyski. Another grouping seems to surround Diocletianopolis, with religious buildings identified at Matenitsa, Krasново, and Vasil Levski. Interestingly, there does not seem to be a similar pattern around the city of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, although this may be a result of methodological problems discussed below. Instead, the final concentration of religious sites appears to be distributed along the route of major roads. A line of sites with churches extends

from Zlatna Livada in the north to Belitsa in the south, mirroring closely the route of the *Via Militaris*.¹⁸³ Furthermore, the sites with ecclesiastical building in the north-east of the province – specifically, Karassura, Karanovo, and Cabyle – are all located along the road that links the *Via Militaris* with Anchialos and the Black Sea, and which also passes through Augusta Traiana-Beroe.¹⁸⁴

The distribution of the sites also illustrates the prevalence of ecclesiastical construction at sites of high elevation. The majority of smaller settlements with religious buildings seem to be clustered in the northern Rhodope Mountains, the Sredna Gora range, or in the hilly terrain in the east of the province. This pattern may be explained by suggesting religious leaders preferred to build churches in remote mountainous locations, but it is more likely that this distribution is simply a reflection of modern excavation preferences and methodological issues. Sites at high elevation are often more immediately visible than remains of similar structures in lower altitudes, particularly within alluvial plains where archaeological material can be covered quickly by large sedimentary deposits.¹⁸⁵ This appears to be the case in the province of Thracia, where most of the identified sites from Late Antiquity are located in the surrounding highlands, and the centre of the province – that is, the rich agricultural landscape centred on the Maritsa River – is noticeably bare of archaeological evidence. Visibility factors may also explain the scarcity of evidence immediately south of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, since the region is similarly at a low elevation and subject to large sedimentary deposits. This hypothesis is further supported by a similar pattern in Moesia Secunda, where the majority of archaeological evidence has been recovered in the Stara Planina and the hilly

¹⁸³ Wendel (2005), 108-138.

¹⁸⁴ Малжаров, М. (2009), 103-109; Wendel (2005), 99, 104-107

¹⁸⁵ Goldberg & Macphail (2006), 72-84; Rick (1976).

eastern region. Conversely, the relatively flat landscape in the west of Moesia Secunda, between modern Veliko Tarnovo and the Danube, is largely devoid of archaeological remains – with a few notable exceptions such as Nicopolis ad Istrum.

The agricultural value of the lowlands may be another contributing factor to the relative absence of reported archaeological sites in the area between the Sredna Gora and Rhodope Mountains. As a result of the marked fertility of the Upper Thracian Plain, the region has been subject to consistent and extensive agricultural exploitation; in the early 20th century, the region was the foremost agricultural producer in Bulgaria across nearly every category provided, and in the early 21st century, it continues to be the leading producer of wine, rye, and fruits (Agrarian Report 2014, 22-61; Beshkov 1939). The impact of such intensive agricultural operations on the archaeological record is substantial. Modern ploughs, in particular, not only disturb cultural layers but can also damage – or even destroy – more substantial remains, such as the walls or floors of smaller structures.¹⁸⁶ Thus, it is entirely likely the most visible archaeological remains in the lowland areas of late antique Thracia have been damaged or displaced by the long history of agricultural development in the region and require more intensive investigations of the landscape to detect properly.

The analysis presented herein suggests several conclusions. The first is a confirmation of the importance of the cities of late antique Thracia as centres of ecclesiastical attention. This is evident in the sheer number of religious buildings erected in the cities, but also by the comparison with the state of ecclesiastical construction in the surrounding landscape. In stark contrast with the thriving development of the religious infrastructure in Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis, the smaller sites around Thracia demonstrate

¹⁸⁶ Hinchliffe & Schadla-Hall (1980).

comparatively far fewer examples of ecclesiastical building. While the exact reasons for this difference of attention remain unclear, it is at least apparent that there was indeed a great deal of focus on the urban centres on behalf of the provincial clergy.

It is also clear the religious influence of Thracian cities was not restricted to the *intra muros* area. Clusters of smaller sites that have religious buildings are located primarily in close proximity to the cities of Philippopolis and Diocletianopolis, and are often no more than a single day's travel from the urban centres. A similar pattern may become apparent around Augusta Traiana-Beroe with further archaeological examination.

Perhaps the most striking conclusion of this analysis is the clear need to conduct additional investigations in the area of central Thracia. Evidence from the region between the Rhodope Mountains and the Sredna Gora range is not nearly as immediately apparent to investigators due to archaeological and methodological difficulties, and it is likely that further evidence will be recovered as a result of any renewed effort to study the landscape.

Conclusion

One aspect that becomes apparent as a result of this analysis is the difficulty in determining whether the urban planners of antiquity were aware of the influence of the surrounding landscape. For example, did the planners of Diocletianopolis deliberately consider the funnelling effect of its position near the mountains and the Oescus-Philippopolis road when they chose the site of the city? Or was it simply an unconscious influence?

As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, however, this analysis is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it is intended to be a starting point for further lines of enquiry in the future. The interaction between the cities of Thracia and the surrounding landscape is a topic

that has been largely ignored, despite its significance to the understanding of both the cities and the countryside. It is my intention, therefore, that this chapter stimulate both the discussion of the interplay between town and countryside as well as the analysis of other features of the landscape.

For example, the influence of movement vectors is a particularly interesting subject that certainly merits further examination. Thracia was a province that was well-integrated into the road network system and had links to the Middle Danube, the Lower Danube, the Aegean, and Constantinople. Furthermore, the role of the Maritsa is very often ignored in discussions of travel and transportation in Thracia, yet the river was certainly navigable as far as the Hellenistic emporium of Pistros. Accordingly, the river transport system of Thracia is a subject ripe for further investigation.

Modern Name	Ancient Name	Ecclesiastical Building Dates	TIR K-35/2 Page #
Debrashtitsa		Early Christian?	89
Dolni Voden		4 th – 5 th century	110
Dorkovo		Early Christian	112
Dorkovo - Tsepina		6 th century?	112
Golyamo Belovo		Early Christian	135
Gorno Novo Selo		4 th – 5 th century	138-139
Hisar	Diocletianopolis	4 th – 6 th century	98-102
Hristo Danovo	Sub Radices	Late 4 th century	366
Isperihovo		5 th century	158-159
Isperihovo - Klisatepe		5 th – 6 th century	158-159
Kabile	Cabyle/Diospolis?	4 th – 6 th century	68-73; 103-104
Karanovo		Early Byzantine	171
Kostandovo		5 th – 6 th century	181-182
Kovachevo		5 th – 6 th century	183
Krasново		6 th century?	187
Krepost		4 th – 6 th century	188
Lyubenovo		5 th century	203
Matenitsa		Early Christian	217
Nova Mahala		5 th – 7 th century	255
Patalenitsa		3 rd – 4 th century?	283
Patalenitsa - Granča		6 th century	283
Perushtitsa		4 th – 9 th century	290
Plovdiv	Philippopolis	4 th – 7 th century	293-299
Plovdiv - Komatevo		5 th – 6 th century	301-302
Rupikte	Carasura	Early Christian	73
Sinitovo	Bessapara	4 th century?	46-47
Spahievo		4 th century?	356
Stamboliyski		4 th – 6 th century	357-358
Stara Zagora	Beroe/Augusta Traiana	4 th – 6 th century	29-32
Vasil Levski		5 th – 6 th century	423
Velingrad		Late antique	425
Vinogradets		5 th – 6 th century	427
Yavorovo		Mid-4 th century	436-437
Zlatna Livada		4 th – 6 th century?	446

Table 1. Sites with ecclesiastical buildings in Thracia.

Modern Name	Ancient Name	Ecclesiastical Building Dating	TIR K-35/2 Page #
Blaskovo		Late antique	52
Bliznatsi	Erite	5 th – 6 th century	122
Bonevo		4 th – 6 th century	55
Cherkovna		4 th – 6 th century	77
Chomakovtsi	Zetnoukortu?	4 th – 6 th century	84
Dalbok Dol		Early Christian	87
Dalgopol		Early Christian	87-88
Devnya	Marcianopolis	4 th – 6 th century	213-217
Devnya		5 th – 6 th century	95
Dobril Dol		Late antique	105
Draganovets		2 nd – 6 th century	113
Gabrovo		4 th – 6 th century	126-127
Golesh		4 th – 6 th century	133
Han Krum		4 th – 5 th century	148
Kilifarevo		6 th – 7 th century	174
Konstantinovo		Late antique	178
Koshov		2 nd – 4 th century	180-181
Krivina	Iatrus	4 th – 5 th century	152-156
Krivnya		5 th – 6 th century	189-190
Krivnya - Kaleto		Late antique, 5 th century?	189-190
Lesicheri		4 th century	194-195
Lomets	Sostra	4 th – 6 th century	354-356
Mogilets		5 th century	238
Nikyup	Nicopolis ad Istrum	5 th – 6 th century	244-252
Onogur	Palmatis	Early Christian	279-280
Osenovo		Late antique	275
Ovcharovo		5 th – 6 th century?	276-277
Ravna		Late antique	319
Razgrad	Abritus	6 th century	1-8
Shkorpilovtsi		5 th – 6 th century	343
Svishtov	Novae	Late 4 th – 6 th century	255-262
Targovishte		5 th – 6 th century	371-372
Tsarkvitsa		5 th – 6 th century	404
Varna	Odessos	5 th – 6 th century	266-270
Varna – Dzhanavar Tepe		5 th century	419-421
Veliko Tarnovo	Zikideva	Late 5 th – 6 th century	443-444
Zaychino Oreshe		Late antique?	440

Table 2. Sites with ecclesiastical buildings in Moesia Secunda.

CHAPTER 3

PHILIPPOPOLIS

The late antique city of Philippopolis (modern Plovdiv) occupied three hills on the south bank of the Maritsa River (the ancient Hebros) as well as the flat plain at the base of the hills, with a total fortified area of approximately 80 hectares (**Fig. 1**). The three hills – the modern Nebet Tepe, Dzhambaz Tepe, and Taksim Tepe – comprise the acropolis of the city and afford a commanding view of the surrounding low-lying Thracian Plain. Furthermore, Philippopolis is situated at the intersection of several significant roads and was a major transportation hub. Most notably, the *Via Militaris* passed through the city, but it was also the terminus of roads leading north to legionary bases on the Danube and south across the Rhodope Mountains. Thus, due to its size and strategic location, it should not be surprising that Philippopolis became the capital of the province of Thracia upon Diocletian's reforms of the empire's administration.

As is often the case with sites that have been occupied continuously since antiquity, archaeological excavation of the remains of Philippopolis has been difficult. Many of the features of the ancient city remain buried beneath modern Plovdiv, but others have been uncovered due to rescue excavations prompted by modern development. Due to their nature, the rescue excavations have not undertaken specific, directed research projects. Nevertheless, investigations have been ongoing in the city since the 1950s under the direction of several prominent scholars, most notably Botusharova, Kesjakova, Bospachieva, and Topalilov.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ There are a plethora of publications concerning various aspects and features of Philippopolis, but see especially Топалилов (2012); Topalilov (2012); Bospačieva (2005); Bospachieva (2003); Bospachieva (2002); Bospachieva (2002); Bospachieva (2001); Кесякова (1999); Botušarova & Kesjakova (1980).

Many of these programs have focused on the major features of the city and, as a result, understanding of the monumental architecture has been greatly enhanced.

Few scholars have undertaken a broad examination of Philippopolis in Late Antiquity, but a summary of the conventional interpretation is as follows. During the Gothic incursion led by Cniva in 250/251, Philippopolis was captured and sacked and, while the city recovered in the ensuing years, the recovery was slow and limited. The reign of Constantine (r. 324-337 in Thracia), however, spurred a “Renaissance” of the city and effected widespread urban development, including the first Christian structures. The Gothic unrest of 376-382 was not as devastating to Philippopolis as Cniva’s campaign a century prior, but the city suffered nonetheless – particularly the extramural buildings and surrounding territory. Another period of urban development occurred during the reign of Theodosius I (r. 379-395), during which time large residential complexes appeared in the city and the Christian topography of Philippopolis expanded. Conversely, the campaign of Attila in 443 was a disaster for Philippopolis; the Huns captured and sacked the city, destroying many buildings in the process and severely affecting wide swathes of the urban landscape. As with many other urban centres in the Roman Empire, Philippopolis witnessed a final flourishing during the reign of Justinian (r. 527-565), who built new fortifications around the city’s three hills. It is also possible the city in the plain was deserted at this time, reducing the fortified area to about 35 hectares on the acropolis. By the end of the 6th century, however, most of the major buildings in Philippopolis are said to be no longer in use and urban life is generally thought to end no later than the campaign of the Avar khagan in 626.

The conventional understanding of the history of Philippopolis during Late Antiquity is convenient, but it does not hold up to close analysis of the archaeological evidence. The

role of a single emperor in spurring development in the city, for example, is often emphasized, but these sharply-defined periods arise (counter-intuitively) from the poor resolution of the available dating material. Thus, when scholars are presented with material dated to the late-3rd/early-4th century, there is a strong tendency to attribute it to the reign of Constantine despite the lengthy regimes of Diocletian, Galerius, and Licinius prior to Constantine's conquest of Thracia. A similar situation occurs with material from the first half of the 6th century, which is inevitably viewed as part of the Justinianic renewal of the empire. As a result, the possible impact of less-visible emperors such as Licinius, Constantius II, and Anastasius is often subsumed to the reign of their more popular imperial colleagues.

Similarly, the instances of invasion and unrest in Thracia are a convenient explanation for destruction layers in the archaeological record from Philippopolis. In most cases, it has been very difficult to date the damage to buildings or burned layers precisely, so this material is often assigned broad chronological ranges such as the mid- to late-4th century or the 5th century. Consequently, the poor dating resolution results in scholars' reliance on the Gothic unrest of 376-382 and the Hunnic campaign of 443 to explain the damage rather than suggesting more nuanced explanations; accidental conflagration, minor fires, deliberate demolition, or limited repair are rarely considered.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the archaeological material recovered from Philippopolis and present a revised, holistic interpretation of the city during Late Antiquity. Notably, the analysis does not avoid uncertainty; rather, instances of ambiguity and gaps in the archaeological record are highlighted in order to bring attention to the assumptions that are being made by previous – and the current – studies. In order to undertake this analysis, however, a thorough description of the archaeological material is

necessary so as to avoid ambiguity regarding how a conclusion was reached. In so doing, I hope to provide a nuanced analysis of Philippopolis that will serve as the basis for further interest and investigation into one of Late Antiquity's underappreciated urban centres.

Infrastructure

Fortifications

Much of the urban area of Philippopolis had been fortified long before Diocletian secured sole control of the empire. The three hills of the city were first enclosed with a curtain wall in the Hellenistic period and the urban area in the plain was secured in AD 172 following the raids of the Costoboci into Thrace a few years prior.¹⁸⁸ Only sections of the 2nd-century defences have been uncovered and studied, but from the available information it is estimated the walls enclosed an area of about 80 ha, including the acropolis on the Three Hills.¹⁸⁹ In all of the sectors uncovered, the 2nd-century wall is characterized by an *opus emplectum* construction technique in the superstructure, in which the tops of the facing blocks are joined by iron clamps and the core is composed of rubble and white mortar; the foundations of the fortifications were also bonded using white mortar.¹⁹⁰ The full height of the curtain wall is not currently known since no more than two or three courses have survived in any sector,

¹⁸⁸ Ботушарова, А. (1959); (1960); (1963); (1965); (1977); Ботушарова, А. & Коларова, В. (1971); Колев, К. (1971); Девев, П. (1975); Djambov, C. & Matheev, M. (1978); Bospačieva, M. (2001). The dating of the curtain in the plain is provided by a bilingual inscription, which names the emperor Marcus Aurelius as well as Gaius Pantuleius Graptiacus, the governor of Thrace – IGBulg. 3, 878 = CIL III, 6121 = III 7409. See also PIR² P 96 for Graptiacus.

¹⁸⁹ The most notable sections include parts of the north curtain next to the stadium and on the north slopes of the Three Hills along Vitosha Street, the south curtain on the former Kapitan Raycho Street (now the parking area for the Trimontium Hotel) and 3 Ivan Vazov Street, the east curtain adjacent to the Small Basilica (which is sometimes referred to in literature as being on Nezavisimost Street or, formerly, Lilyana Dimitrova Street) and on Tsar Ivan Shishman Street in conjunction with the so-called East Gate. The western extent of the fortifications is currently unknown.

¹⁹⁰ Botoucharova & Kesjakova (1978), 139.

but the thickness varies between 2.30-2.40 m. Furthermore, evidence of a defensive ditch was discovered outside the east curtain wall, near the Small Basilica. Based on the fill recovered from the bottom of the trench, the excavators suggest the ditch was in use prior to the Gothic invasions.¹⁹¹

The fortification efforts at Philippopolis during Late Antiquity begin with the city's recovery following the Gothic sack in AD 250 and the restoration period is traditionally separated into two phases. The first phase is characterized by the use of pink mortar to repair surviving sections of the 2nd-century fortifications, including the foundations in some sectors.¹⁹² Thus, the repairs appear to be relatively limited and are focused on mending the pre-existing structure. The first recovery phase is usually dated to the reign of Gallienus (r. 253-268) due to a reference in the *Historia Augusta*, in which Gallienus instructs Cleodamus and Athenaeus of Byzantium to repair and fortify cities following an incursion by trans-Danubian groups.¹⁹³

Conversely, the second phase of the recovery of the defences of Philippopolis appears to have been more substantial than the first phase since the repairs are characterized by the construction of entirely new sections of the curtain wall rather than repairing the pre-existing structure. The lower courses of the 2nd-century fortifications were preserved, but they were only used as a base upon which the rest of the wall was reconstructed in *opus mixtum* with bands of four bricks. Despite the extensive reconstruction, it appears the circuit of the fortifications remained largely unchanged; the only modifications currently known were to the so-called East Gate, which was shifted about 18 m to the northeast and rebuilt as a

¹⁹¹ Bospačieva (2001), 176-178.

¹⁹² Bospačieva (2001), 175.

¹⁹³ *Historia Augusta* (*Gallieni Duo* 13.6).

massive bastion that incorporated a pre-existing honourific arch as the main entrance to the city (**Fig. 2**). The expansion of the East Gate is thought to have occurred in conjunction with the construction of a nearby hexaconch structure, which is believed to be a martyrium, and this juxtaposition has led scholars to interpret the acts as a deliberate attempt by Constantine to create a new, Christian nucleus in the city. Accordingly, the entire second recovery phase of the fortifications of Philippopolis has been attributed to Constantine as well.

From the above summary, it is evident the conventional dating of the restoration of Philippopolis' walls rests largely on literary-historical evidence. This should not be a surprise, however, since it is notoriously difficult to date fortifications precisely using archaeological data alone unless there is a lucky discovery of brick stamps or an inscription.

Nevertheless, there are some problems with the literary-historical evidence that is often cited in discussions of the fortifications of Philippopolis. The passage in the *Historia Augusta* that mentions Cleodamus and Athenaeus, for example, notes the "Scythians" sailed up the mouth of the Danube and that a battle took place near the Black Sea. There is no mention of any Scythian activity or military engagements in the vicinity of Philippopolis, which was situated some several hundred kilometres from the Danube and the Black Sea, so it is unlikely the city's walls would have suffered damage or required any repairs as a result of the naval raids. Thus, although the two generals of Gallienus were instructed to repair and fortify cities, their attention may have been directed to the area around the Danube and Black Sea littoral – namely, Moesia Inferior – rather than Thrace, since this region is directly adjacent to the areas of Scythian activity and the most likely to have been affected. Moreover, Gallienus' instructions were likely issued only a few months before his assassination, so a protracted restoration project could have extended well into the reign of his successors

Claudius, Quintillus, or even Aurelian. Assigning the first restoration phase to the reign of Gallienus is, therefore, perhaps not entirely accurate.

The attribution of the second restoration phase to Constantine is even more problematic since it relies almost entirely on the identification of the hexaconch structure outside the so-called east gate as a Christian *martyrium*. As discussed in more detail below, the hexaconch structure may have been converted to a *martyrium* in the later 5th century, but it was likely originally constructed in the early 4th century as a conventional mausoleum. Furthermore, Constantine certainly pursued a widespread building program and built many Christian buildings, but these were primarily churches or *martyria* and were mostly concentrated around Rome, Constantinople, or Jerusalem. There is no evidence he ever attempted to alter urban topography in order to deliberately reorient the core of a city towards a Christian complex, as has been suggested by previous studies of Philippopolis. Rather, if the so-called east gate of Philippopolis became a Christian focal point, it was likely a later development in the 5th century.

Considering the fortifications of Philippopolis in a regional context, particularly the results of excavations at nearby Diocletianopolis, provides some insight into alternate interpretations. Based on epigraphic material dated to the reign of Galerius and Licinius (308-311), a convincing argument can be made that the walls of Diocletianopolis were started by Diocletian but not completed until the reign of one of his successors.¹⁹⁴ Since the fortifications of Diocletianopolis were built in the same manner as those of Philippopolis – namely, in *opus mixtum* with bands of brick and stone – it is possible the restoration of the defences of the latter followed a similar timeline. Thracia was administered by Diocletian,

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of the walls of Diocletianopolis.

Galerius, and Licinius for forty years (284-324), but their efforts are often overshadowed by or attributed to Constantine by modern scholars, and the date of the restoration of the defences of Philippopolis may be another example of this historical bias.

As a final note on the late antique repairs, there is no definite indication the two restoration phases occurred separately. It is possible, for example, the two phases represent different approaches to repairing the wall that were used concurrently during a single restoration phase. The sections of the wall that were only lightly damaged could have been patched up with pink mortar, whereas the sections that were levelled or suffered sufficient damage to require a complete reconstruction were rebuilt entirely in *opus mixtum*. Future archaeological studies will hopefully examine this question in more detail.

Following the restoration of the walls of Philippopolis, the main fortification efforts in the city during Late Antiquity were limited to modifying to the existing structure. The earliest modifications appear to be the addition of new towers to the outer face of the city walls; the clearest example of this development is a rectangular tower that was built abutting the eastern wall, indicating it was clearly not part of the initial fortification plans (**Figs. 3, 4**).¹⁹⁵ It is possible the so-called East Gate was also reinforced at this time by the addition of large bastions flanking the main entrance, although only the east tower has been investigated. Botusharova and Kesjakova dated the construction of the bastion to the period between the reigns of Valentinian and Arcadius (i.e. 364 – 408), but it is not clear on what evidence they have based this conclusion.¹⁹⁶ Additional towers that may have also been part of the strengthening of the wall of Philippopolis have been identified along the southern wall and

¹⁹⁵ Bospačieva (2001), 178. The tower cuts through an earlier defensive ditch from the mid-3rd century, which provides a *terminus ante quem*, but this is the only dating material available.

¹⁹⁶ Botušarova & Kesjakova (1980), 270.

on Tsanko Lavrenov Street, but it is not possible to determine if they were built concurrently at the present state of scholarship.¹⁹⁷

Further modifications to the fortifications of Philippopolis took place in the late-5th or early-6th century, at which point the walls were thickened significantly. The section of wall visible on Vitosha Street, for example, was nearly doubled in thickness – from 2.10 to 3.90 m – and furnished with triangular towers.¹⁹⁸ Justinian (r. 527-565) is most often credited with this later period of reinforcement due to a reference to Philippopolis in Procopius' *De Aedificiis* (4.11.19), but recent studies have demonstrated several inaccuracies in the source material.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the literary evidence from Procopius should not be accepted without reservation.

More convincing is the analysis of the archaeological evidence from Philippopolis and the eastern Balkans by Rizos, which supports an earlier date for the thickening of the walls and the addition of triangular towers.²⁰⁰ Rizos' analysis is wide-ranging and examines sites from the Danube to the Peloponnese, concluding that the triangular or apexed-style towers are common to the reigns of Anastasius and Justinian and are particularly popular in the Balkans.²⁰¹

An examination of three sites in the immediate vicinity of Philippopolis, specifically Serdica, Ratiaria, and Augusta Traiana-Beroe, provides additional useful information regarding building activity in the late-5th and early-6th century. The fortifications of the three cities were strengthened in a similar manner to what is observed at Philippopolis – namely,

¹⁹⁷ Djambov & Matheev (1978).

¹⁹⁸ Bobchev (1961), 111.

¹⁹⁹ Topalilov (2012), 374; Botušarova & Kesjakova (1980), 271-271, for example, mention Procopius when discussing the fortifications of Philippopolis but cites no archaeological evidence.

²⁰⁰ Rizos (2010), 125-130.

²⁰¹ Rizos (2010), 127.

by adding new masonry to the exterior of the existing walls.²⁰² Procopius relates that all three sites were repaired by Justinian.²⁰³ The construction at Ratiaria, however, is dated to the reign of Anastasius due to an inscription reading *Anastasiana Ratiaria* that was found in the ruin of the city's gate.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, bricks bearing the monogram of Basiliscus and his son (r. 475-476) were used in the erection of the walls of Serdica.²⁰⁵ In fact, an inscription dedicated to Basiliscus was erected in Philippopolis and may be an indication the usurper favoured the city and intended to strengthen it with new fortifications, as he did at Serdica.²⁰⁶ At the very least, the results from Ratiaria and Serdica demonstrate the claims of Procopius should be approached with caution and further study is required to clarify the phasing of the walls of Philippopolis.

The final stage of late antique fortification building at Philippopolis is the construction of a wall to the south of the Three Hills (**Fig. 5**). The wall was built of reused material, particularly marble, and appears to reduce the fortified area of the city significantly; only the acropolis, the space near the so-called East Gate, and the area between Taksim Tepe and Sahat Tepe were included within the new circuit.²⁰⁷ Notably, the wall runs over the remains of the city's western baths, indicating it is likely built in the 6th-century.²⁰⁸

Very little additional information is available about this wall, but the notion that the entire citizenry of Philippopolis was limited to the new, smaller fortified area is certainly mistaken. As demonstrated in the rest of this chapter, many buildings in the southern sectors

²⁰² Atanassova-Georgieva (1986), 439. For Augusta Traiana, see Chapter 2.

²⁰³ Proc. *De Aed.* 4.1.31, 4.6.24, 4.11.19.

²⁰⁴ Velkov (1985), 886-889.

²⁰⁵ Rizos (2010), 129.

²⁰⁶ Beševliev (1964), 138-139, n. 206.

²⁰⁷ Botušarova & Kesjakova (1980), 273.

²⁰⁸ Цончев 1940, 156.

of the city continued to be used and occupied well into the 7th century. Additionally, there is no indication at present that the late-3rd/early-4th century walls were no longer used. The wall built of reused material, therefore, may simply be a secondary line of defences, similar to the citadel at Thessalonica, rather than a reflection of reduced population.

Street Network

Similarly to the city's fortification system, most of the major construction efforts involving the street network of Philippopolis occurred prior to Late Antiquity. The streets of the city in the plain were initially laid out according to an orthogonal plan and excavators have thus far identified 14 *decumani* and 18 *cardines*.²⁰⁹ The lengths of the *insulae* vary from 65 m to 72 m and the widths range from 24 m to 42 m. In this phase of construction, the city's roads were paved with river stones over a foundation of gravel, crushed tiles, and coarse sand.²¹⁰

During the early-2nd century, the city's road system received a major overhaul and the gravel streets were paved over with syenite slabs, raising the level of the pre-existing roads in the process. Additional curb stones were added to the streets as well, and an underground sewer system installed beneath the roads.²¹¹ Notably, the original grid layout was maintained for the most part. The only exceptions to the orthogonal plan appear to be a street that runs along the south foot of the Three Hills and the so-called Trimontium Street, which ran up the slope of the Three Hills and connected the lower city to the acropolis; both of these streets were new additions in the 2nd-century and do not conform to the grid plan.²¹² A third

²⁰⁹ Topalilov (2012), 375; Кесякова (1977), 57. The lengths of the *insulae* vary from 65 m to 72 m, and the widths range from 24 m to 42 m. The majority of this section considers only the street network of the 'lower' city since there is almost no data regarding roads on the Three Hills.

²¹⁰ Botoucharova & Kesjakova (1980), 126.

²¹¹ Кесякова (1977), 59.

²¹² Botoucharova & Kesjakova (1980), 126-130.

phase of road works occurred in the late-3rd century, during which time the street level was raised a second time. Several of the syenite paving stones from the second phase seem to have been recycled, although there are also areas where marble was used instead.²¹³

Following the third phase of construction, the street network of Philippopolis remained largely unchanged between the late 3rd and early 7th century. The most significant road works project at Philippopolis during Late Antiquity was the construction of a broad street that ran from the city's so-called east gate to the centre of the city.²¹⁴ Measuring 13.2 m in width, with the road itself 8.0 m in width and sidewalks of 2.6 m on either side, the street was the widest in Thracia. It also had colonnaded porticoes and shops along the length of either side. It is likely the road was built in the early 4th century in conjunction with the remodelling of the adjacent city gate and fortifications due to the fact it overlies the remains of the 2nd-century wall.²¹⁵

The sheer size of the street and its impressive decoration suggests it was intended as the main entrance to the city. Similar large processional ways were constructed in other major cities of Late Antiquity, such as Thessalonica, with the archetypal example being the Mese in Constantinople.²¹⁶ These streets used for normal entrance to the city, but also in elaborate *adventus* ceremonies when administrative, military, or religious officials entered the city.²¹⁷ The most notable *adventus* ceremonies, however, are for the reigning emperor or emperors and several imperial visits to Philippopolis are attested in Late Antiquity.²¹⁸ Thus, the construction

²¹³ Topalilov (2012), 375.

²¹⁴ Кесякова (1999), 93-98; Botušarova & Kesjakova (1983), 266-268.

²¹⁵ Botušarova & Kesjakova (1983), 266.

²¹⁶ Mango (2000).

²¹⁷ Dey (2014), 57-64; MacCormack (1981), 17-84.

²¹⁸ See Chapter 1.

of this major road in Philippopolis is likely tied to its role as the capital of Thracia and its increased importance in Late Antiquity.

Interestingly, the broad street ignores the previous orthogonal plan and runs at an oblique angle relative to the grid system employed in the majority of the lower city. The orientation of the street is often explained in recent literature as a deliberate endeavour to create a new Christian axis through the city since it is thought to connect the supposed *martyrium* outside the east gate with the episcopal basilica of Philippopolis.²¹⁹ While the connection of Christian focal points in Philippopolis may have been a later concern, it was not the initial purpose of the new street; as mentioned previously, the street was built in the late 3rd/early 4th century, whereas the episcopal basilica was erected only in the late 4th century.²²⁰ Furthermore, the building interpreted as a *martyrium* was likely used initially as a conventional mausoleum and may have only been converted to a Christian purpose at a later date.²²¹ Thus, the two Christian complexes the street is claimed to connect did not exist at the time when the road was built. Consequently, the broad processional street was likely built to connect two points of significant urban traffic – namely, one of the main entry points to Philippopolis and the heart of the city – rather than serve a Christian agenda.²²²

With the exception of the colonnaded street, the other road works in Philippopolis during Late Antiquity are relatively minor. Due to the size of the Episcopal Basilica, for

²¹⁹ Topalilov (2012), 375, 391. Topalilov even suggests the agora of Philippopolis was no longer used by the 5th century due to the centre of civic activity shifting to the East Gate complex. Notably, initial analysis of the colonnaded street made no suggestion of a religious nature; Кесякова (1999), 97 simply states the purpose of the road was to connect the east gate to the lower city.

²²⁰ Кесякова (1999); Kessiakova (1989). For a full discussion of the Episcopal Basilica, see below.

²²¹ Vospatchieva (2001); Boyadjieva (2001). For a full discussion of the Hexaconch Structure, see below.

²²² It is important to note only a small section of road near the east gate has been archaeologically attested. The south-west extent of the colonnaded street is not currently known and it is not clear how far it extends into the city centre. The claim the colonnaded street ends at the Episcopal Basilica is, therefore, only a hypothesis at this point.

example, a road was shifted to the west to accommodate the construction of the massive building in the late 4th century.²²³ There are also some examples of encroachment in later periods, such as the construction of small structures attached to the south side of the Residence over the adjacent street, but these examples are minimal.²²⁴ Some observers claim these changes indicate the regular road system of Philippopolis was no longer used, but two isolated examples are not enough to support such a broad hypothesis.²²⁵ In fact, compared to other urban centres where encroachment is a commonly-observed facet of late antique urban development the use of streets in Philippopolis appears to be relatively consistent.²²⁶

Agora

The agora of Philippopolis was a well-integrated part of the urban infrastructure prior to Late Antiquity, with the basic form of the complex having been established as early as the 1st century CE (**Figs. 6, 7, 8**).²²⁷ By the mid-3rd century, the agora consisted of a paved open-air piazza surrounded on all sides by a sandstone stylobate and portico, with shops lining the

²²³ Vospachieva (2003); Кесякова (1999); Kessiakova (1989).

²²⁴ Кесякова (1999), 57.

²²⁵ Topalilov (2012), 375 states: “It is suspected that after the mid-5th c. AD the regular street network ceased to function.”

²²⁶ Jacobs (2009b).

²²⁷ It is unclear when the complex was initially constructed, but it must have been prior to the 1st century CE since the earliest structures appear to have been destroyed by fire in the early 1st century, as evidenced by coins of Roimetalkes I (r. 12 BCE – 12 CE) and Augustus (r. 27 BCE – 14 CE) found in a burned layer. It has been suggested the conflagration was a result of the Thracian revolt of 21 CE, but the absence of any coins of Tiberius (r. 14-37) or Roimetalkes I's successors may indicate the fire in the agora was a separate and earlier event. This first phase of construction consisted of a paved square and a stylobate, portico, and shops built in wood and adobe. Following the conflagration, the agora was monumentalized and built in stone. The chronology of this process is somewhat contested due to the lack of precise dating material, but it is clear that between the late-1st and late-2nd century the agora is rebuilt mostly in sandstone, with some marble colonnades and capitals added subsequently. The administrative buildings at the north side of the square appear to have been added during this phase as well; epigraphic material provides a *terminus post quem* of 183-184 for the *aedes thensaurorum*. For more detail on the early history of the agora of Philippopolis, see Topalilov (2012), 380-391 and Кесякова (1999), 26-37. For the various dates of the construction in stone, see Кесякова (2004), 39, 41 (after the creation of the province of Thrace in 46 CE); Мартинова (2004), 293 (during the reign of Vespasian); Боспачиева (2003), 45 (before the reign of Vespasian); Коларова (2004), 298 (before the end of the 1st century CE). For the inscription from the *aedes thensaurorum*, see Ivanov, T. & Ivanov, R. (1983).

east, south, and probably west sides.²²⁸ The north side of the complex, however, was devoted to a group of administrative buildings, including an *odeon/bouleuterion*, *tabularium*, and *aedes thesaurorum* (sic). Several structures also appear to have been built in the open square, although their identity has not been securely established. Moreover, at 148 m x 136 m, the agora of Philippopolis was amongst the largest civic spaces in the eastern and southern Balkans and was even used as a model when the agora of Nicopolis ad Istrum was constructed.²²⁹ The affluence and influence of Philippopolis, therefore, is reflected in the development of the agora.

In contrast to the earlier phases, there is very little archaeological evidence regarding the development of the agora of Philippopolis in Late Antiquity. In the late-3rd or early-4th century, the level of the open square was raised by covering the previous sandstone pavements with new marble slabs and water pipes were installed.²³⁰ The prevailing perception of these efforts is that they reflect a reconstruction of the agora following severe damage sustained during the Gothic sack of the city in 250.²³¹ There does not, however, appear to be any evidence currently published that the agora sustained damage in the 3rd century.

²²⁸ Кесякова (2004a); Djambov & Mateev (1983); T. Ivanov & R. Ivanov (1983); Djambov & Matheev (1980); Djambov & Matheev (1976). The presence of shops on the west side of the agora has not yet been archaeologically attested; only the east half of the agora has been excavated since the Central Post Office of Plovdiv is situated over the west half.

²²⁹ Few *agorai* or *fora* have been excavated in the region, but Philippopolis is the largest of those that have been investigated. The forum of Oescus is 98 x 58 m; the agora of Nicopolis ad Istrum is a smaller version of Philippopolis at 30 x 30 m; the agora Philippi is 148 x 70 m; the upper agora of Thessalonica is 146 x 73 m, but the lower agora has not been archaeologically investigated and may in fact be larger than the agora of Philippopolis. The bibliography for each site is extensive, but for summaries of the respective *agorae* see Dickenson (2017), 343-350 for Philippi and Thessalonica; T. Ivanov & R. Ivanov (1994) for Nicopolis ad Istrum; and Динчев (2009a) for Oescus.

²³⁰ Кесякова (2004a); Кесякова (2004b); Кесякова (1999), 36.

²³¹ Кесякова (1999), 15; Topalilov (2012), 388. Topalilov also attributes the reconstruction to Constantine, although his interpretation is based on a perceived city-wide building program rather than evidence specific to the agora. This chapter will demonstrate that the notion of a Constantinian building program in Philippopolis is not visible in the archaeological record and is instead a product of historical bias among modern scholars.

Furthermore, the extent of the renovations do not appear to reflect a complete reconstruction; neither the administrative buildings, nor the stylobate, nor the porticoes appear to have been modified. Thus, it is possible the late antique construction phase reflects regular maintenance of the agora of Philippopolis rather than a broad construction program.

Although there do not appear to be any further modifications to the architectural composition of the agora of Philippopolis after the Tetrarchic era, the complex continued to be used for at least a century thereafter. Many coins from the 4th and 5th centuries were discovered during excavation of the agora, including a gold coin issued by Arcadius, suggesting at least some level of continuity.²³² The full numismatic evidence has not been published, so information regarding find context, quantification, and issue dates is almost entirely lacking. Accordingly, it is possible to make only broad generalizations about the late antique phases of the agora at this point.

Nevertheless, it is generally believed that by the second half of the 5th century, the agora of Philippopolis no longer operated as the traditional civic and economic core of the city. The archaeological evidence for this interpretation is, however, limited. The administrative buildings appear to have been occupied in some fashion in the 5th century, indicating they were no longer used for their original purpose, but there has been no discussion of the use of the piazza, shops, or colonnades.²³³ Furthermore, no coins from the 6th century – or very few at least – were discovered during excavation, although the problems with the numismatic evidence outlined above persist.²³⁴ Despite the fragmentary nature of

²³² ДЖАМБОВ & МАТЕЕВ (1980), 54; Djambov & Matheev (1976), 148-149.

²³³ Topalilov (2012), 388-390.

²³⁴ The wording in the preliminary reports is somewhat ambiguous regarding the date ranges of the numismatic evidence. ДЖАМБОВ & МАТЕЕВ (1980), 54 states there are many coins from the 4th-5th century and Djambov & Matheev (1976), 148-149 relates that most of the coins were issued between the 9th century (presumably BCE) and the 5th century (CE?). Significantly, neither claim eliminates entirely the possibility of

the archaeological evidence, there is a broad trend in the southern and eastern Balkans for civic spaces to fall into disrepair in the 5th century, so it is likely the agora of Philippopolis shared a similar fate.²³⁵

Interestingly, although the most-commonly cited cause of the 5th-century change is damage sustained during the Hunnic invasions of 441-442, there does not appear to be any archaeological evidence of destruction in the agora during the 5th century.²³⁶ An alternate explanation has recently been advanced that suggests the civic square was no longer used not because of violent destruction, but rather because urban activity shifted to the so-called East Gate Complex.²³⁷ While it is possible the shops along the colonnaded street leading from the east gate of Philippopolis served a similar economic role to the agora, they were built in the early-4th century – well before the decline of the agora. Thus, the shops of the colonnaded street likely operated in conjunction with the economic activities of the agora during the 4th and 5th century rather than competing to the point of the complete deterioration of the agora. It is likely further archaeological investigation that does not solely focus on monumental architecture is required to clarify the late antique phases of the agora.

Although the agora of Philippopolis did not maintain its role at the heart of urban activity past the 5th century, it may not have been completely abandoned. The Residence Building, which was built adjacent to the agora, appears to be occupied until the 6th century at least and provides indirect evidence of continued activity in the vicinity of the agora. More

coins issued after the 5th century – such coins may simply be more limited in number. Furthermore, Djambov & Matheev (1976), 135-136 states coins were found in both the Turkish and later antique/Middle Ages phases that overlie the Classical occupation layer.

²³⁵ Rizos (2010), 229-230.

²³⁶ Topalilov (2014), 234.

²³⁷ Topalilov (2012), 391; Динчев (2009b) also suggests the agora was abandoned rather than destroyed, but does not emphasize the role of the East Gate Complex.

significant, however, is a reference in the preliminary reports by the excavators of the agora that mentions a layer above the Classical occupation phase; this layer is described as containing material from a “later antiquity” and the Middle Ages, including the remains of lightweight buildings.²³⁸ The nature of the buildings is entirely unclear, but they may be evidence of encroachment onto the open square after the 5th century. The process of partitioning and occupying public space is observed elsewhere at a similar period, such as at Hierapolis in the 4th century, Ephesus in the late-5th/early-6th century, and Palmyra.²³⁹ Accordingly, it makes sense that the considerable urban space of the agora in a city as affluent as Philippopolis would not remain completely abandoned indefinitely, but would rather be repurposed for new uses.

Water Supply & Management

Despite ample archaeological evidence, the water supply system of Philippopolis has not been the subject of focused investigation. As is the case with several other sites in Plovdiv, most of the archaeological material has been recovered sporadically during rescue excavations prompted by modern development rather than from directed research projects, and few detailed results have been published. Consequently, analysis often necessarily focuses on individual components of the water supply system and does not consider a broad scope of contemporaneous public infrastructure construction. Furthermore, the lack of diagnostic or

²³⁸ Djambov & Matheev (1976), 135-136. The periodization is not defined by the excavators, so the exact dating is unclear. Furthermore, the mention of this layer is exactly four lines and is not referenced subsequently in the report; the ensuing discussion is focused entirely on the monumental remains from the Classical periods. Later publications follow a similar approach and do not mention either the later antique/Middle Ages layer or the Turkish phase that lies directly over the former.

²³⁹ Jacobs (2009) not only cites Hierapolis and Ephesus, but also provides a valuable overview of the process of encroachment in the eastern Mediterranean, including encroachment on public squares, streets of varying sizes, and other urban spaces. For Palmyra, see Intagliata (2018).

datable material has made interpretation difficult. Nevertheless, the sheer range of material related to water supply and management reveals Philippopolis was certainly well-supplied with fresh water.

Prior to Late Antiquity, the water supply and management system of Philippopolis was quite sophisticated. Catchments in the northern Rhodopes near the modern villages of Markovo and Kuklen – 10 and 13 km south of Philippopolis, respectively – supplied the city with fresh water, which was transported to Philippopolis by means of one or several aqueducts (**Fig. 9**).²⁴⁰ The manner in which the water was transported to the city, however, is somewhat contentious and warrants further consideration; accordingly, the extramural aqueducts will be discussed in detail below. Once inside the fortified area of Philippopolis, a recently-investigated “water-main” at 3 Rilski Metoh Street – that is, to the east of the stadium at the foot of Taksim Tepe – provides some indication of how water was distributed within the city itself.²⁴¹ Furthermore, sewer pipes were found 0.8 – 1.0 m beneath the pavement of every road running north-south, as well as some of the roads running east-west, indicating the city benefited from an extensive sewer network from at least the early 2nd century.²⁴² It is, therefore, likely water drained to the south in Philippopolis, following the slope downhill from the Three Hills.

The most significant archaeological evidence for the water supply of late antique Philippopolis may be the remains of the two arcaded aqueducts, which were investigated in the late 1970s as a result of road and sewer works. Although most of the superstructures of

²⁴⁰ Джамбов (1968), 69; Цончев (1938), 81-83.

²⁴¹ Topalilov (2012), 378 dates the “water-main” to the reign of Antoninus Pius due to the construction technique – stone and brick walls with an arched brick roof – and a coin of Antoninus Pius

²⁴² As discussed above, the streets of Philippopolis were paved with large syenite paving stones – under which the sewer pipes lay – in the early 2nd century.

the aqueducts have been destroyed or dismantled, the surviving foundations of the arcades' supporting pillars were studied in two locations: in the neighbourhood of Komatevo and at the north end of Komatevsko Shose Street, just south of Dzhendem Tepe (**Fig. 10**). In both locations, two lines of foundations were found running in parallel about 30 m apart, clearly indicating the presence of two separate conduits.²⁴³ The exact extent of the arcaded segments of the aqueducts is currently unclear, but it is evident they were instrumental in transporting water across the plain from the catchments in the northern Rhodopes. Upon reaching the western slope of Dzhendem Tepe, however, the conduits entered underground channels and thereafter the water travelled along masonry conduits around the west side of Bunardzhika, then must have crossed a bridge to reach Sahat Tepe, and finally entered Philippopolis by crossing the 2nd-century walls north of the stadium. Moreover, reservoirs have been identified at Dzhendem Tepe and Bunardzhika.²⁴⁴ Thus, the arcaded segments were only one part of a sophisticated water transportation system.

Very little of the arcaded superstructure survived to the present; the only original structural material to have been preserved are two rows of bricks, which formed the base of the western arcade's pillars in some places.²⁴⁵ Interestingly, the bricks are incredibly regular in shape – measuring 0.30 m x 0.30 m – and many are marked with Greek characters, such as Β, Φ, etc.²⁴⁶ This seems to indicate the materials used in the construction of the arcade were

²⁴³ Cf. Tsonchev (1938), who previously suggested conduits carrying water from two separate catchments in the northern Rhodopes (i.e. near Markovo and Kuklen) joined into a single aqueduct in the vicinity of Komatevo.

²⁴⁴ Кесякова (1985), 115-116; Колев (1977), 108.

²⁴⁵ Кесякова (1983), 67. The modern visitor to the aqueduct of Philippopolis, however, will see that large sections of the arcade along Komatevsko Shose have been reconstructed since their initial excavation, despite the minimal evidence.

²⁴⁶ Кесякова (1983), 67-68.

organised and regulated to a high standard, which is to be expected on a large and prestigious engineering project such as an aqueduct.

Due to the lack of evidence regarding the superstructure, the majority of the archaeological evidence necessarily comes from the arcade's foundations. As mentioned previously, two parallel lines of foundations were localised in both the neighbourhood of Komatevo and at the north end of Komatevsko Shose Street. The dimensions of the foundations vary but their construction is remarkably similar, consisting of limestone blocks bonded with mortar containing crushed brick.²⁴⁷ Most of the identified foundations supported individual piers and are spaced irregularly, depending on the suitability of the terrain; occasionally, additional support poles were necessary to provide further structural stability. The foundations of the western aqueduct at the north end of Komatevsko Shose, however, consisted of a continuous wall that extended for over 350 m.²⁴⁸

Traditionally, the two arcaded aqueducts have been dated to Late Antiquity. In her 1983 publication, Kesyakova refers to the construction technique of the foundations as the main supporting evidence for this conclusion, citing the use of mortar with brick fragments and brick dust inclusions in particular.²⁴⁹ Unfortunately, as Kesyakova highlights, this dating method provides only an unhelpfully broad period during which the aqueducts could have been built – namely, Late Antiquity. As a result, researchers have relied on relative dating methods to refine the chronology of the aqueducts of Philippopolis, most notably in the area

²⁴⁷ КЕСЯКОВА (1983),

²⁴⁸ Road works in 2016 revealed an additional 500 m of the aqueduct's foundation, but results of the archaeological investigations have not been published. The foundations were subsequently re-covered.

²⁴⁹ КЕСЯКОВА (1983).

at the north end of the stadium. In this area, several water channels cross the city walls and two masonry conduits have been interpreted as the continuation of the arcaded aqueducts.

The conduit that has been interpreted as the continuation of the eastern arcaded aqueduct (is thought to have been built in the early 5th century at the earliest since it supposedly overlies the ruined remains of the stadium, which was thought to be destroyed by fire in the late 4th century.

The second masonry conduit is equated with the western arcaded aqueduct and is thought to have been built in the early 6th century. This suggestion is based on the remains of five supporting pillars, across which the raised water conduit travelled over the street leading from the north end of the stadium. The pillars are thought to have encroached on the street and, therefore, must have been built after the street supposedly ceased to be used in the late 5th century. Kesyakova also says the pillars overlie the remains of the fortification wall of Marcus Aurelius, which supposedly ceased to function in the late 5th century.

Despite Kesyakova's chronology being generally accepted in subsequent publications, there are several problems with attributing the construction of the arcaded aqueducts to Late Antiquity.²⁵⁰ For example, there is no evidence the stadium was destroyed by fire in the 4th century, thereby invalidating the early-5th-century dating of Aqueduct 1. Furthermore, the pillars supporting the raised water channel of Aqueduct 2 did not encroach on the street north of the stadium. Rather, they were built on either side of the street, which would allow traffic to continue to pass beneath the conduit without issue and suggests the raised water channel was in use concurrently with the street below. Similarly, it does not appear the pillars of the raised water conduit were built over the ruins of the city wall either; the foundations of the

²⁵⁰ The late antique dating is cited, for example, in Topalilov (2012), 380; cf. Tsurov (2006).

pillars appear to have been built adjacent to the wall and used the same construction material and technique as the wall.²⁵¹ It is, therefore, the initial construction of the fortification wall and city street (i.e. in the 2nd century during the reign of Marcus Aurelius) – instead of their later destruction – that serves as *terminus post quem* for the raised masonry channel. Accordingly, it is entirely possible Aqueduct 2 was built much earlier than previously thought.

An alternative interpretation is that the arcaded aqueducts of Philippopolis were built in the 2nd century. There is no internal archaeological evidence within the arcades to support this hypothesis, but the explanation arises from a consideration of the wider state of water management system construction in the region. The cross-shaped construction of the foundations of the aqueduct's piers at Philippopolis, for example, is shared by the arcaded aqueduct of Nicopolis ad Istrum (near modern Nikyup, Bulgaria) where it traverses the Rositsa valley.²⁵² The aqueduct of Nicopolis ad Istrum also lacks a secure internal dating, but is attributed to the 2nd century on the merit of the similarity of its catchment to the catchment at Ratiaria (near modern Archar, Bulgaria).²⁵³ Specifically, both structures have distinctive polygonal forms; the catchment of Nicopolis ad Istrum is octagonal and that of Ratiaria hexagonal.²⁵⁴ This comparison is important because the water catchment of Ratiaria can be dated securely to the 2nd century due to brick stamps bearing the name of Hadrian.²⁵⁵ Thus, if the stylistic similarities between water management systems of Nicopolis ad Istrum and

²⁵¹ The foundations may have even been bonded to the inner face of the city wall, although it is unclear whether the foundations are in their original archaeological context or are modern reconstructions built during the restoration work of the 1970s.

²⁵² Tsurov (2002).

²⁵³ Tsurov (2006), 23. The evidence from Pliny the Younger's *Letters* (10.41-42) is, however, unconvincing. Trajan indicates Pliny may ask for a surveyor ("*libratorem*") from P. Calpurnius Macer, the legate of Moesia Inferior from 110-113, but this does not automatically indicate major water supply projects were being undertaken across the entire province.

²⁵⁴ Atanasova (1980).

²⁵⁵ Atanasova (1980).

Ratiaria – and by extension Philippopolis – are indicative that they were built around the same time, then the 2nd century dating seems not unreasonable.²⁵⁶

In addition to stylistic comparanda, further supporting evidence for an earlier dating of the arcaded aqueducts of Philippopolis is provided by examining the dates in which the water supply systems of other urban centres in the region were constructed. In addition to Nicopolis ad Istrum and Ratiaria cited above, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, Abritus, and Serdica are all provided with aqueducts prior to Late Antiquity. Critically, no site that existed as a major urban centre prior to the Tetrarchic period had a main aqueduct built during Late Antiquity. Such a pattern makes logical sense since a city would require sufficient water supply at the earliest time possible. In the case of Philippopolis, the wells on the Nebet Tepe and the Maritsa River may have been sufficient to supply the city's inhabitants during the Thracian period, but the population boom in the late 1st and early 2nd century would have certainly increased demand for fresh water and prompted a greater investment into appropriate water supply infrastructure – namely, catchments, aqueducts, sewers, and distribution tanks. The two catchments near Markovo are dated to the 2nd century and coins from the 2nd century were recovered from the subterranean sewer conduits in the city. Thus, it seems likely the arcaded aqueducts were built as part of a wider infrastructure plan for the city in the 2nd century.

²⁵⁶ There are, however, glaring problems with this evidence. For instance, relying on a comparison at two degrees of separation is tenuous at best. Furthermore, without an extensive study of the typology of water management systems in the region, it is unclear whether the stylistic similarities are reliable dating indicators; there is no suggestion that cross-shaped arcade piers or polygonal water catchments are strictly 2nd-century phenomena. These problems arise primarily from the scarcity of reliable internal dating evidence across the entire region and will hopefully be redressed with future intensive analyses of the urban water supply systems of Thrace.

There is, of course, the problem of whether the arcaded aqueducts of Philippopolis represent the original structure or were repaired, replaced, or reconstructed. Unfortunately, the present state of archaeological evidence does not permit for such a distinction to be made, so it is assumed the arcaded aqueducts are original until additional data are recovered.

The dating of the arcaded aqueducts of Philippopolis cannot be definitively resolved here due to the lack of archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, the current data seems to indicate construction during the 5th and 6th centuries is highly unlikely. It is possible the arcades were repaired or reinforced during Late Antiquity but the majority of the water supply system of Philippopolis appears to have been a 2nd-century project, spurred by the city's increasing significance.

Public Buildings

Theatre

The theatre of Philippopolis was built in the natural cradle between Dzhambaz Tepe and Taksim Tepe in the late-1st or early-2nd century AD (**Fig. 11**).²⁵⁷ It consists of a seating area (*koilon*) divided into three vertical tiers, a horseshoe-shaped orchestra, and a well-ornamented three-storey scene building (*skene*) that included a *proskenion*. Furthermore, two covered side entrances (*paradoi*) provided access to the orchestra from the east and west and it is likely a

²⁵⁷ Epigraphically attested by inscription on frieze-architrave of the eastern paraskenion, which is dated to AD 114-117. The inscription refers to the construction of a *pyrgos*, however, and may refer to the construction of the paraskenion alone rather than the entire theatre. There is also evidence for a late-1st century dating due to another inscription referring to *to koinoboulion*.

portico ran along the upper limit of the seating area.²⁵⁸ Estimates place the capacity of the theatre at about 3500-4000 spectators.

In addition to traditional theatrical performances, the theatre of Philippopolis was also used to stage other spectacles. It is not clear whether the exhibitions were gladiatorial fights or beast hunts (*venationes*), but a passage running beneath the scene building seems to have provided a dramatic entrance to the arena space – the orchestra in this case – that is mirrored in amphitheatres elsewhere. The entrances to the orchestra were also blocked and a protective barrier erected, thereby protecting the spectators in the lower tiers of seating.²⁵⁹ The modifications of the theatre are certainly not part of the initial construction and are dated to the late-2nd or early-3rd century.²⁶⁰ It is unknown whether the theatre was permanently converted to a pseudo-arena, if it was simply a temporary change and was later reverted back to theatrical performances, or if theatrical performances and *ludi* shared the space.

The theatre of Philippopolis was still in use in Late Antiquity, but the archaeological evidence for the period is limited. A recently-published inscription refers to a reconstruction of the theatre during the reign of Galerius (r. 305-311), although it is not entirely clear what the reconstruction entailed.²⁶¹ The construction of the third (uppermost) tier of seating may have been included in Galerius' reconstruction efforts since it is generally dated to Late Antiquity, but this is a tenuous attribution at best.²⁶²

Despite Galerius' attention, it is generally believed the theatre of Philippopolis was no longer used by the late-4th or early-5th century. Damage sustained during a fire is the most

²⁵⁸ Кесякова (1999); Botusharova (1980); Kolarova (1980). The diameter of the seating area is 85 m, while the orchestra had a diameter of 26.64 m.

²⁵⁹ Vagalinski (2002), 281-283.

²⁶⁰ Vagalinski (2002), 282.

²⁶¹ Шаранков (2014).

²⁶² Мартинова (2009), 386.

common explanation for the abandonment of the theatre, although destruction following an earthquake has also been suggested.²⁶³ Interestingly, none of the building material from the theatre appears to have been reused in building works elsewhere, which seems to indicate the structure was covered quickly – such as during a landslide caused by an earthquake.²⁶⁴

Stadium

The stadium of Philippopolis was likely built in the early 2nd century between Taksim Tepe and Sahat Tepe (**Fig. 12**).²⁶⁵ Unfortunately, most of the stadium remains buried beneath the modern Knyaz Alexander I Street in Plovdiv and, as a result, only some sections have been excavated. The sectors that have received scholarly attention include the northern end of the stadium with the curved *cavea*, two of the pillars of the arched southern entrance, and portions of the eastern and western seating areas.²⁶⁶ From these sectors, the stadium is projected to be 250 m long and between 55 and 60 m wide; accordingly, the seating capacity of the stadium

²⁶³ Кесякова (2006), 146; 1999, 64; Вагалински (2009), 76; cf. Topalilov (2012), 397, who suggests an earthquake.

²⁶⁴ Rizos (2010), 251-252.

²⁶⁵ Матеев (1971), 136 correctly suggests the stadium was built in the early-2nd century, but does not provide any supporting evidence. Cf. Tsontchev (1947), who proposes the reign of Caracalla. As Topalilov (2012), 404 points out, the stadium must have been built before the fortification of the city in the plain since the curtain wall erected during the reign of Marcus Aurelius respects the contour of the curved section of the *cavea*, thereby including the stadium in the fortified area. Furthermore, decorations dedicated to Antinous found in the stadium suggest the building was in use as early as the reign of Hadrian – see Шаранков (2002).

²⁶⁶ Excavations in the 1920s and 1970s revealed only the northern curved sector, leading some scholars to believe initially it was an amphitheatre, e.g. Ботунарова (1977). Subsequent excavations in the 2000s, which revealed the eastern, western, and southern sectors of the stadium, proved this hypothesis to be incorrect. The link between these elements is not entirely certain since they were not investigated as a comprehensive project – rather, each element was excavated separately over several years as the opportunity arose – but the use of similar decorative motifs, similar construction materials, and their shared alignment make it extremely likely the separate sectors represent parts of a single structure.

of Philippopolis is compared to that of Aphrodisias, which is of a slightly larger size (c. 270 x 60 m) and had a capacity of around 30 000 people.²⁶⁷

The north end of the stadium is the most intensively-investigated section of the stadium. It consists of 14 tiers of marble seats decorated with lions' feet and separated at regular intervals by stairs leading down to the track below. A section of the track has also been uncovered, which was separated from the lowest row of seats by a raised podium of 1.80 m.²⁶⁸ Direct access to the track in this area of the stadium is afforded by an arched passage that runs beneath the northern seating area. Interestingly, the arched passage appears to be one of the city streets of Philippopolis, complete with subterranean sewerage. The purpose of this street and its route beyond the north end of the stadium, however, remain unclear at the present stage of investigation.²⁶⁹ Finally, flanking the vaulted passage are two rectangular brick "drainage shafts". The drainage shafts were on the track itself and were purportedly used to drain the stadium and divert water to the sewer canals beneath the street under the vaulted passage. These features have received effectively no scholarly attention, and their use is largely assumed rather than properly investigated. Moreover, there is no dating evidence for the drainage shafts; they may have been part of the stadium's original plan since they are incorporated into the sewer system, but they also may have been a later modification around the same time as the aqueduct built to the north (i.e. 4th century).²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Топицкилов (2012), 121. Confusingly, some scholars do not distinguish between the entire stadium building and the track area in Philippopolis – e.g. Tsontchev (1947). For clarity, it appears the track alone is around 180-190 m long and 30 m wide. See Welch (1998) for the stadium of Aphrodisias.

²⁶⁸ Tsontchev (1947).

²⁶⁹ Мартинова-Кютова & Райчева (2011).

²⁷⁰ I have not been able to find any published material regarding the drainage shafts. Consequently, this information is based on personal observation and the information boards established at the site. Water channels along the outer edge of a stadium's track are found elsewhere, although their exact purpose is not known currently either – see Miller 2014, 287-288.

The eastern and western seating areas that have been uncovered are also made of marble and have lions' feet decorations that match those found in the northern curved sector of the stadium. In constructing the stadium's tiered seating, the western sector took advantage of the natural slope of Sahat Tepe and were built on the hill's flank – albeit aided by terracing. The eastern sector, however, lacked such natural support and required the construction of a vaulted substructure to provide the height and gradient necessary for a satisfactory view of the track.²⁷¹ The excavations of the eastern sector also revealed a nearby water cistern, which is further evidence of water management infrastructure in the vicinity of the stadium.

Despite modern reconstructions, relatively little is known about the southern entrance to the stadium of Philippopolis (**Fig. 13**).²⁷² The only archaeological evidence that has been uncovered to date are the foundations of two support pillars, which were discovered during excavation of the modern Kamenitsa Square. The reconstructed proportions of the stadium would suggest there should be six pillars, although some scholars have proposed a smaller *propylaea* with only four or five pillars.²⁷³ Unfortunately, none of the superstructure survives, thereby limiting the discussion of this sector of the stadium. Furthermore, the only decoration recovered in the excavation are marble pilasters that bear bas-relief depictions of a herm surmounted by a vase and palm leaf, as well as the lion skin, club, and bow of Heracles.²⁷⁴ The pilasters, however, do provide a clear link with the decorative scheme found

²⁷¹ Мартинова (2006), 235-236.

²⁷² For the modern reconstructions, see Матеев (1993), 32, 41.

²⁷³ Cf. Tsontchev (1947), Pl. X and Топалянов (2012), 121-122, who propose four and five pillars respectively.

²⁷⁴ Цончев (1938), 73-74; Колев (1992), 125. Furthermore, there is debate regarding exactly how the pilasters were incorporated into the architectural scheme – see Tsontchev (1947), Pl. XVI and Матеев (1971) for differing interpretations. Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer this question at the current state of research.

in the other sectors of the stadium; the lions' paws in the various seating areas are yet another Heracleian motif.

The comment by Anna Comnena referring to the “hippodrome” of Philippopolis has led some scholars to propose the structure between Taksim Tepe and Sahat Tepe is a hippodrome (or circus) rather than a stadium.²⁷⁵ Several factors demonstrate the Byzantine princess may have misinterpreted what she saw in Philippopolis and referred to it by a term that would have been more familiar to her due to the prominence of the circus of Constantinople. For example, the stadium of Philippopolis lacks several features required of a circus; excavators have found no evidence of a *euripus* – the barrier down the centre of the arena – or a proper starting gate with a synchronised starting device.²⁷⁶ More significantly, perhaps, the size of the structure would be among the most miniscule circuses currently known, with hardly enough room for chariots to turn at the north end.²⁷⁷ Conversely, the dimensions are exactly what is to be expected from a stadium; in addition to the stadium of Aphrodisias mentioned previously, the Stadium of Domitian in Rome was c. 275 m long and the stadium at Perge in Pamphylia was c. 230 x 30 m.²⁷⁸ Finally, there is ample evidence of athletic events, gladiatorial combat, and even animal combat at Philippopolis, but absolutely

²⁷⁵ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, 18.4.2.

²⁷⁶ As noted above, very little evidence for the starting gate area has been recovered and none of the main track area was excavated. Thus, it is conceivable further archaeological investigations will reveal a *euripus* or other aspects typical of a hippodrome, but the current state of investigation indicates the structure was used as a stadium. Also, for the use of *euripus* rather than the common term *spina*, see Humphrey 1983, 175-176.

²⁷⁷ Dodge (2014), 562, who notes the smallest circuses have an arena length of 250-300 m. The arena of the largest circus, the Circus Maximus in Rome, was over twice the length (c. 580 m) of the track at Philippopolis – see Humphrey (1983), 124-126.

²⁷⁸ For the Stadium of Domitian, see Colini (1943); for Perge, see Grainger (2009) and Abbasoğlu (2001).

no evidence for chariot racing. Accordingly, there is little doubt at present that the structure is indeed a stadium.²⁷⁹

Following its initial construction, the stadium of Philippopolis remained an integral part of the surrounding urban landscape for several centuries. Investigators identified where some changes were made in the early 3rd century, but these appear to have simply been a change in decoration rather than a substantial architectural renovation. A second period of repair has also been proposed based on the use of pink mortar in areas excavated on the east side of the stadium, indicating work undertaken in the late 3rd or early 4th century.²⁸⁰ Despite these minor changes and repairs, the overall plan of the stadium remained unchanged throughout Late Antiquity and was an imposing presence in the western sector of Philippopolis.

Very little is known about how the stadium was used in its later phases. It is not mentioned in any literary sources between the 3rd and 11th centuries, and the archaeological data has so far been unenlightening in this respect. Botusharova proposed the stadium was destroyed by fire in the early 4th century, and her hypothesis had been perpetuated in the years since her analysis, but it is abundantly clear that this cannot be the case.²⁸¹ In the investigations undertaken to date, excavators have found no archaeological evidence whatsoever to indicate the stadium suffered any fire damage; excavations have not revealed ash or destruction layers, and indeed much of the marble masonry was found intact.

²⁷⁹ While it is likely some of these events were staged at the theatre, this clearly took place at a later date – namely, after the modification of the theatre from its original purpose. Thus, during an earlier period, it is entirely reasonable to suggest they occurred in the stadium. See esp. Vagalinski (2002), 281-283 and Вагалински (1997).

²⁸⁰ Мартинова (2006), 236; Топалилов (2005), 221; Tsontchev (1947).

²⁸¹ Ботушарова (1977); 1980; Кесякова (1999).

More recently, Topalilov suggests the stadium declined following Theodosius I's edict banning all pagan cults and practices in 393, although this is an unconvincing alternative as well.²⁸² Similarly to the proposal of Botusharova, there is no supporting archaeological evidence to indicate the stadium ceased to be used in the 5th century and Topalilov does not provide any primary sources to substantiate his hypothesis. Moreover, a recent analysis of the impact of the anti-pagan laws on the theatres of Stobi, Scupi, and Heraclea Lynkestis concludes there was little impact of the legislation on the structures.²⁸³ Thus, it is not sufficient to assume the anti-pagan laws had an effect on the stadium of Philippopolis; additional supporting evidence is necessary to validate Topalilov's hypothesis.

In fact, there is evidence the stadium was still operating after the 4th century. Similar to when the city was fortified in the 2nd century, the new wall built in the 6th-century included the stadium within the fortified area. Furthermore, despite the 6th-century wall being built primarily of *spolia*, none of the stadium's structural material was used in its construction, which may indicate the stadium was still in use at the time.²⁸⁴ It is, however, unclear whether the stadium continued to be used to host athletic events; the remains of structures built on the area of the track have recently been uncovered and may be evidence of later encroachment into the stadium.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, despite the poor understanding of the stadium's later

²⁸² Topalilov (2012), 407-408.

²⁸³ Jarić (2017). The stadium of Stobi was no longer in use by the late-4th century, but the stadium of Heraclea Lynkestis may have persisted until the late-5th/early-6th century and there is not sufficient evidence to determine the extent of use of the theatre of Scupi. Thus, as Jarić presents, the attribution of their disuse to the anti-pagan laws is due to the lack of reliable dating material and the misinterpretation of the legal sources.

²⁸⁴ Rizos (2010), 251-252 suggests the lack of spoliation can be explained by the stadium being silted up quickly. Due to the size of the stadium, a substantial quantity of material would have been required to cover it sufficiently to prevent spoliation, but this is perhaps feasible due to the stadium's location in a depression between two hills.

²⁸⁵ Rizos (2010), 251. There is currently no information regarding the nature or dating of these buildings, so this hypothesis requires further excavation to explore in more detail. The process of encroachment in Philippopolis might also be seen during the later phases of the city's agora, however, which may indicate a

phases, the account of Anna Comnena confirms the structure was still recognizable in the 11th century at least.

Western Baths

Excavations have uncovered two possible bath complexes in Philippopolis. The first baths erected in the city, called the Western Baths, were originally built in the mid-2nd century about halfway between the *agora* and the stadium (**Fig. 14**).²⁸⁶ At some point thereafter, the building suffered severe fire damage and had to be rebuilt entirely.²⁸⁷ Previous investigators link the damage to the Gothic capture of the city in AD 250 but the archaeological material does not permit such a specific attribution. While the discovery of a burned layer certainly indicates the baths suffered fire damage, it is impossible to determine the cause of the fire from this evidence alone. Furthermore, no material has been published to give any indication of the date at which the conflagration occurred. Accordingly, attributing the destruction of the first phase of the Western Baths to the Gothic invasions is a misinterpretation of the currently-available evidence.

The Western Baths were rebuilt, however, and were constructed on a new, larger plan. Eight rooms and a corridor have been partly excavated. Typical bathing facilities, such as an *apodyterium*, *frigidarium*, and *tepidarium*, are present in the new plan, as well as a large domed vestibule. Furthermore, a staircase indicates the structure included a second storey.²⁸⁸ Of the

similar development at the stadium is not unreasonable. As with the agora, see Jacobs 2009 for a valuable overview of encroachment in the eastern Mediterranean.

²⁸⁶ The remains were found at the intersection of Knyaz Alexander I Street and Patriarch Evtimiy Street; in older literature, the Western Baths are often described as being under the Balkan Cinema but the establishment no longer exists.

²⁸⁷ Цончев (1940), 129, 156; Кесеякова (1999), 40-42.

²⁸⁸ Topalilov (2012), 398.

areas investigated to date, the corridor, *apodyterium*, and Room 9 were decorated with floor mosaics, and remnants of wall mosaics were also found in Room 9.²⁸⁹

The second building phase of the Western Baths is most often dated to the late-3rd century because it is interpreted as part of Philippopolis' recovery following the capture of the city by the Goths in AD 250. This interpretation, however, is based on the assumption – discussed above – that the first phase was destroyed by the Goths and no evidence is provided to support the hypothesis. There have been some attempts to date the baths based on the stylistic elements of the floor mosaics, but these studies have been inconclusive as well; the geometric motifs found in the Western Baths are not very distinctive and were in use from the 1st – 6th century. The only possible indication of a late antique dating for the baths is the use of mortar with a high concentration of brick inclusions in the foundation layers of the mosaics, which is observed elsewhere in late antique structures in Philippopolis. Thus, while it is possible the Western Baths were built during Late Antiquity, the matter is far from certain and further archaeological investigation is required to clarify the matter.

Frustratingly, the cessation of the bath's operation is similarly contested. The original excavator, Tsonchev, proposed the baths ceased to function in the first half of the 4th century, whereas more recent reappraisals by Kesjakova and also Martinova and Bospachieva propose the complex persisted to the mid-4th or even into the 5th century.²⁹⁰ The mid-4th century dating is based on numismatic evidence recovered during excavation, in which the majority of coins were from the first half of the 4th century. These coins, however, are not an accurate indicator of when the baths were last used since they are only a *terminus post quem* and only prove the

²⁸⁹ Pillinger et al. (2016), 265-269 provides a recent overview of the mosaics.

²⁹⁰ Цончев (1940), 156; Кесякова (1999), 42; Мартинова & Боспачиева (2002), 190.

Western Baths were being used thereafter. Furthermore, although the majority of coins are from the first half of the 4th century, the dating of the rest of the assemblage is not clear; a full numismatic catalogue from the excavation has not been published so the latest coin issue is not known currently. The only definite dating evidence available at present is the 6th-century fortification wall that was built over the ruins of the baths, which provides a reliable *terminus ante quem* for the destruction of the Western Baths. It is uncertain for how long and under what circumstances the Western Baths of Philippopolis were out of use prior to the construction of the wall.

Eastern Baths

During rescue excavations south-east of Dzambaz Tepe in the 1940s, excavators discovered a building that was interpreted as a possible second bath complex in Philippopolis (**Fig. 15**).²⁹¹ The facility is known in literature as the Eastern Baths in contrast to the earlier Western Baths. Several rooms were uncovered that were built with alternating bands of stone and brick (*opus mixtum*) in the superstructure. Furthermore, four of the rooms were equipped with underfloor hypocausts, which led the excavators to interpret the structure as a bath complex. Evidence of a rich decorative scheme also contributed to the view that the building was used as a bath; marble bases and pilaster capitals were discovered, the walls were clad with marble, and one room – Room 5 – was decorated with a floor mosaic.²⁹² Despite the excavated area extending over 2500 m², the entire plan of the building could not be determined at the time of initial investigation since portions of the structure fell outside the area of study.

²⁹¹ Цончев (1950). The excavated sector is often described as being on the site of the J. Gruev School, but it appears the school has been renamed to the Professional School in Home Appliances. It is located at 2 Ivan Perpeliev Street, near the intersection with Sveta Gora Street.

²⁹² Цончев (1950), 139-141.

Another portion of the Eastern Baths was uncovered in 1996 at 1 Tsar Georgi Terter Street, approximately 30 m to the east of the original excavations. The new excavation investigated an area of c. 10 x 11 m and exposed part of a well-decorated rectangular room with an underfloor hypocaust system.²⁹³ The walls have been only partially preserved, but it appears they were built using the same technique as the sector studied in the 1940s – namely, alternating bands of stone and brick (*opus mixtum*) with pink hydrophobic mortar. Additionally, the room was ornamented with marble wall cladding, wall and floor mosaics, and marble pilasters that closely mirrored the decoration of the previous sector.²⁹⁴ Specifically, the pilaster capitals from both sectors resemble Corinthian anta capitals with a (likely) central motif flanked by volutes and acanthus leaves and the floor mosaics share the same ivy border. Thus, the similarity in construction technique and decoration between the sectors investigated in the 1940s and 1990s is a convincing indication they are part of the same overall structure.

Interestingly, the dual excavations produced two differing chronologies for the Eastern Baths. The initial excavator from the 1940s, Tsonchev, proposed the baths were built in the 4th century, destroyed by the Huns in the mid-5th century, and rebuilt by the end of the 5th to continue in operation as baths until the end of the 6th century.²⁹⁵ Conversely, the investigation undertaken by Bospachieva in 1996 concluded the baths were built in the late-3rd century and were destroyed in the late-4th century; thereafter, the Georgi Terter sector was

²⁹³ Bospachieva (2002). Similar to the excavations by Tsonchev in the 1940s, the new sector was discovered as a result of rescue excavations due to modern development. Consequently, the area of investigation was limited and the entire room was not exposed; the north and south walls were revealed but the extent of the room to the east and west could not be determined.

²⁹⁴ Bospachieva (2002), 302-303; Цончев (1950), 120, Fig. 9. Unfortunately, none of the wall mosaics survived *in situ* so their composition cannot be compared at present. Furthermore, the marble wall facing from the Tsar Georgi Terter Street site is described as white marble with lines and spots of green, pink, and red, but Tsonchev did not provide any information regarding the nature of the marble from the J. Gruev/Ivan Perpeliev Street site, which frustrates attempts to compare the cladding.

²⁹⁵ Цончев (1950), 144-146

no longer used as a bath and instead was repurposed to be used as residential and industrial buildings.²⁹⁶ Despite the convincing archaeological evidence for Bospachieva's interpretation, most subsequent scholars have accepted Tsonchev's proposed chronology.²⁹⁷

The acceptance of Tsonchev's chronology, however, assumes the two interpretations are mutually-exclusive – only one of which can be correct – and must be applied to the entire structure. A close analysis of the evidence reveals that such an assumption is not valid. The datable elements shared by both sectors of the Eastern Baths – namely, the use of *opus mixtum* masonry with pink mortar and the floor mosaic motifs – are attributable to the late-3rd/early-4th century and indicate the entire complex was likely built at the outset of Late Antiquity.²⁹⁸ Thereafter, a burned layer over the floor mosaic from the Georgi Terter sector undoubtedly attests to a conflagration in the mid-4th century since coins of Constantius II (r. 337-361) were the latest found in the sealed context.²⁹⁹ Tsonchev also claimed the bath was destroyed but his conclusion that the Huns were responsible for the damage is based on historical factors rather than archaeological data. It is, therefore, possible the damage he observed is the same mid-4th century conflagration event that Bospachieva detected.

Following the destruction of the baths, the J. Gruev/Ivan Perpeliev sector was rebuilt and appears to have maintained its monumental character. The plan and nature of the

²⁹⁶ Bospachieva (2002), 304. Moreover, evidence from refuse pits seems to indicate the site was occupied until the 10th-12th century.

²⁹⁷ Topalilov (2012), 402-403; Кесякова (1999), 43.

²⁹⁸ Цончев (1950), Fig. 7; Bospachieva (2002), 301-303. The use of *opus mixtum* was ubiquitous in Philippopolis in the late-3rd/early-4th century. For the mosaics, comparanda come from the Western Baths and the Tseretelev 10-10a Building. See especially Pillinger et al. (2016), 250-252.

²⁹⁹ Bospachieva (2002), 304. Although the coin of Constantine II is only a *terminus post quem*, the latest coin from a sealed destruction layer is often an accurate indicator of the time of deposition. Furthermore, the earliest coin was issued by Claudius Gothicus (r. 368-370), but the rest of the assemblage has not been published. Consequently, it is not possible currently to provide a more precise *terminus post quem* than the 24-year reign of Constantius II.

building after its reconstruction is not currently known, but a vaulted space was built to support a second storey at least. Evidence of fire indicates the vaulted structure likely ceased to be used after burning down, although the point at which the conflagration occurred is not clear; Tsonchev claims the structure was destroyed in the late-6th century due to barbarian invasions but his interpretation is based on historical considerations rather than archaeological data. Accordingly, the link between the fire damage and barbarians is conjectural at present and requires additional substantiating evidence to confirm.

The Georgi Terter sector did not recover in the same fashion as the J.Gruev/Ivan Perpeliev sector. Smaller domestic and industrial buildings were built over the decorated room and indicate the space was no longer used as a monumental public building.³⁰⁰ It is not clear when the smaller buildings were erected, but the subdivision and reuse of space are classic indicators of encroachment. Thus, a full analysis of encroachment processes in Philippopolis during Late Antiquity may provide some helpful insight into the later phases of this building. Nevertheless, numismatic evidence indicates the sector was occupied in some fashion until the 10th-12th century.

As a result of this analysis, it is evident the chronologies of Tsonchev and Bospachieva are not mutually exclusive but rather should be considered together where possible. Moreover, the two sectors of the Eastern Baths had demonstrably different development trajectories and, consequently, there is not a single chronology for the entire structure. Rather, a more nuanced late antique chronology can be suggested. The Eastern Baths were built in the late-3rd or early-4th century and then destroyed by fire in the mid-4th century. At some point after the conflagration, the massive complex is divided – whether intentionally or not

³⁰⁰ Bospachieva (2002), 304.

is unclear – and the two investigated sectors develop independently of one another; the J. Gruev/Ivan Perpeliev sector was rebuilt as a two-storey building whereas the Georgi Terter sector was converted to houses and workshops. Further excavations are likely required to determine how long either sector remained in use.

Finally, a word must be said about the interpretation of the complex as a bath building. As mentioned previously, the structure was initially interpreted as a bath due to the discovery of floor and wall hypocausts as well as the extensive decoration – and this interpretation has been largely maintained in literature up to the present. Although the elements cited by Tsonchev are certainly found in baths, they are not limited to bathing facilities alone. Furthermore, unlike the Western Baths of Philippopolis, none of the spaces characteristic of baths has been identified at either sector of the so-called Eastern Baths. Thus, it is possible the complex may have had a different character; Bospachieva suggests it might be a palace with private bathing facilities attached, for example, or it could be a very large private residence.³⁰¹ Unfortunately, the present level of investigation does not permit a definitive identification but further excavation may help clarify the nature of the building.

Religious Buildings

Early Churches

Investigators have discovered very little evidence of Christian buildings from the early 4th century. The earliest Christian structure in the city is thought to be a basilica located beneath the modern church of St. Petka, situated approximately 100 m east of the Episcopal Basilica.

³⁰¹ Bospachieva (2002), 304. In support of the private residence – similar floor mosaics from that residential building on Trimontium 10-10a.

Due to the basilica's location beneath the modern church, it has not been archaeologically investigated; the only evidence that has been found is a stylobate and a paved floor.³⁰²

Considering the limited archaeological evidence, it is not entirely clear why the basilica beneath the church of St. Petka is thought to be a Christian basilica.³⁰³ Regardless of the building's nature, however, it appears to have either been damaged or destroyed by fire in the 4th century. A coin of Julian (r. 361-363) has been used to date the conflagration, but details regarding the coin's find context have not been published, which makes it difficult to critically assess the validity of the dating.

In addition to the basilica beneath the church of St. Petka, it is also supposed that a Christian basilica was erected to replace the city's temple of Apollo Kendriseus by the mid-4th century.³⁰⁴ Even less archaeological material is available from this basilica. As a result, very little can actually be said about the purported earliest churches of Philippopolis.

Episcopal Basilica

During the construction of a nearby underpass from 1983-1986, excavations uncovered the remains of the largest basilica currently known from ancient Philippopolis. The modern Cathedral of St. Louis is built directly to the north of the remains of the basilica and limited the scope of the original excavations, with the result that only the southern half of the structure was initially uncovered. Nevertheless, due to the building's size and central location, it has been identified as the seat of the bishop of Philippopolis and is referred to in modern literature as the Episcopal Basilica.

³⁰² Кесякова (1999), 21.

³⁰³ Topalilov (2012), 414-415, for example, who says the basilica's "interpretation as an early Christian basilica is certain."

³⁰⁴ Topalilov (2012), 414.

Based on the archaeological data available at present, the Episcopal Basilica had a relatively simple plan consisting of a central nave flanked by an aisle on both sides and a single semi-circular apse at the east end (**Fig. 16**). Furthermore, excavators found the remains of several columns overlying the floor mosaics of the nave. Some of the columns appear to have collapsed from a colonnade separating the nave from the south aisle, evidenced by three column bases that were found *in situ*, whereas other, smaller column fragments were clearly not part of the dividing colonnade and suggest instead the basilica had second-storey galleries.³⁰⁵ The basilica's *bema* was a raised rectangular platform about 0.30 m above the level of the nave and was located directly west of the apse; two layers of mortar in the foundation of the *bema* may indicate it was repaired or rebuilt at some point.³⁰⁶ No evidence of a *synthronon* was found in the apse. Interestingly, the basilica did not have a true narthex at its west end, but rather what seems to be an exonarthex with rooms on either end that flanked a large atrium.³⁰⁷

Despite not being fully excavated, the scale of the Episcopal Basilica of Philippiopolis is evident nonetheless. The basilica alone measured approximately 55 m x 38.5 m (c. 2117.5 m²) and the dimensions extend to 86.3 m x 38.5 m (c. 3322.5 m²) when the exonarthex and atrium are included.³⁰⁸ The structure is, therefore, not only the largest basilica in Philippiopolis,

³⁰⁵ Кесьякова (1999), 66-74. The diameter of the larger columns range from 0.50 – 0.60 m whereas the smaller columns have a diameter of 0.23 m; the column bases found *in situ* have grooves to support columns of a diameter of about 0.60 m. Additional evidence was found outside the basilica to the east of the apse, where carved stone blocks seem to have fallen from a second storey.

³⁰⁶ Kessiakova (1989), 2544-2546. The dimensions of the *bema* are 11.20 m east-west and an estimated 10.60 m north-south. As with the rest of the central nave, the north side of the *bema* was not excavated in the 1980s.

³⁰⁷ Кесьякова (1999), 74; Kessiakova (1989), 2544, 2548-2550. The plan of the exonarthex – with projecting wings on either side of the atrium – is somewhat distinctive, although a parallel may perhaps be seen in Basilica A in Ptolemaic Thebes. See Krautheimer (1986), 122.

³⁰⁸ Kessiakova (1989), 2550. Although the superstructure of the basilica largely do not survive, the south aisle has been determined to have measured 47.4 m (east-west) by 8.5 m (north-south) based on the floor mosaics that were preserved nearly intact. The central nave was not fully investigated in the 1980s, but its dimensions were reasonably estimated to be 47.4 x 21.5 m; the length is simply the same as the south aisle and the width

but is among the largest churches built in the entire Balkan Peninsula during Late Antiquity. For example, the churches of a similar scale to the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis include Basilica B (57 x 32 m) in Nicopolis of Epirus Vetus, Hagios Demetrios (c. 54 x 32 m) in Thessalonica, the 6th-century phase of Hagia Sophia (50 x 25 m) in Serdica, and Hagia Eirene (c. 50 x 35 m) in Constantinople.³⁰⁹ Notably, each of the aforementioned cities are either provincial or imperial capitals in Late Antiquity and early Christian churches from non-capital cities are usually much smaller in comparison.³¹⁰ Thus, the construction of the Episcopal Basilica in Philippopolis should be viewed as part of a long process of establishing monumental Christian architecture among the empire's leading cities.

As with several other structures in Philippopolis, the aspect of the Episcopal Basilica that has received the most attention by modern scholars is its decorative scheme.³¹¹ Extensive floor mosaics were preserved nearly completely intact in the nave and south aisle, covering the entire floor area, and similar mosaic fragments were found in the apse and narthex as well. The mosaics of the south aisle consist of three panels. The central panel depicts a fountain gushing water with peacocks on either side and other plants and small birds below, which has

was determined from the curvature of the apse that has survived. The apse is c. 7.5 m deep, the exonarthex 20.2 m long, and the atrium an additional 9.5 m.

³⁰⁹ Since the sizes of adjoining atria and other associated buildings varied widely, only the dimensions of the basilicas are presented here. See Ćurčić (2010), 131 and 190-191 for Nikopolis and Hagia Eirene; Spieser (1984), 188 for Thessalonica; Kirova (2012), 238-241 for Serdica. There are also a small number of massive churches in the Balkans larger than those cited here, most notably the basilica under the modern Hagia Sophia (94 x 53 m) in Thessalonica, Hagios Polyuktos (58 x 52 m) and Hagia Sophia (77 x 71 m) in Constantinople, and Hagios Leonidas (c. 115 x 40 m) in Corinth – which is the longest basilica in the entire Balkans.

³¹⁰ There are far too many smaller churches to provide a complete list, but a few representative examples from the Diocese of Thrace include Basilica 2 (39 x 24 m) in Diocletianopolis, the Large Basilica in Nicopolis ad Istrum, the 6th-century basilica (c. 22 x 13 m) from Abritus, Basilica 1 (c. 22 x 15 m) and Basilica 2 (c. 25 x 17 m) in Nicopolis ad Nestum, and the northwestern Christian basilica (c. 20 x 18 m) in Mesembria.

³¹¹ The studies focusing on the mosaics from the Episcopal Basilica include Pillinger et al. (2016), 198-220; Topalilov (2016); (2015); Кесякова (2011); Bospačeva (2005); Koranda (1992); Popova-Moroz (1987). Indicative of the narrow emphasis of modern scholars on the decorative aspects of the Episcopal Basilica is the fact that at present there are no analyses of other aspects of the basilica such as the construction technique or structural form.

been interpreted as the Fountain of Life; the lateral panels are decorated with geometric motifs and do not depict any individual elements. Conversely, the central nave was divided into four asymmetrical panels, of which three panels have polychrome geometric motifs while the fourth panel was divided into small squares that were filled with figural depictions such as a single bird, a pair of birds, a plant, or a kantharos.³¹² Only fragments of the floor decorations from the narthex and apse were recovered, although small fragments of wall plaster suggest the walls of the central apse were also decorated with coloured panels.³¹³

Significantly, all of the mosaics mentioned so far appear to have been part of a single decorative effort. Although there is some debate regarding the exact sequence and precise date when the Episcopal Basilica was decorated, the consensus at present is that the process likely began in the second quarter of the 5th century. The dating is based primarily on the use of figurative decorative motifs and on comparanda from other sites. After the initial decoration, some sections appear to have been added or altered – probably in the 6th or 7th century – but the majority of the 5th-century mosaics were maintained.³¹⁴

In addition to the decorations discussed above, the excavations in the 1980s revealed some traces of an earlier decorative phase where the 5th/6th-century mosaics had been

³¹² Кесьякова (1999), 75; Kessiakova (1989), 2553-2556. Topalilov (2015), 594 outlines the various figures from the nave.

³¹³ For the wall plaster, see Кесьякова (1999), 74.

³¹⁴ Kessiakova (1989), 2555 provided a preliminary dating of the second quarter of the 5th century, which was subsequently expanded upon. Pillinger et al. (2016), 220 consider there to have been three decorative phases for this mosaic layer, starting with the mosaics of the south aisle and apse in the late-5th century (possible during the reign of Anastasius) and followed by the decoration of the nave and then the exonarthex in the 5th and 6th century. Topalilov (2015), 595-596 also believes a first decorative phase occurred around the mid-5th century, specifically after the Hunnic invasion of 441/442, but does not differentiate between the various rooms; his second phase includes only the decoration of the easternmost panel from the nave, which he dates to the 6th-7th century. Topalilov's claim the second phase occurred during the reign of Justinian is questionable, however, since the only evidence provided for such a precise date is the claim that "other construction activity" is observed in Philippopolis during his reign and – as I demonstrate throughout this thesis – much of the building activity attributed to Justinian in Philippopolis is not supported by archaeological data.

damaged. Since it would have been necessary to remove the later mosaics in order to reveal the earlier phase, the excavators decided to study the older layer in the nave and south aisle only where the mosaic above was already damaged. Consequently, very little data was published about the earlier phase. Nevertheless, it was possible to see some of the decorative motifs of the earlier mosaics, which allowed the layer to be tentatively dated to the late-4th century.³¹⁵ Very recent excavations have revealed the earlier layer more fully, but the preliminary results of the project do not appear to contradict the prevailing interpretation.³¹⁶

It is not entirely clear when or why the Episcopal Basilica ceased to be used. Since the remains of columns were found directly on the upper mosaics and were not removed to be used elsewhere, it is likely the building did not recover after suffering damage of some sort – but there are multiple explanations for how the building was damaged. The traditional view is the destruction of the basilica ought to be linked with the invasions of the Avars and Slavs in the late-6th and early-7th century.³¹⁷ It has also been suggested recently that the damage could have been caused by an earthquake instead.³¹⁸ Both explanations, however, are based on an imperfect interpretation of dating evidence recovered from 96 graves that were found

³¹⁵ Pillinger et al. (2016), 219 and Topalilov (2015), 595 rely on the geometric motifs and, specifically, the lack of figural representations to date the first decorative phase. The use of large, carpet-like geometric patterns that covered the entire floor area of a room and the absence of figural depictions is prevalent in mosaics in both Greece and the eastern provinces around the late-4th century; see e.g. Dunbabin (1999), 176-177, 219.

³¹⁶ A conservation and exhibition project was undertaken in 2015, which uncovered the north half of the nave and narthex as well as the entire north aisle. Additional floor mosaics that appear to be synchronous with the 5th/6th century decorations were discovered in these areas. Furthermore, the upper mosaic layer in the south aisle and the south half of the nave were removed to be displayed elsewhere, thereby revealing the earlier mosaics below – including part of a mosaic inscription in the south aisle (perhaps a donor's inscription?). The results of the project have not yet been published, but a poster outlining these very basic results was presented at the 13th Conference of the International Committee for the Conservation of Mosaics, 15-20 October, 2017 by Elena Kantareva-Decheva and Rayna Decheva, entitled *Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis (Plovdiv, Bulgaria) Conservation of the Mosaic Floor*.

³¹⁷ Кесякова (1999), 21, 75; Kessiakova (1989), 2553-2556; Кесякова (1989b).

³¹⁸ Topalilov (2012), 426-427.

over the upper mosaics.³¹⁹ A coin of Tiberius II Constantine (r. 574-582) was found in one of the graves and has been used as a *terminus ante quem* for the destruction of the Episcopal Basilica, but of course the coin should instead be used as a *terminus post quem* for the burial; the deposition of Roman coins – for various reasons – in much later graves is certainly attested elsewhere.³²⁰ The only other dating evidence from the graves that has been mentioned is a lead seal from the 11th century – although the necropolis is purported to be in use until the 13th century. Accordingly, lacking a full published analysis of the data from the burials, all which can be said for certain about the end of the Episcopal Basilica is that it was likely destroyed at some point after the late-6th century.

The revised chronology of the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis, therefore, can be summarized as follows. It is clear the basilica had at least two decorative phases, with the first phase occurring in the late-4th century. The structural aspects of the Episcopal Basilica have not been adequately investigated so it is unclear if the building was built concurrently with the first decoration phase, but there is no indication at present of any earlier phases. The entire floor of the basilica was then re-decorated in the mid-5th century and minor repairs or alterations continued into the 6th century at least. Thereafter, the basilica was damaged at

³¹⁹ Kessiakova (1989), 2547, 2556-2558. Extremely few details regarding the burials have been published. They were located in the nave, apse, and some were dug into the foundation of the chancel, although the exact position of each and their relation to one another is unknown. Furthermore, the bodies were oriented east-west, with the head to the west and arms crossed over their chest. Most of the burials did not contain grave goods, although some had bracelets, earrings, and rings. Again, it is unclear exactly which burials had grave goods and which did not. The context of the grave goods – including the coin of Tiberius II Constantine – is not indicated so it is unclear whether the coin was a so-called Charon obol, if it was used in jewellery, or a stray deposition. The genders and ages of the dead are not indicated either. All of these pieces of data would be necessary for a full evaluation of the assemblage.

³²⁰ Traviani (2004) provides examples from Italy and Ćirić (2016) examines the use of Roman coins in graves from the 10th-15th century in Serbia. The 6th-century numismatic evidence should certainly not be completely disregarded, but it is very difficult to make any definitive claims without a better understanding of the numismatic data. Improved recording and publishing practices for future excavations would help clarify these questions immeasurably.

some point – possibly due to an earthquake or violent destruction in the late-6th century – and was not rebuilt.

Small Basilica

Named in contrast to the larger Episcopal Basilica, the Small Basilica (20 x 13 m) was located just inside the east wall of Philippopolis and was the second basilica from the ancient city to be archaeologically investigated.³²¹ The structural composition of the Small Basilica was similar in form to its larger counterpart and did not change significantly during the period in which the church was used (**Fig. 17**). The basilica had a central nave and two aisles, a single semi-circular apse at the east end of the nave, and a narthex to the west. Furthermore, a smaller apsed structure – perhaps a chapel – was situated on the south side of the basilica and a paved area on the north side may have been an atrium. The one major structural change was the addition of a baptistery to the north-west corner of the church, which is discussed in further detail below.

Although the overall plan of the Small Basilica did not change drastically, the configuration and particularly the decoration of the interior space reveal several phases of the building's development. The first floor level, for example, consisted of intricate mosaics that covered the entire area of the nave, aisles, narthex, and *bema*. Polychrome geometric patterns are the primary motifs employed in the floor mosaics, although there are some images of rosettes, vases, and a cross as well.³²² The most notable aspect of the mosaics is a dedicatory

³²¹ Bospachieva (2002); Gerassimova (2002). The area of the Small Basilica, along with the adjacent fortification wall, street, and other buildings, was excavated in 1988 as part of the construction of a block of apartments. The preliminary results are presented in Боспачиева (1992). Further restoration and conservation efforts of the floor mosaics were undertaken in the early 2000s and, after securing funding, a modern restoration of the Small Basilica was opened to the public in 2014.

³²² Pillinger et al. (2016), 227-238; Bospachieva (2002), 64-71.

inscription that was located directly in front of the *bema* (Fig. 18). Unfortunately, the name of the donor was erased in antiquity but it has been reasonably suggested that the inscription originally referred to the short-ruling emperor Basiliscus (r. 475-476) – although not necessarily during his reign.³²³

Changes to the furnishing of the *bema* also attest to alterations after the initial decoration of the Small Basilica. The *bema* was built as a two-level area during the original construction of the church, with a set of three steps dividing the two sections. The chancel screen and altar, however, were later additions since they were built over the floor mosaics.³²⁴ In fact, part of the chancel screen runs directly over the name from the dedicatory inscription, thereby erasing it. Although not strictly part of the *bema*, the *ambo* of the Small Basilica was also built over the mosaics after they had been laid and was likely part of the same phase whereby the basilica was furnished.³²⁵

³²³ Gerassimova (2002). Despite the upper portion of the inscription being destroyed, the dedication is contained in a *tabula ansata*, from which it is clear the inscription must be six lines long. Accordingly, the inscription reads:

[ὕπερ ---]
 --- [βι-]
 κτωρος καὶ
 πατριου ἄμ-
 α τῷ ἕκτῳ αὐτῶν
 ἐμούσωσαν.

The words [βι]κτωρος καὶ πατριου are the basis for identifying Basiliscus as the donor referenced by the epigram. Gerassimova identified only one inscription dated to the 4th-6th century in Bulgaria, the FYROM, Romania, and northern Greece – with the obvious exception of Constantinople – that refers to someone by the title patrician, which is an honourific inscription from Philippopolis addressed to Basiliscus; see Beshevliev (1964), n. 206. Moreover, the erasure of the donor's name may be an instance of *damnatio memoriae* following the overthrow of Basiliscus at the hands of Zeno in 476.

³²⁴ Bospachieva (2002), 57-58.

³²⁵ Bospachieva (2002), 58. It is also suggested that a *synthronon* was located in the *bema* of the Small Basilica due to the semi-circular mosaic panel on the upper level. There is, however, no archaeological evidence of such a structure. Moreover, it is extremely rare for the *synthronon* to be located in front of the apse rather than within the apse; the 5th-century Great Basilica at Abu Mina is one example of such an arrangement, but it is exceptional due to the presence of subterranean burials in the apse – Grossmann (1998), 283.

Nevertheless, the decorative efforts came to naught when the Small Basilica was damaged as a result of a fire. A layer of burned wood and *tegulae* were found overlying the mosaics and indicate the roof of the church collapsed onto the floor below; there does not appear to have been any attempt to clear the rubble thereafter.³²⁶ Presumably, the interior furnishings were also damaged or destroyed.³²⁷ Significantly, the structural integrity of the building does not seem to have been fundamentally affected by the fire since the original exterior walls appear to have been reused in subsequent reconstruction efforts.

Following the fire, the Small Basilica was eventually restored – although the fact that the rubble from the collapsed roof was not cleared may indicate there was a significant span of time between the fire and the point at which the restoration efforts began (**Fig. 19**). A new floor paving was laid over the burned timbers and roof tiles – as well as an additional layer of fill where necessary – so that the raised floor level was equal with the upper section of the *bema* from the first phase. The new floor was paved with brick in most areas, but marble slabs were used instead in the new *bema* and for a section at the west end of the north aisle. Furthermore, the narthex was partitioned at this time, resulting in separate spaces at the east end of the nave and both aisles. Finally, at some point after the conflagration event, a small baptistery was also added to the north-west corner of the Small Basilica.³²⁸ A cross-shaped immersion pool (depth 1.00 m at the deepest point) was situated in the centre of the baptistery

³²⁶ Bospachieva (2002), 74.

³²⁷ Both the chancel screen and the *ambo* are primarily attested only by the remains of their foundations; a single fragment of the marble screen was later reused in the construction of the baptistery. Similarly, the only evidence of the altar are the holes in which the supporting dowels would have been placed.

³²⁸ Bospachieva (2002), 60-62. It is not clear whether the baptistery was built concurrently with the restoration of the Small Basilica or at a subsequent point. The baptistery was built abutting the external wall of the church, but this is unhelpful for determining a relative dating since the walls were reused from the first (pre-conflagration) phase.

and was surrounded by polychrome mosaic panels containing figural depictions of stags and birds; the pool was also possibly surmounted by columnar decorations.³²⁹

Based on the changes to its interior features, the chronology of the Small Basilica consists of at least three distinct phases.³³⁰ The first phase includes both the initial construction and the decoration of the basilica and is dated to c. 460-476, based on the inscription that is likely attributable to Basiliscus.³³¹ The second phase provided the basilica with an ambo, altar, and chancel screen – the latter of which is particularly notable since it erased the name of (probably) Basiliscus. If the deletion was a deliberate attempt to remove the church's association with Basiliscus, it is possible the erasure occurred shortly after his deposition and death in 476, although this is admittedly a speculative suggestion since there

³²⁹ Bospachieva (2002), 62. Fragments of marble columns (1.80 – 2.00 m high) and capitals were found during the excavation of the baptistery and were interpreted as a *ciborium* over the immersion pool. It seems unlikely to have been a *ciborium*, however, since such structures are generally used to cover the altar rather than a baptismal pool. Furthermore, despite the remains of several columns, the excavators found no evidence of a canopy – which would be representative of a *ciborium*. Alternatively, it is possible the baptistery was simply adorned with decorative columns or perhaps the columns were deposited or dumped therein at a later date. Unfortunately, the original arrangement of the columns could not be determined, which complicates attempts to interpret their presence.

³³⁰ The two main phases are traditionally referred to as Basilica A and Basilica B by the excavators, but this implies two intrinsically different basilicas and – as shown in this section – the later phase of the Small Basilica is a restoration of the first phase. Furthermore, the traditional dichotomy does not account for the addition of the interior furnishings, which is a clearly separate and subsequent phase. Accordingly, I do not refer to the phases as Basilica A and Basilica B, but rather as simply the first, second, and third phase.

³³¹ Gerassimova (2002), 81; Bospachieva (2002), 73-74. Despite the two articles being published in the same volume, Bospachieva and Gerassimova do not agree on the dating of the inscription. Moreover, both proposed dates are problematic. Bospachieva suggests a date of c. 463 based on the belief that Basiliscus would be based in Philippopolis as a result of his appointment as *magister militum per Thracias*. Basiliscus, however, was not appointed to the post until 464 (*PLRE* II, 212-214). Additionally, the campaigns against the Goths and Huns undertaken while he was *magister militum per Thracias* were likely along the Lower Danube since there is no indication of incursions farther south, and the winter quarters for such campaigns are historically Marcianopolis or Odessos – not Philippopolis. Conversely, Gerassimova proposes a date of 471 by assuming the mosaic inscription was laid down at the same time as the other, honourific inscription that mentions Basiliscus; see above, also Beshevliev (1964), n. 206. There is no evidence the two inscriptions were established concurrently. Furthermore, even the dating of the honourific epigram to 471 is questionable since it rests on the word *rediit*, which Gerassimova has interpreted as Basiliscus' return to Philippopolis to alleviate a siege during the uprising of Theoderic Strabo in 471 – his first visit being during his tenure as *magister militum*. Thus, while the mosaic inscription probably did name Basiliscus, it is not currently possible to attribute it to a specific year.

is no definite dating evidence to indicate this was the case; Basiliscus' name could also have remained for many years after his death.³³² If this hypothesis can be verified by further data, however, the first two phases will have followed in quick succession. The third phase is more problematic since there is no indication at what point the conflagration took place, nor how long it took before the basilica was restored. Accordingly, the third phase of the Small Basilica can only be broadly dated to the 6th century based on design elements, including the partitioned narthex and baptistery. It is also unclear at what point the Small Basilica ceased to be used, but evidence from robber trenches and in the quarry ditches where building material from the walls was later removed indicate the building was no longer in use by the 10th-11th century.³³³

Hexaconch Structure

During rescue excavations near the intersection of Maragidik Street and Neofit Bozveli Street in 1993 and 1995, investigators discovered a late antique building that has subsequently been identified as a *martyrium*. The building appears to have been centrally-focused with six exedras surrounding a circular core that was likely covered by a dome (**Fig. 20**).³³⁴ However, due to the nature of the excavation – that is, a rescue excavation rather than a directed research project – much of the structure fell outside the area under investigation and only the western extent of the building was uncovered. Thus, more than half of the purported *martyrium*

³³² *PLRE* II, 214-215.

³³³ Bospachieva (2002), 55, 74. Bospachieva suggests the Small Basilica was abandoned and the area “became desolate” in the late-6th century as a result of the various Avar and Slavic incursions. As with many other sites in Philippopolis, there is no evidence to support this theory.

³³⁴ Bospachieva (2001); Boyadjiev (2001).

remains unexcavated and although the reconstruction presented by the excavators is reasonable, it should be noted that it is nevertheless a hypothetical reconstruction.

Two construction phases were identified. The first phase established the general layout of the structure and was built over earlier buildings, which are dated by numismatic evidence to the 1st - 3rd century.³³⁵ Solid ashlar stones were used in the construction of the superstructure and the blocks are joined with mortar containing ceramic fragments; the same mortar was used for the foundations, although rubble was used instead of ashlar blocks. A stratum of packed clay marks the floor level of the first construction phase.

Following the hexaconch structure's initial construction, the building suffered severe fire damage and required repair. The extent of the damage and the subsequent degree of restoration is not known, but there is evidence at least in the southernmost excavated exedra that additional masonry was built over the ashlar wall from the first phase. Furthermore, a new mosaic was laid over the layer of burned remains, raising the floor level by 0.80 m from the packed clay surface.

The hexaconch building of Philippopolis has traditionally been identified as a *martyrium* and Bospachieva consequently attributes its construction to the reign of Constantine due to the latter's association with the spread of Christianity and Christian architecture. The archaeological data, however, present an alternate interpretation. The building was almost certainly erected in Late Antiquity since mortar with ceramic or brick inclusions – which was used in both the superstructure and substructure – is used widely in Philippopolis from the late 3rd century onward. Furthermore, the hexaconch structure must

³³⁵ Bospachieva (2001), 59.

postdate the earlier buildings over which it was built, which appear to have been used until at least the early 3rd century.³³⁶

A more precise chronology is provided by the coins recovered from the excavation. Although the complete numismatic data is not published at present, the excavator states coins issued between the reigns of Diocletian (r. 284-305) and Theodosius II (r. 402-450) were found beneath the mosaic floor. The later coins of Theodosius II were found specifically in the burned layer, thereby likely dating the conflagration to the early or mid-5th century, but the coins of Diocletian are of particular interest since they seem to indicate the initial construction phase predated the reign of Constantine.³³⁷ It seems more likely, therefore, that the so-called *martyrium* was originally built not by Constantine, but rather during the reign of one of his predecessors – either Diocletian, Galerius, or Licinius.

Furthermore, in light of the revised dating of the first construction phase, it is necessary to also reconsider the identification of the structure as a *martyrium*. The main archaeological evidence provided to support the interpretation of the building as a *martyrium* is its centralized layout, since previous scholarship viewed centralized circular or polygonal buildings as prototypical *martyria*. While there are certainly several examples of *martyria* with such a layout – such as those found at Augusta Traiana-Beroe, Pliska, Akrini (Greece), and

³³⁶ Bospatchieva (2001), 66. Coins of Trajan (r. 98-117) and Geta (r. 209-211) are cited as dating evidence, although these really only provide a *terminus post quem* of 211 for the destruction of the earlier buildings. The discovery of domestic goods such as ceramic utensils, sewing needles, and clay lamps suggests the earlier buildings were likely private residential structures. They were made of wood and “sun-dried bricks” and appear to have been destroyed by fire.

³³⁷ Bospatchieva (2001), 66. Very little numismatic information is provided, so it is not clear how many coins were found, in which year they were issued (beyond the issuing emperor), in which context, etc., and this presents several problems when trying to determine the chronology of the building. For example, it is possible the coins issued during the reign of Diocletian were deposited later than their initial minting. Furthermore, since the reign of Theodosius II is so long, the lack of issuing year presents a problem when dating the conflagration – it is possible to attribute the fire damage to the Hunnic invasions if it occurred toward the end of the reign of Theodosius II, but a much different explanation must be sought if the building was damaged at the beginning of his reign.

possibly also Veliko Turnovo – a closer inspection of these buildings reveals they were all built in the 5th century. Conversely, the *martyria* built concurrently with the hexaconch building of Philippopolis are instead much simpler in layout, such as the two *martyria* at Serdica that had rectangular plans with a single apse or the two-storey Anastasius Mausoleum in Salona, which had a fairly standard basilical layout.

Among buildings erected in the Tetrarchic period, the closest parallels to the hexaconch structure from Philippopolis are late antique polygonal mausolea.³³⁸ The most-impressive and best-studied tombs of this type are the imperial mausolea, such as that of Diocletian in Split and of Galerius at Gamzigrad, but the use of this style of burial was not limited to the emperors. Moreover, the location of the hexaconch building outside of the walls of Philippopolis and near a road leading into the city is what would be expected of a tomb. Thus, it seems plausible the hexaconch building of Philippopolis was originally erected as a private mausoleum for one of the city's wealthy inhabitants rather than a *martyrium*.

While the hexaconch building may not have been originally built as a *martyrium*, it is still possible it was converted to that purpose at a later date. The second construction phase of the building is difficult to date precisely, but since the mosaic floor is built directly over the burned layer in which coins of Theodosius II were found, there is at least a *terminus post quem* of around the mid-5th century for the decoration of the central space. Additionally, the stylistic and compositional features of the mosaic itself are dated to the 5th century as well. Thus, the second construction phase can likely be dated to the second half of the 5th century. As mentioned previously, the use of centralized circular or polygonal buildings as *martyria* was

³³⁸ The Temple of Minerva Medica, Rome. Rotunda of Galerius, Thessalonica. The hexagonal hall in the Palace of Antiochus in Constantinople is another close analogy, although it dates to the early 5th century.

more common in the 5th century, and the process of converting earlier tombs into *martyria* is attested elsewhere. Accordingly, the hexaconch building at Philippopolis may have undergone a similar transformation in the later 5th century.

Part of the reason why there is such a strong propensity to identify the hexaconch building as a *martyrium*, despite the lack of archaeological evidence, is because there is a tradition that Christian martyrs were executed near that location during the reign of Diocletian. The martyrs include the saint Severus, the centurion Memnon, and thirty-seven other soldiers, who were persecuted near the east gate of Philippopolis by the governor of Thrace Apellianus.³³⁹ Thus, upon discovering a centralized, hexaconch structure near one of the city's gates, the excavators immediately drew a connection with the martyrological tradition. A close inspection of the textual evidence, however, reveals the earliest mention of the martyrs of Philippopolis is in an 18th-century Armenian encyclopaedia. Notably, there are no mentions of the martyrs in the 9th-century Martyrology of Usuard, which includes references to more than 1100 saints and martyrs. Furthermore, the supposed governor of Thrace, Apellianus, does not appear elsewhere in any record, and the title by which he is referred did not exist during the reign of Diocletian, thereby casting doubt on his authenticity. Finally, there is no indication the gate next to which the hexaconch building was found was considered the east gate of Philippopolis in antiquity; in fact, the gate is towards the north side of the city, whereas the gate near the Small Basilica would more rightly be considered the east gate.

Nevertheless, I do not wish to dismiss the tradition of the martyrs of Philippopolis entirely. As Delahaye points out, although it is unclear where or when the tradition arose, it

³³⁹ PLRE, 80.

is likely the result of a persistent local belief, for which there must be an underlying origin. It is possible, for instance, the hexaconch building of Philippopolis was originally built as a private mausoleum, but then converted to a *martyrium* in the second half of the 5th century and the memory of this second phase served as the basis for a local martyrological tradition.³⁴⁰ Due to the problems with the textual evidence, however, any interpretation cannot be more than conjecture at the present state of excavation. Further investigation of the structure, particularly the unexcavated sector to the east, is necessary to clarify the layout, chronology, and character of the hexaconch building before attempting to identify it as a specific *martyrium*.

Synagogue

In addition to the Christian inhabitants of Philippopolis, the discovery of a synagogue complex during rescue excavations in 1981 attests to a significant Jewish population in the city as well.³⁴¹ Regrettably, due to the relatively poor state of preservation and the limited extent of the rescue excavation, the archaeological record of the synagogue is rather fragmentary. Nevertheless, it is possible to determine the rough contour of the complex, which appears to have consisted of an open courtyard connected to a basilica-style synagogue building (**Fig. 21**). The entire compound was oriented north-south, with the courtyard accessed directly from the street to the north, and occupied half of the insula (c. 650m²) within which it was situated. Furthermore, the complex was sited among several grand structures in

³⁴⁰ The hexaconch building seems to have still been structurally intact in the 11th or 12th century since a small chapel was built over the mosaic floor and does not encroach on any of the earlier walls, although the roof will have likely collapsed by that point.

³⁴¹ The remains of the synagogue were found at Block 21, Maria Luiza Blvd. (also referred to in older literature as Lilyana Dimitrova Blvd. or Nezavisimost Street) and were interpreted as a synagogue due to the architectural plan of the building, the depiction of a *menorah* and *lulav* in the floor mosaics, and the Hebrew names mentioned in the dedicatory inscriptions. The preliminary results of the excavation were published in Данов and Кесякова (1984) and Danov and Kesyakova (1984), with subsequent discussion and clarification in Данов (1985); Данов (1987); Кесякова (1989); Kessiakova (1994); Кесякова (1999), 76-82.

the eastern sector of the city – the other half of its insula, for example, was occupied by an impressive residential building and the Narcissus Building stood directly opposite the synagogue to the east. Thus, the synagogue of Philippopolis appears to have been situated in an affluent quarter of the city.

As mentioned previously, the results of the archaeological investigation of the synagogue are limited. The walls of the basilical building survive mostly only in substructure; crushed stone bonded with white mortar was the primary building technique used in the foundations, although some instances of pink mortar were also observed. Additionally, the excavators report that column bases were found in the atrium, which suggests a colonnade separated the courtyard from the synagogue building. The remains of a well – or possibly a fountain – were also found in the courtyard.³⁴²

Despite the limited evidence, at least two phases to the synagogue's development are visible in the archaeological record. Some sections of the surviving superstructure were built using large stone blocks, including reused marble pieces, and were found to have been constructed over the previous crushed stone masonry, thereby signifying the sections were built at a later date.³⁴³ The clearest indicator of the different periods, however, is the presence of two floor levels in both the courtyard and the synagogue building. In the courtyard, the open space was initially paved with mortar and subsequently re-paved with another layer of mortar at a later date; subterranean masonry water channels at two different heights clearly illustrate the two floor levels. Similarly, the interior of the synagogue was originally decorated

³⁴² Кесякова (1989), 20-22, 29.

³⁴³ Кесякова (1989), 29.

with a series of floor mosaics that were later covered by a second layer of mosaics – indicating two distinct decoration phases.³⁴⁴

Although the mosaics are heavily damaged, it appears most of the interior of the synagogue was covered by a large carpet of black and white geometric patterns during the earlier decorative phase. Notably, however, the area at the south end of the building was dedicated to three panels. The two side panels are nearly identical; both panels are comprised of black and white geometric patterns enclosed in a broad border and a dedicatory inscription naming a certain Kosmianos, also known as Joseph, is repeated in each section.³⁴⁵ Conversely, the central panel is much more ornate, consisting of a polychrome depiction of a seven-branched candelabrum (*menorah*) and palm frond (*lulav*) enclosed in broad frame.³⁴⁶ The central panel also has a dedicatory inscription below the *menorah*, which appears to follow a model similar to the inscriptions from the side panels and names Isaac as the donor.

The first floor level does not appear to have been damaged but it was subsequently covered completely by another layer of floor mosaics, which differ from the earlier mosaics in both style and technique. The mosaics from the second floor level were polychromatic, but the individual *tesserae* were larger and rougher than the synagogue's earlier decorations. Moreover, the motifs employed were strictly geometric and did not include any figural representations or donative inscriptions. It also appears the later mosaics were repaired a number of times using brick or marble patches.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Кесякова (1989), 22.

³⁴⁵ The only difference between the panels is the arrangement of the words in the inscriptions. The text in either inscription is identical, but the words in the east panel are arranged so the final word – *πασιν* – is squished into a fourth row in the bottom corner of the *tabula ansata*. Conversely, the text in the west panel are neatly arranged into three evenly-spaced rows.

³⁴⁶ Pillinger et al. (2016), 239-248 provides a thorough summary of the mosaics from the synagogue.

³⁴⁷ Pillinger et al. (2016), 239-248.

The most prevalent interpretation of the synagogue's chronology is based on the early publications of the excavators and identifies three discrete phases.³⁴⁸ According to the initial conclusions of Danov and Kesyakova, the use of white mortar in the foundations and a purported affinity for Judaism by the Severan dynasty is evidence the compound was built in the early-3rd century. Simultaneously, the black and white mosaics donated by Kosmianos-Joseph were laid inside the synagogue.³⁴⁹

The second phase is evidenced by the pink mortar with crushed brick, which the excavators interpreted as an indication the first synagogue building was destroyed during the Gothic unrest of the mid-3rd century and subsequently rebuilt on the same plan and with the same floor levels. The mosaic panel depicting the *menorah* and *lulav* was donated by Isaac at this time as well.

The third phase suggested by the Danov and Kesyakova occurred in the mid-5th century following the synagogue's destruction in the early-5th century due to anti-Semite persecution. This phase includes the new floor levels in the courtyard and basilical building as well as minor alterations to the compound's layout; the synagogue building maintained its rectangular plan but was extended to the north, thereby shortening the attached courtyard. The excavators consider the third phase to have continued until the synagogue's final destruction in the early-6th century as a result of the Slavic incursions.

While the initial interpretation of Danov and Kesyakova is the most prevalent description of the synagogue in ensuing literature, it is somewhat outdated and does not take

³⁴⁸ For example, the traditional chronology of the synagogue is repeated in Topalilov (2012), 412-413 and Rizos (2010), Table 3.

³⁴⁹ Данов & Кесякова (1984) and Danov & Kesyakova (1984). Palaeographic features of the mosaic dated to 212-218 by Попова.

into account the assessment of other scholars or the shifting opinion of both Danov and Kesyakova. In a subsequent publication, for example, Danov claims the mosaic panels donated by Kosmianos should in fact be dated to the 4th century based on palaeographic features.³⁵⁰ Similarly, Kesyakova later altered her initial view and stated the three mosaic panels were likely laid concurrently; she believes the difference in style between the panels donated by Kosmianos and those funded by Isaac should be viewed as the result of different mosaicists working on different sections simultaneously.³⁵¹ Furthermore, Koranda and Valeva contend that all three mosaic panels date to the late-3rd or early-4th century, and Williams has recently argued that the use of undeclined form names in the dedicatory inscriptions indicates the mosaics were laid in the 4th-5th century.³⁵² The variety of interpretations is a result of the fragmentary nature of the archaeological evidence recovered from the synagogue and, consequently, the over-reliance on stylistic analyses of the floor mosaics without supporting contextual data.

Another effect of the sparse archaeological evidence is that scholars have often used historical events to explain changes to the synagogue despite little or no data to support such explanations. For instance, there is no archaeological evidence the synagogue was destroyed in the mid-3rd century as a result of the Gothic invasions – the excavators did not note any charcoal, ash layers, or damage to the floor mosaics. The use of pink mortar with brick dust may indicate the foundations were repaired at some point after the mid-3rd century – alternately, it could simply be explained as regular maintenance – but in either case there is no way to date the mortar so precisely as to associate it with the Gothic invasions. There is

³⁵⁰ Данов (1985).

³⁵¹ Кесякова (1989).

³⁵² Williams (2007); Valeva (1995); Koranda (1992).

even less evidence to support the claim that the synagogue was destroyed in the late-6th or early-7th century as a result of the Slavic incursions into the Balkans. Smaller structures were later built over the remains of the synagogue, but they are not securely dated and there is no indication they are associated with Slavic occupants.³⁵³ While such historical explanations are convenient, they are not based on archaeological data.

There is, however, one instance where a historical explanation may be correct and supported by additional evidence – namely, the destruction of the synagogue in the first half of the 5th century due to the persecution of the Jewish inhabitants of Philippopolis. None of the material recovered from the excavation of the synagogue can be definitively dated to the early-5th century, but several other synagogues were damaged, destroyed, or seized during this period.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is possible the second floor level inside the basilical building was laid in order to deliberately cover the distinctive Jewish elements of the earlier floor mosaics; features such as the *menorah*, *lulav*, and Hebrew donor names are conspicuously absent from the basic geometric patterns of the later mosaic. Thus, perhaps the function of the basilical building shifted away from being used as a synagogue in its later phase, although the process by which this may have occurred is not clear.

The examination of the available evidence and scholarly opinions presented above facilitates a revised chronology of the synagogue of Philippopolis. It is still not entirely clear when the synagogue complex was initially built, but the original interpretation of Danov and Kesyakova that it occurred in the first half of the 3rd century appears to be closest to the truth. The use of white mortar in the foundations suggests the synagogue was built prior to Late

³⁵³ Кесьякова (1989), 31.

³⁵⁴ Levine (2000), 194-195.

Antiquity – during which time pink mortar was ubiquitous – and the structures over which the compound was constructed provide a *terminus post quem* of the 2nd century. It is difficult to assess the alternate suggestions for dating the synagogue discussed earlier in this section since they rely entirely on stylistic elements of the floor mosaics or palaeographic features of the inscriptions and the focus of this thesis is not palaeography or mosaic design. What is clear, however, is most of the alternate datings do not take into account the structural archaeological evidence mentioned above, which appears to be convincing. Thus, while the dating parameters are somewhat imprecise, the synagogue seems to have been built at some point roughly between the mid- to late-2nd century and the mid-3rd century.

Furthermore, since there is no indication the synagogue was affected by the Gothic unrest in the mid-3rd century, the first phase of the complex appears to have continued for an extended period of time. The discovery of pink mortar in the foundations, which may indicate care was taken to maintain or conserve the structure during Late Antiquity, suggests the first phase continued to at least the late-3rd century and likely extended into the 4th century. Moreover, although the precise dating of the floor mosaics is still under debate, I tend to agree with the idea of two decoration phases; the use of colour in the central panel, the differing levels of technical skill, and the markedly different palaeographic features of the inscriptions are compelling indicators that the central panel was laid at a different time than the side panels. The second decoration phase, however, should not be viewed as a result of the Gothic destruction, but rather part of the natural development of the space over an extended period of use.

The later phase of the synagogue has received comparably less attention than the first phase, both during the initial excavation and in subsequent publications, which makes it

difficult to state any definite conclusions. The extension of the basilical building and the new floor levels indicate there was undoubtedly a change in the compound's arrangement at some point, but there is no convincing evidence regarding the dating of the change or its cause. It is possible the synagogue was destroyed or seized during the early-5th century and repurposed for some other function, although this conclusion is conjectural and not based on archaeological evidence.

The end of the complex is similarly unclear due to lack of evidence. The so-called Slavic structures that were later built over the remains of the synagogue are not securely dated and there is no material evidence linking them to a Slavic population. As a result, it is not currently possible to date the terminus of the synagogue complex of Philippopolis – whatever its use in the second phase.

Private Buildings

Eirene Building

As is the case with many archaeological investigations of cities from the ancient world, the residential architecture of Philippopolis is largely understudied. Nevertheless, several examples of late antique intramural houses in Philippopolis have been investigated over the last few decades. Archaeologists have overwhelmingly focused on the monumental private residences of the city's elite, with the result that the houses of affluent citizens comprise the majority of the currently-known private buildings from Late Antiquity. Examples of elite residences in Philippopolis include the Eirene Building, the Residence, the Narcissus Building, and the Museum Site. Furthermore, the remains of a private bathing facility at Block

21, Knyaginya Maria Luiza Blvd. and excavations on the slopes of the Three Hills possibly attest to at least two additional large domestic buildings in the city.

As described below, archaeological data confirms the use of all of the above buildings for domestic purposes during Late Antiquity. Yet much of the archaeological data from the excavation of elite houses in Philippopolis, particularly from older excavations, remains unpublished or exists only in brief annual reports.

Of the elite residences of Philippopolis, the Eirene Building has received the most scholarly attention and the results of its excavation are relatively well-published. North of the Episcopal Basilica, excavations in 1983-1984 uncovered a private building that likely dates to Late Antiquity (**Fig. 22**). Although investigators did not expose the entire floor plan, it is nevertheless evident the building was a sizeable structure in antiquity; about 650 m² has been excavated at present and excavators estimate this represents less than half of the entire area, thereby indicating the overall size of the building was likely 1000-1300 m².³⁵⁵ Furthermore, several rooms were decorated with floor mosaics and the residence is named after one such mosaic, which depicts a figural representation of the goddess Eirene. Thus, due to its size and sumptuous decoration, the Eirene Building was an impressive residential complex in antiquity.

Activity in the Eirene Building seems to have been divided between two areas: the western sector and the eastern sector. Although the two sides of the house are connected internally, separate entrances to the house provide access directly from the street to either sector.³⁵⁶ The western sector includes Rooms 2, 4, 13, and 14. These rooms have received

³⁵⁵ Bospachieva (2003), 84.

³⁵⁶ A door leading from the street into Room 13 provides access to the western sector, while the eastern sector is entered by means of a door to Room 1.

relatively little archaeological attention, but *dolia* found in Room 2 and other “household utensils” suggest some domestic activities took place therein.³⁵⁷ Moreover, the western sector lacks any decoration, which is particularly notable when compared with the lavish eastern sector and attests to a more utilitarian role for the area. Conversely, the eastern sector of the Eirene Building appears to have been the main reception area (**Fig. 23**). A central peristyle courtyard forms the core of the eastern sector, with rooms arranged along the south (Rooms 1 and 3) and east sides (Rooms 6, 9, 10, 11, 12). Furthermore, nearly the entire area of the sector is decorated with intricate floor mosaics.³⁵⁸

Despite the floor mosaics being the subject of ample scholarly attention, as discussed below, the phasing of the Eirene Building itself is poorly-understood. Its initial construction is dated broadly to the late-3rd or early-4th century and Bospachieva cites the use of pink mortar with crushed brick inclusions as supporting evidence for such a date. Pink mortar with crushed brick is certainly used elsewhere in Philippopolis during Late Antiquity but it is not a precise indicator of construction date.³⁵⁹ As a result, the only precise piece of dating evidence are coins issued during the reigns of Constans and Constantius II that were found beneath the floor mosaics in Room 3, and which provide a *terminus post quem* of the mid-4th century for the decoration of that room.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ Bospachieva (2003), 86. Bospachieva also acknowledges further excavation may reveal shops along the west side of the building.

³⁵⁸ Archaeological evidence for mosaics in Rooms 9, 11, and 12 has not yet been discovered. It is also likely additional rooms are situated on the north side of the courtyard, but this area has not been excavated.

³⁵⁹ The use of similar mortar in major public projects may indicate a similar construction period, but its use in private building is somewhat more complicated. Since there is no centralised direction of mortar composition for private building projects – as there would be during the construction of, for example, city walls – then it is possible to have minor variations between batches of mortar.

³⁶⁰ Bospachieva (2003), 102. Details of the coins and their find contexts have not been published; it is unclear how many coins were found or how they came to be located under the mosaic. Moreover, it should be stressed that the mid-4th century is only a *terminus post quem* – not an absolute dating, as is often repeated in publication. It is also certainly possible the Eirene Building was initially built well before the decoration of Room 3 but there is no archaeological data to support such a conclusion at present.

Few structural changes were made to the overall plan of the Eirene Building during its period of use, with the exception of the addition of an apse to the east end of Room 9. It is unclear exactly at what point the apse was added, although if it is assumed it was built concurrently with its decoration then it likely dates from the 5th century.³⁶¹

Despite a poor understanding of the overall phasing of the Eirene Building, the floor mosaics have received comparatively ample scholarly attention. As a result, researchers have been able to identify two major decoration phases as well as several minor modifications. The first decoration phase includes the “finest” mosaics in the building according to Bospachieva and consists largely of polychrome geometric patterns as well as depictions of flora, vases, and rosettes.³⁶² The surviving mosaics from the first decoration phase are located in Room 3 and the south portico of the peristyle courtyard. The first decoration phase also includes the figural representation of Eirene in Room 3 that lends its name to the building in modern publications (**Fig. 24**). The categorisation of the first decoration phase is based largely on stylistic analysis, but the respective mosaics also share the same construction technique – a thin layer of pink mortar (0.03 m) over a stratum of mortar mixed with crushed bricks (0.10 m) and a base of stone rubble (0.30 m).³⁶³

In addition to the floor mosaics, the first decoration phase is also said to include the *opus signinum* – polished pink mortar – floor paving in Rooms 9 and 10 as well as the levelling and paving of the peristyle courtyard. There is, however, no published dating evidence for these events and their attribution to the first decoration phase appears merely conjectural. The *opus signinum* of Rooms 9 and 10 underlies the remnants of floor mosaics discovered in

³⁶¹ Bospachieva (2003), 101.

³⁶² Bospachieva (2003).

³⁶³ Bospachieva (2003), 87.

those rooms, so the paving certainly predates the second decoration phase (discussed below), but there is no data that indicates the polished floor paving was laid concurrently with the floor mosaics of Room 3 and the south portico.

There is even less evidence for the conversion of the peristyle courtyard; a single “glass-melting bath” serves as the basis for Bospachieva’s hypothesis that the courtyard was used for the production of *tesserae* during the construction of the Eirene mosaic and that the area was converted into a paved courtyard immediately after the mosaic’s completion.³⁶⁴ While it is certainly possible, even likely, the mosaicists used the convenient open space to produce *tesserae* in close proximity to the location where the mosaic would eventually be laid, the timing of such an endeavour is not at all clear. The craftsmen could have used the courtyard just as easily after it had been paved, for example, or the space could have been paved well after the first decoration phase. Thus, the attribution of the *opus signinum* flooring in Rooms 9 and 10 and the paving of the peristyle courtyard to the first decoration phase is a hypothesis of convenience rather than being based on actual archaeological evidence.

The floor mosaics in Rooms 1, 9, 10, and the east portico of the peristyle courtyard represent the second decoration phase. The mosaics in these spaces share several design features and an identical colour scheme, thereby suggesting they were installed concurrently. Bospachieva also comments on the stylistic value of the mosaics, noting they are “of lesser quality” than the mosaics from Room 3 and the south portico and, therefore, must represent a subsequent decoration phase.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Bospachieva (2003), 88, 96. The item is described as “a brick fragment...with melted glass material on the surface.” It has a diameter of 1 m and a thickness of 0.5 m. Contextual information of the “glass-melting bath” has not been published, however, so its relation to its surroundings is unknown.

³⁶⁵ Bospachieva (2003), 87.

While dating features on stylistic grounds alone can be problematic, additional archaeological data supports the notion of a second decoration phase. The most telling evidence was found in Rooms 9 and 10, where the floor mosaics overlie the *opus signinum* floor from the first decoration phase. Moreover, a stratum of burned material separates the two decorated layers and further underscores the presence of two discrete periods of decoration. The conflagration that resulted in the burnt layer may have even effected the second decoration phase.

Additional evidence for the extent of the second decoration phase is provided by the construction technique of the mosaics in the east portico and the newly-added apse of Room 9. In these two spaces, the mosaic bases are identical, consisting of 3-4 cm of pink mortar over a 10 cm layer of stone and ceramic fragments.³⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the base of the mosaics in Room 1 has not been investigated, but the geometric designs and colour scheme in Room 1 are consistent with the other mosaics from the second phase so it is likely they belong to the same decoration effort.

The date of the second decoration phase is based primarily on a single coin discovered in the burned stratum in Room 9. Few details regarding the coin have been published, but Bospachieva assigns it to the “end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century”.³⁶⁷ The motifs from the mosaics do not help much in this regard either; the comparisons provided range in date from the 4th to the 6th century and reflect the difficulties with using stylistic components as dating factors, particularly in an understudied field such as late antique mosaics.³⁶⁸ Gerassimova suggests the mosaic inscription in Room 1 shares palaeographic characteristics

³⁶⁶ This is the only surviving evidence of mosaics in the apse; none of the tesserae have been preserved.

³⁶⁷ Bospachieva (2003), 102.

³⁶⁸ Bospachieva (2003), 101.

with the donor's inscription from the Small Basilica, thereby dating the second decoration phase to the second half of the 5th century, but even this is somewhat unhelpful since the inscription in Room 1 was added after the room's initial decoration. Thus, as with much of the rest of the building, the dating of the second decoration phase is nebulous. The coin from the burned layer provides the end of the 4th/beginning of the 5th century as a vague *terminus post quem*, and the mosaic inscription in Room 1 may provide the late-5th century as a *terminus ante quem*, but this is far from precise.

Based on numismatic and stratigraphic evidence, the Eirene Building is traditionally believed to have been completely destroyed by a conflagration in the early-7th century. Excavators noted the mosaics in the apse of Room 9 suffered fire damage and coins of the emperors Justin II (565-574) and Phocas (602-610) found in the burned layer are cited as evidence the building was destroyed in the reign of the latter.³⁶⁹ The destruction of the Eirene Building is also conventionally described as a result of Slavic and Avar military activity in the region but there is no archaeological evidence to suggest such a specific explanation; as with several other sites in Philippopolis, it is not possible to determine the cause of the fire that destroyed the Eirene Building with the archaeological data that is currently available.

Furthermore, while the coins certainly provide a valuable *terminus post quem* for the destruction of the Eirene Building, it is perhaps incorrect to use them as definitive dating material without considering several other factors. For example, it should not be surprising that a coin of Phocas is the latest numismatic evidence since the Avars controlled much of the region of Thrace during the years following Maurice's Balkan campaigns, thereby limiting the circulation of official imperial coinage in Philippopolis. Additionally, although Phocas's

³⁶⁹ Bospachieva (2003), 102.

successor Heraclius mobilized sizeable armies and minted a great deal of new coinage, these efforts were almost entirely directed towards the Sassanian and, subsequently, the Arab armies; the Balkans were effectively ignored while Heraclius attempted to address his problems along the eastern frontier.³⁷⁰ The dearth of numismatic evidence in the Balkans in the early-7th century is clearly demonstrated by coin assemblages from late antique/early Medieval Pernik and Turnovo.³⁷¹ The lack of coins issued after the reign of Phocas, therefore, may simply be a reflection of the lack of overall coin circulation in Thracia rather than an indication that the Eirene Building was destroyed in the early 7th century.³⁷²

In addition to concerns regarding the date of the Eirene Building's destruction, Bospachieva's claim that the building was completely levelled by fire is perhaps imperfect as well. The only archaeological evidence of a conflagration in the later period is the burning damage sustained by the mosaic in the apse of Room 9, in which the aforementioned coins of Justin II and Phocas were found. Significantly, none of the mosaics in other areas of the building appear to have sustained any fire damage – including, most notably, the mosaics from Room 9, which is directly adjacent to the apse.³⁷³ Thus, it appears the fire in the apse was an isolated and contained event rather than a great conflagration that destroyed the entire building. The exact reason for the Eirene Building's ultimate destruction, therefore, remains

³⁷⁰ Curta (2001), 189.

³⁷¹ Morrisson (2002), Figures 6.11 and 6.13.

³⁷² Coin circulation and diffusion in Thracia in the late 6th and early 7th century is an often-neglected subject due to the lack of published numismatic material, particularly regarding hoards. Curta (1996), 95 notes, for example, “there are no published data about Thracian hoards that could be used for this analysis”. Thus, the full publication of numismatic material and comprehensive analyses of coin circulation in the province of Thrace and/or the Diocese of Thracia would be immeasurably helpful not only for clarifying the later phases of the Eirene Building, but also for exploring broader questions regarding the chronology of 6th-9th centuries in the region. Regrettably, such an extensive project is beyond the scope of this thesis.

³⁷³ This does not, of course, include the burned layer between the first and second decoration phases in Rooms 9 and 10 since it is clear this is a separate, earlier conflagration event.

unclear and could be explained by any combination of deliberate demolition, repurposing of the building material, or structural collapse.

Whether the Eirene Building was completely destroyed by fire or simply damaged, it is nevertheless clear that at some point the use of the structure changed markedly. In the period following Late Antiquity, pits were cut through the floor mosaics in several places, badly damaging the decorations, and “structures of mud” were built both inside and outside of the building. The progression of this process is entirely unknown, but numismatic evidence seems to indicate some sort of continuing presence in the area of the Eirene Building up to the 14th century.³⁷⁴

Residence

In contrast with the Eirene Building, very little has been published about the other residential buildings of Philippopolis. Despite the size and reputation of the so-called Residence complex and the Narcissus Building, for example, Kesyakova’s overview of Philippopolis provides only a brief summary of both structures and states clearly at the end of each section the materials are not published.³⁷⁵ As a result, the summaries provide detailed descriptions of the mosaics found at either location, but they are relatively less-useful for determining the chronology, development, and overall purpose of the buildings. The problems that arise from a lack of proper published data is reflected in subsequent literature, where Kesyakova’s initial

³⁷⁴ Vospachieva (2003), 103. The complete numismatic data has not been published so it is impossible at this time to analyse the recovered coins in any detail. It would be interesting, however, to see whether there is a significant break after the reign of Phocas since this may help determine coin circulation patterns in the region.

³⁷⁵ Кесеякова (1999), 57, 92. Kesyakova is able to provide the brief summaries without the material having been published since she conducted the excavation of both the Residence and the Narcissus Building. The lack of published material, however, makes it difficult for other scholars to verify her conclusions.

assumptions have been perpetuated without much additional consideration due to the difficulty of providing a persuasive alternative.³⁷⁶ What is possible, however, is to review the archaeological data that is available and explore whether the conventional understanding of the private housing of Philippopolis is justified by the existing evidence.

The so-called Residence complex was partly excavated in 1983 during the construction of roadworks adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the ancient agora. The roadworks revealed a series of rooms on either side of one of the city's *decumani*, which Kesyakova grouped together into a single residential complex (**Fig. 25**). A large building near the centre of the street is the only part of the complex for which there is any archaeological information beyond a basic plan. The building consists of a large room (14 x 9 m) at the east end, which was decorated with coloured plaster on the walls as well as a polychromatic floor mosaic depicting geometric patterns and representations of birds, fruits, and pots. Two small rooms followed the large room, one of which also had floor mosaic, and a final room in the west had a projecting exedra and hypocaust system. Furthermore, a narrow, raised corridor extended along most of the northern side of the building and was open to the north in several places, similar to a portico. After the building's initial construction, two smaller buildings were added to the south side and built directly over the street; a thick layer of hydrophobic mortar lined the interior walls of the later buildings. According to Kesyakova, the initial construction of the so-called Residence occurred in the first half of the 4th century and it is in use until the 6th century.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ See, for example, Rizos (2010), 324; Topalilov (2012), 418. In an entire chapter devoted to the houses of late Roman aristocrats, Rizos discusses the Residence and Narcissus Building in a single paragraph. Similarly, Topalilov mentions the Residence once in passing and the Narcissus Building not at all.

³⁷⁷ Кесякова (1999), 57.

Based on the published archaeological evidence, there are several problems with Kesyakova's interpretation of the Residence complex. For example, the dating of the construction of the Residence is based entirely on a stylistic analysis of the floor mosaics, which in itself is not problematic but Kesyakova seems to be selective in her interpretation of the evidence. Having noted stylistic similarities with other mosaics that have dates ranging from the 3rd to the 6th century, it is not clear why Kesyakova settled on the first half of the 4th century as the specific time at which the Residence was built.³⁷⁸

Similarly, it is unclear why Kesyakova determined the Residence ceased to be used in the 6th century since there is no archaeological evidence to suggest such a conclusion. So-called "medieval" structures were later built over the ruins of the Residence, but these are not at all securely-dated and provide only the vaguest *terminus ante quem*. Accordingly, additional investigation is necessary to clarify the dating of the Residence complex.

Narcissus Building

As with the Residence, few details about the Narcissus Building have been published. It appears the building was a typical peristyle house that was the direct neighbour of the city's synagogue. Only a very basic plan of the house exists, unfortunately. The peristyle courtyard was offset to the west from the centre of the building and had an *impluvium* in the middle, while the domestic rooms appear to have been arranged north of the courtyard and rooms associated with crafts and industry comprised the south half of the building.³⁷⁹ Although most

³⁷⁸ Pillinger et al. (2016), 164-169. Written by Kesyakova, this publication provides a full catalogue of comparanda, including sites from Syria, Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro, etc. Interestingly, Kesyakova mentions similarities with other mosaics from Philippopolis – most notably the Narcissus Building (mid-4th century) and the Eirene Building (early-3rd century) – but does not explore the significance of their drastically different construction dates nor their proximity to the Residence complex.

³⁷⁹

of the rooms appear to have been paved with brick, an impressive floor mosaic was discovered in one of the rooms. The central circular panel of the mosaic depicts Narcissus, whence the building gained its name in modern literature.

Based on a stylistic analysis of the floor mosaic, the Narcissus Building appears to have been originally built in the early 3rd century, but it is likely the building continued to be used into Late Antiquity. At a later date, structures built using stone bonded with mud and mudbrick appear within the house's interior. Furthermore, at some point an "oval grain storage" (perhaps a *dolium*?) was built into the former *impluvium*. There were also apparently some furnaces nearby, but their exact location in the house is not clear and their dating is not reported.³⁸⁰ These features, therefore, attest to re-use of the space in the Narcissus Building particularly for commercial or manufacturing purposes.

The encroachment of the Narcissus Building is generally dated to the 5th or 6th century due to the perceived poor construction technique of the encroaching structures.

Museum Building

The remaining archaeological evidence for residential architecture in Philippopolis is incomplete at best. Limited excavations were undertaken at the Museum Building from 1976-1977, so-named after its proximity to the former location of the Plovdiv Archaeological Museum, which revealed the partial remains of a structure that has been traditionally interpreted as a private residence.³⁸¹ Only three rooms were investigated during the initial

³⁸⁰ Topalilov 2014, 232.

³⁸¹ However, Tankova (1980), 27-28 makes it clear the purpose of the building could not be determined at that point – even making a point that no domestic goods were found during excavation. This could, however, be due to a deliberate evacuation and demolition of the house before the construction of the 5th/6th century wall over its remains.

excavation of the site and, although recent excavations have uncovered a private bath suite that appears to be part of the same building, the full extent and plan of the complex remains unclear.

The main focus of scholars has been a polychromatic floor mosaic that covers an area of 45 m² in one of the rooms discovered in the 1970s.³⁸² The central emblem of the mosaic is a maritime scene depicted in a rectangular panel (2.37 m x 1.55 m), of which only the right half has survived. The section that has survived depicts a figure guiding a small ship across the top of waves while fish, coral, algae, and Eros riding a dolphin are shown beneath the sea. The remainder of the floor area is covered with regular geometric motifs and a band of ivy surrounds the outermost border of the room. Furthermore, syenite columns were built through the mosaic after its completion, attesting to later modifications of the room, and at some point the building suffered serious fire damage; the layer of earth overlying the floor mosaic contained a significant amount of charcoal and the central emblem bears traces of fire damage.

Unfortunately, the chronology and development of the building is not well-understood. The remains uncovered in the excavations of the 1970s are purportedly from the fourth construction phase, indicating several periods of use, reuse, and restoration but there is no data about the earlier phases. It appears the Museum Building was renovated in the latter half of the 3rd century, implying it was originally built before that point, and was presumably occupied throughout the 4th century until the floor mosaic was laid in the late 4th or early 5th century. Tankova suggests the mosaic was destroyed during a reconstruction of the building in the 5th century, but the prevalence of charcoal in the layer directly above the

³⁸² Bospačieva (2005), 52; Tankova (1980), 28.

mosaic suggests rather the collapsed wooden features were left where they fell rather than being cleared to allow for further building in the area.³⁸³ The latest chronological extent of the Museum Building is, however, more definite since the 6th-century fortification wall was built directly over the ruins of the building and provides a helpful *terminus ante quem*.³⁸⁴

Maria Luiza Building

It also appears a substantial residential building was located in the east sector of Philippopolis, as evidenced by excavations at Knyaginya Maria Luiza Blvd., Block 21. Similarly to the Museum Building discussed above, the full extent of the Maria Luiza Building was not explored, but the presence of an elite residence is assumed based on the discovery of an apparent private bath suite. The investigators uncovered six connected rooms and interpreted them as the *apoditerium* (Room 1), a service room (Room 2), *latrina* (Room 3), *laconicum* (Room 4), *caldarium* (Room 5), and another service room with the *praefurnium* (Room 6). Furthermore, the *apoditerium* was decorated with a floor mosaic. The other rooms of the standard bath suite – particularly the *frigidarium* and *tepidarium* – are presumed to be in the unexcavated area in the northeast of the building, and the rest of the residence is thought to extend to the east.

The excavator of the Maria Luiza Building dates the bath suite to the early 5th century based largely on the materials and technique used in its construction – namely, the use of bricks and mortar with brick dust and crushed brick inclusions. Pink mortar with brick dust

³⁸³ The extent of the charcoal fragments suggests the entire room was covered by burned, wooden debris – perhaps from a collapsed wooden roof, rafters, or elements of an upper storey. The cause of the fire damage, however, is not at all clear.

³⁸⁴ The latest coins recovered during excavation were issued by Justinian and may support a mid-6th century dating for the end of the Museum Site, although no information about these coins has been published. Thus, it is not clear how many coins were found, where they were found, or whether they were from sealed contexts, making it difficult to judge their usefulness as dating material.

and crushed brick inclusions is employed widely throughout Philippopolis in Late Antiquity, but its use is not restricted to the early 5th century.

An imprecise *terminus post quem* for the construction of the Maria Luiza Building is provided by a building over which the baths were built. The size and nature of the earlier building is entirely unclear since the only evidence for its existence is a wall that was later reused in Room 4, but it appears the reused wall was originally built on the same level as the adjacent *cardo*. Furthermore, since the adjacent *cardo* sits about a meter higher than the nearby *decumanus*, it was likely laid as a result of the repair and restoration work undertaken in the mid-3rd century due to the damage inflicted by the Goths under Cniva. The result of this lengthy extrapolation is that the earlier building must have been built after the mid-3rd century. Kesyakova assumes the earlier building was in use throughout the 4th century, and therefore the baths must post-date the 4th century, but there is no published evidence for her conclusion; as mentioned previously, the only remains of the first phase is the reused wall in Room 4. Thus, all that can be said regarding the dating of the Maria Luiza Building is that it was built between the mid-3rd century and the 6th century, at which point the floor of Room 1 is decorated with a mosaic.³⁸⁵

The dating of the point at which the Maria Luiza Building ceases to be used is similarly problematic. It is assumed the residential complex is violently destroyed at the end of the 6th century due to the “huge waves of Slavonic invasions”, but the evidence provided to support this hypothesis is the supposed destruction of other buildings in Philippopolis – namely, the synagogue, Episcopal Basilica, and other residential buildings.³⁸⁶ As I hope I have

³⁸⁵ Kesyakova (1998), 171 dates the mosaic to the 6th century based on stylistic elements and technical skill.

³⁸⁶ Kesyakova (1998), 171.

demonstrated by now, the claims that these buildings were violently destroyed by the Avars or Slavs is largely not supported by the archaeological evidence and they may in some cases have continued to be used into the 7th century and later. Accordingly, it is not appropriate to assume the Maria Luiza Building was destroyed during the late 6th or early 7th century without other, site-specific supporting evidence. The building was certainly destroyed by the 10th century.³⁸⁷

Knyaz Tseretelev Building

The final possible indication of elite residential architecture in Philippopolis is a large fragment (2 x 3 m) of a polychrome floor mosaic that was discovered in 1957 during sewer works at 22-24 Knyaz Tseretelev Street.³⁸⁸ The stylistic elements of the mosaic, comprising geometric motifs in black, white, red, and yellow, have been dated to the 4th century.³⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the mosaic fragment was the only material recovered from the site and its archaeological context is not known; the mosaic is assumed to have come from a residential building due to its artistic quality, but this has not been proven archaeologically. Floor mosaics were used to decorate a number of public and private buildings in Late Antiquity, so it is possible the fragment from Knyaz Tseretelev Street originated from another type of structure. If the Knyaz Tseretelev Building is indeed a private residence though, it would be the only known aristocratic house on the Three Hills.

³⁸⁷ Medieval structures were built over the ruins of the bath suite and ceramic and numismatic evidence, particularly a coin of Byzantine emperor Basil II (976-1025), provides the *terminus ante quem* of the 10th century for these structures; Kesyakova (1998), 171.

³⁸⁸ Botušarova (1960), 165-168. This 'building' is sometimes referred to by its location on the Three Hills, rather than by the street address – e.g. Topalilov (2012), 418 n. 52.

³⁸⁹ Botušarova (1960) dates the mosaic to the early 4th century, whereas Koranda (1992) suggests the late 4th century.

Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the purpose of the extensive analysis of the archaeological material from Philippopolis presented above is to provide a revised and holistic interpretation of the city during Late Antiquity. The investigation herein demonstrates many of the traditional views about Philippopolis during Late Antiquity are outdated or not substantiated by archaeological evidence. It is very difficult, for example, to attribute building efforts precisely to a single emperor without clear, definitive dating material such as brick stamps or a dedicatory inscription. Furthermore, the archaeological record does not reflect widespread destruction in the city, thus the violent effects of invasions and unrest is likely overstated in the case of Philippopolis.

Consequently, an amended interpretation is necessary. Moreover, the revised picture of Philippopolis during Late Antiquity presented here does not focus on the efforts of individual emperors or specific events but rather emphasises long-term processes and developments that are more readily visible in the archaeological record.

Most of the city's infrastructure is built prior to Late Antiquity and is used throughout the period. Accordingly, there are only two notable new infrastructure projects throughout Late Antiquity: the construction of the colonnaded street in the late-3rd /early-4th century and the erection of the 6th-century fortifications. Conversely, other construction efforts are mostly limited to the repair or maintenance of existing structures, such as repaving the agora and successive modifications to the 2nd-century city walls.

The public buildings of Philippopolis exhibit a similar continuity to the city's infrastructure. For instance, both the theatre and the stadium were likely built in the 2nd

century and continued to be used into Late Antiquity. Furthermore, although the archaeological remains of the western baths represent a late-3rd/early-4th century phase, the late antique baths were a reconstruction of an earlier bath complex. Thus, the only completely new public building constructed during Late Antiquity was the eastern baths, which was also built in the late-3rd/early-4th century.

The main difference between the city's infrastructure and its public buildings is that where the infrastructure is largely maintained throughout Late Antiquity, many of the public buildings are not used for their original purpose by the end of the 6th century. The eastern baths are divided and repurposed as early as the 4th century, the theatre is abandoned by the early-5th century, and the western baths are built over in the 6th century. Consequently, the stadium is the only public building that may have survived Late Antiquity relatively unchanged – and even that is unclear. The various dates at which the public buildings became obsolete suggests the process cannot be explained by a single cause, but rather represents a long-term process whereby the need or desire for large public buildings is reduced over the course of several centuries.

In contrast to urban infrastructure and public buildings, the construction of new religious buildings in Philippopolis accelerates during Late Antiquity, which is a trend seen throughout the Mediterranean and reflects the widespread acceptance of Christianity. The earliest purpose-built churches in Philippopolis are still relatively obscure in the archaeological record, but it seems Christianity was established in the urban topography by the early-4th century.³⁹⁰ Thereafter, the city experiences a boom in Christian architectural construction – the Episcopal Basilica is built in the late-4th century and the Small Basilica in

³⁹⁰ Matches the historical record – Council of Philippopolis, contra Council of Serdica in 343.

the mid-5th century and both churches experience several phases of decoration, re-decoration, repair, and modification during Late Antiquity. Moreover, the Hexaconch Structure may have been converted to a *martyrium* in the later-5th century as well.

A glaring hole in the religious archaeological record of late antique Philippopolis is the obscurity of non-Christian religions. The synagogue of Philippopolis, for instance, may have been converted to a different purpose in the early-5th century, but neither the process by which the transfer occurred nor the new purpose is evident from the current state of archaeological investigation. Additionally, the Temple of Apollo Kendriseus is known to have existed until the 4th century at least but the building is wholly unknown in the material record. The conversion of the empire to Christianity was not immediate nor absolute at the outset of Late Antiquity, so it should not be thought that all traces of non-Christian religions were erased upon the accession of Constantine.

Perhaps the most varied elements of the urban topography of Philippopolis are the private residential buildings. Some domestic buildings, such as the Narcissus Building and the Museum Building, were built prior to Late Antiquity, whereas other homes were built in the 4th century – e.g. the Eirene Building and perhaps the Knyaz Tseretelev Building. Notably, however, no new residential buildings were constructed after the 4th century. Instead, from the 5th century onward, the existing domestic buildings were either maintained and redecorated or no longer used for their original purpose.

Interestingly, among the residential buildings no longer used for their original purpose, both the Residence and Narcissus Building were overbuilt by smaller structures. A similar process of encroachment is observed at the agora and half of the partitioned eastern baths. The later structures are conspicuously humble in design and, therefore, have often

been disregarded in previous archaeological investigations, hampering discussion of their significance. Nevertheless, it is evident that some form of re-use and re-purposing of space in Philippopolis starts in approximately the 5th century, which is consistent with the process of encroachment observed extensively at other late antique cities.

CHAPTER 4

AUGUSTA TRAIANA-BEROE

The city of Augusta Traiana-Beroe was the second city of late antique Thracia, ranking in importance only behind the provincial capital of Philippopolis (**Fig. 26**). Augusta Traiana-Beroe was located on the southern slopes of the Sredna Gora, towards the eastern end of the mountain range, but the landscape to the south of the city was wide, fertile alluvial plains; various streams and rivers flow through the region south of the Sredna Gora and eventually drain into the Maritsa River, including the Bedechka River near Augusta Traiana-Beroe.

Furthermore, the ancient city was positioned directly on the route of several major roads. A road running from the *Via Militaris* to the Black Sea coast was the primary link between the Thracian Plain and the cities of the coast, which passed Augusta Traiana-Beroe *en route*.³⁹¹ Furthermore, Augusta Traiana was the terminus of two roads that began at the military bases of Novae and Iatrus, passed through the Moesian city of Nicopolis ad Istrum, and crossed the Shipka Pass into Thracia.³⁹² Thus, Augusta Traiana-Beroe was well-integrated into the provincial road system and was positioned to meet any traveller who wanted to move east-west through Thracia or cross the eastern passes of the Stara Planina and Sredna Gora.

Currently, however, the ancient urban centre is situated beneath the modern city of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. Thus, as is the case with Philippopolis as well, most of the urban topography of Augusta Traiana-Beroe remains hidden and is only revealed through rescue excavation. Nonetheless, the archaeological investigation of the remains of Augusta Traiana-

³⁹¹ Wendel (2005), 97-102.

³⁹² Madzharov (2009), 251-254.

Beroe began in the 1960s and have continued – albeit intermittently – until the present. Most often, the rescue projects were led by one of a small group of prominent Bulgarian scholars of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, beginning with Nikolov and continuing thereafter by Buyukliev, Kalchev, and most recently Kamisheva and Popova.³⁹³ Accordingly, archaeological data from the ancient city has been collected slowly yet steadily over the past few decades.

As a result of the disparate and sporadic archaeological studies that are conducted, it is difficult to summarise the conventional understanding of Augusta Traiana-Beroe in Late Antiquity. As will be demonstrated below, many of the details are debated due to the lack of evidence. Nevertheless, the Roman city was certainly founded by the emperor Trajan (r. 98-117) and it is generally agreed most of the basic infrastructure was provided prior to the outset of Late Antiquity. The reign of Constantine is viewed as a particularly prosperous period. Conversely, the Gothic unrest of c. 378 is viewed as highly destructive, resulting in damage to various areas of the city. Even more destructive, however, was the capture and sack of the city by the Huns in the mid-5th century. Augusta Traiana-Beroe recovered to some degree thereafter, repairing buildings that were damaged or building over those that were completely destroyed. The final point of the traditional view is that the entire city was destroyed in the late 6th or early 7th century as a result of the campaigns of the Avars and Slavs.

³⁹³ Kamisheva & Karamanova-Zlatkova (2017); Popova (2017); Kamisheva (2015); Kalchev (2009); Kalchev (2001); Kalchev (1992); Popova (2012); Kaltschev (1998); Buyukliev, Kalchev & Yanov (1994); Nikolov (1987); Buyukliev, Yanov & Kalchev (1984); Nikolov (1965).

Infrastructure

Fortifications

The fortification system of Augusta Traiana-Beroe was first revealed as a result of the damage sustained by the modern city of Stara Zagora in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878.³⁹⁴ Although only sections of the wall were identified, the results were sufficient to reasonably reconstruct the circuit of the fortifications and determine the defended area of the ancient city was approximately 48.5 ha. Accordingly, Augusta Traiana-Beroe was the second-largest city of Thracia – behind only the provincial capital Philippopolis.

Since the late 19th century, however, detailed research about the fortifications of Augusta Traiana has been relatively intermittent; further remains of the ancient walls have only been revealed in chance discoveries when modern urban development projects are undertaken. Nevertheless, sufficient data has been gleaned to identify three periods of construction in the city's fortification system.

The first fortification efforts at Augusta Traiana-Beroe provided the city with a circuit wall made in *opus vittatum mixtum* – that is, alternating bands of tufa blocks and bricks. The curtain was 1.60 m thick and supporting pillars on the interior face of the wall may have borne a wooden platform used by the defenders. Only one tower from the first construction phase has been identified; notably, approximately half of the tower projects on the exterior of the wall while the remaining half projects internally (**Fig. 27**). Furthermore, the south and south-west gates of the city have been localised. Due to the construction technique, numismatic

³⁹⁴ The first plan of the city walls was produced in 1879 by the Czech scholar Lubor Bayer and the “Bayer Plan” is reproduced in Kaltschev (1998), 89, Fig. 1.

material, and historical factors, the initial fortification of Augusta Traiana-Beroe has been dated to the mid-2nd century.³⁹⁵

Following their erection, the 2nd-century defences of Augusta Traiana-Beroe protected the city at least until the outset of Late Antiquity, but at some point thereafter a second fortification phase was necessary. The second phase is characterised by the use of *opus mixtum* masonry with alternating bands of stone and bricks, which are bonded using mortar with crushed brick additions. Interestingly, some sections of the wall are built completely anew over the foundations of the previous fortifications, whereas in other sections the superstructure of the 2nd-century wall is incorporated into the new curtain; a layer of masonry was either added to the interior face of the wall or the space between the supporting pilasters was filled-in, resulting in a thickening of the curtain from c. 1.60 m to c. 3.50 m. Furthermore, several towers were added to the exterior face of the curtain – five of which have been identified (**Fig. 28**). The new towers are square and project completely outside the face of the wall. The towers were built using the same *opus mixtum* technique as the walls, although the exterior of the towers was clad with stone panels – many of which are reused marble pieces from other structures, such as altars, orthostats, architraves, and high bases.

The second construction phase is traditionally interpreted as a period of recovery following damage sustained during the Gothic War of 376-382.³⁹⁶ The new fortifications are

³⁹⁵ Traditionally, the first phase is attributed to the reign of Marcus Aurelius since it is believed the city was fortified in response to the Costoboci raids in c. 170, as is the case in Philippopolis. Unlike the epigraphic evidence from Philippopolis discussed previously, however, there is no definite proof linking the walls of Augusta Traiana with Marcus Aurelius specifically. In fact, coins issued by Augusta Traiana during the reign of Lucius Verus depicting a fortified city gate – e.g. *RPC IV* 10341 – may provide a *terminus ante quem* of AD 169 (Verus' death) for the first phase. Alternatively, the coin of Verus may commemorate the commissioning of the walls, which was subsequently completed after his death. Thus, while the walls of Augusta Traiana were likely built in the mid-2nd century, they were not necessarily built as a reaction to the raids of 170-171.

³⁹⁶ Kaltschev (1998), 92, 105; Nikolov 1987, 99.

built starting at a level 0.30-0.40 m higher than the 2nd-century walls due to being built over an apparent destruction layer and scholars have interpreted the destruction layer as being associated with the 4th-century Gothic War. The only evidence cited to support the conventional dating, however, is the architectural material reused in the cladding of the towers.³⁹⁷ The investigators' reliance on the so-called *spolia* is problematic because the latest reused material is dated to the late-3rd century.³⁹⁸ Thus, the reused material provides only a *terminus post quem* of the late-3rd century and does not eliminate the possibility of an explanation earlier than the Gothic War.

Furthermore, the use of *opus mixtum* and mortar with crushed brick additions is observed in many fortifications erected in Thracia in the late-3rd or early-4th century. As discussed previously, the walls of Philippopolis were repaired using comparable building techniques during the Tetrarchic period and the other major urban centre of Thracia – Diocletianopolis – was also fortified in a similar manner. Many of the typological comparanda cited by the investigators are dated to the late-3rd or early-4th centuries as well, such as Abritus, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and Pautalia.³⁹⁹ As a result of these factors, it seems plausible the second fortification phase at Augusta Traiana-Beroe represents a period of Tetrarchic recovery or repairs following damage sustained during the campaigns of Cniva in 250/251 rather than due to destruction during the 4th-century Gothic War.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Nikolov (1987), 99.

³⁹⁸ Kaltschev (1998), 103. A catalogue of the reused materials has not been published, so the exact range of dates is not known – nor is the exact definition of “late 4th century”.

³⁹⁹ Kaltschev (1998), 103

⁴⁰⁰ Jordanes, *Getica* 101-103; Dexippus in Syncellus, AM 5746. In fact, the emperor Decius was defeated by Cniva in the vicinity of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, which forced the emperor to withdraw across the Stara Planina and leave the fertile Thracian Plain to the Goths. It should be noted somewhere that there is no indication the city was actually captured in either case though – neither the 3rd c. Goths nor the 4th c. Goths were skilled at siege warfare.

The third fortification phase presents perhaps the most significant changes to the defence system of Augusta Traiana-Beroe since the city's initial fortification. Along with the addition of new projecting triangular towers onto the existing curtain, a second wall was built around the entire circumference of the city at a distance of 6.00-7.80 m from the earlier fortifications (Figs. 29, 30). The outer wall (*proteichisma*) is c. 2.50 m thick and thought to have been 6-8 m tall. Furthermore, new gates were built to provide access through the outer wall and were aligned with the previous city entrances, resulting in a system of dual gates separated by an open space (*propugnaculum*). All of the features from the third fortification phase were built in *opus mixtum*.

There are several similarities between the modern interpretation of the third fortification phase of Augusta Traiana-Beroe and the analysis of the later phases of the walls of Philippopolis. As discussed in the section on Philippopolis, the addition of triangular towers and a *proteichisma* are common elements of fortifications in the Balkans of the late-5th/early-6th century. There is, however, a tendency to attribute building efforts during this period to Justinian due to remarks in Procopius' *De Aedificiis* – a tendency which is repeated in the case of Augusta Traiana-Beroe despite no internal evidence to indicate Justinian was involved. In fact, several cities that are said by Procopius to have been strengthened by Justinian – namely, Ratiaria, Serdica, and possibly Philippopolis – were fortified by Justinian's predecessors. Thus, while it seems likely the third fortification phase of Augusta Traiana-Beroe occurred in the late-5th/early-6th century, it is not possible at present to attribute the construction efforts to any single emperor.

Following the third fortification phase, the walls of Augusta Traiana-Beroe appear to have been maintained and served as the city's defences until well past the end of Late Antiquity.

Street Network

In a similar approach to the investigation of the fortification system, the street network of Augusta Traiana-Beroe has only been examined intermittently when sections are revealed by modern development projects. Thus, the majority of the ancient road system remains hidden beneath the modern city. As a result of various rescue excavations, however, investigators have confirmed the street network of Augusta Traiana-Beroe was organised orthogonally with rectangular *insulae*. Furthermore, the investigations of the south and south-west city gates revealed significant street sections as well, from which additional information regarding the composition and chronology of the city's roads has been gleaned (**Figs. 31, 32**).

During Late Antiquity, the citizens of Augusta Traiana-Beroe were largely using a pre-existing street system. As should be expected, the size of the streets varied depending on the expected volume of traffic. Thus, the streets leading from the gates were the largest in the city and were also provided with sidewalks. It seems the average street width without sidewalks was c. 4.50 – 5.0 m, whereas the street leading from the south gate was 5.2 – 6.0 m wide or 7.5 – 7.7 including sidewalks on either side. The dimensions of the street leading from the south-west gate have only been provided including the sidewalks, measuring 11 m wide, but if the sidewalks are of a similar size to the road leading from the south gate then the street alone must be c. 9 m wide.⁴⁰¹ Moreover, while the larger roads were paved with

⁴⁰¹ Ivanov (2012), 478-479.

stone slabs across their entire width, the smaller streets had paving only along the central axis in order to cover the sewer system.

The paving of the streets of Augusta Traiana-Beroe appears to have occurred in the mid-2nd century. Ceramic material found below the street pavement is dated to the early 2nd century and the earliest numismatic evidence recovered from the street level itself dates to the second half of the 2nd century.⁴⁰² The numismatic evidence also indicates the road network was maintained for several centuries thereafter; the latest coin issues found above the street pavement date to the reigns of Arcadius and Honorius and provides a *terminus post quem* of the early 5th century for the end of the road's use.⁴⁰³

Directly above the street pavement, a stratum 20-30 cm thick and consisting of gravel and small pieces of brick was found, but its nature and extent is entirely unclear and has not been considered in any analysis of the road network of Augusta Traiana-Beroe. Conversely, the layer overlying the brick and gravel stratum has received a great deal of attention since it has been described as a destruction layer, although the exact details regarding its composition and extent are also vague. It is not clear, for example, whether the destruction layer was observed at multiple sectors of the street network or only in a single area. Furthermore, as with similar strata in Thracia, investigators have equated the presumed destruction layer with external military threats – specifically, the Hunnic invasions of the 440s in this instance – despite a lack of supporting evidence.

⁴⁰² НИКОЛОВ (1965), 17. This phase is often credited to Marcus Aurelius, but there is nothing in the published archaeological material that permits such a precise attribution. It should also be noted the stone paving is not the first phase of the street network of Augusta Traiana-Beroe; the stone slabs were laid over a gravel layer that appears to date to the city's foundation in the early 2nd century.

⁴⁰³ НИКОЛОВ (1965), 17-18. The numismatic data has not been published. Consequently, the exact date of issue of the coins is unknown, but it seems likely the coins pre-date 408 since issues of Theodosius II are not mentioned.

The final late antique street level was laid over the destruction layer and was more modest than the 2nd-century system, but nevertheless retained the original orthogonal layout. Thus, instead of being covered with large stone slabs, the roads were paved with gravel, tile fragments, and smaller pebbles. The gravel-paved street is often believed to have been laid in the second half of the 5th century because it overlies the destruction layer that is interpreted as a result of the Hunnic incursions; since the destruction layer's link with the Huns is uncertain, however, the date at which the gravel street level was laid cannot be determined with confidence. Nevertheless, numismatic and ceramic evidence indicates the gravel roads were used in the 6th century, with the latest coins having been issued by the emperor Maurice (r. 582-602). As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the lack of numismatic material from the 6th century does not necessarily mean the entire street system ceased to be used in the early 7th century – rather, it indicates the need for further study of coin circulation patterns and practices in the region.

Piazza

It is not known whether Augusta Traiana-Beroe was equipped with a forum or an agora, but neither structure has yet been discovered in the city. Based on the projected street network, the ancient city square is expected to lie near the intersection of the modern Ruski Boulevard and Vasil Levski Street, but this area is located in the heart of Stara Zagora and is unlikely to be excavated except in the case of rescue excavations prior to modern development (**Fig. 33**).⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ Popova (2017), 61; Иванов (2012), 480; Попова, Д. (2012), 53-54, Fig. 1; Калчев (1992), 51.

Previously, however, a paved piazza adjacent to the southwest city gate was considered to be the city's main square (**Fig. 34**).⁴⁰⁵ Although the piazza's identification as the forum or agora of Augusta Traiana-Beroe has since been refuted, valuable information has been collected from its excavation and its exact purpose continues to be debated.

The piazza has a roughly triangular shape and is bounded on the north by the city baths, on the south by a street, and on the west by the fortification wall. Initially, the open area was paved with gravel but, shortly thereafter, the gravel was replaced with a pavement consisting of large, rectangular marble slabs.⁴⁰⁶ The area of the piazza is approximately 1500 m².

In addition to the paving of the piazza, several features were built on and around the square. The most notable feature was a marble seating area with a colonnaded arcade constructed along the north side of the piazza and abutting the south face of the baths.⁴⁰⁷ The seating area was approximately 80 m long with a slight bow in the centre and was separated from the level of the square by a 0.90 m podium, although three sets of stairs descended to ground level. It is estimated the seating gallery had a capacity of around 1300 people. In addition to the seating gallery, another element of the piazza is the base of an equestrian statue that was found in the centre of the square. The rectangular marble base measures 3.80 x 2.00 m and the imprints of horse hooves are visible on the top of the pedestal, although the statue itself has not been found.⁴⁰⁸ The final notable structural element was a barrier erected at the south edge of the piazza and along the edge of the street. The barrier was not found *in situ*

⁴⁰⁵ Nikolov (1987), 101.

⁴⁰⁶ Буюклиев, Калчев & Янков (1994), 89; Nikolov (1987), 101-102.

⁴⁰⁷ Nikolov (1987), 103-104. The structure has been called an auditorium, *cavea*, , but in fact its true purpose has not been determined.

⁴⁰⁸ Nikolov (1987), 103.

but has been reasonably reconstructed based on holes found to have been drilled into the marble paving slabs as well as altars that were found nearby with corresponding drill holes in their bases.⁴⁰⁹

The various elements of the piazza present a serious challenge for determining the chronology of its evolution. A *terminus post quem* is provided by an as-yet unidentified building over which the piazza and adjacent baths were built. The date of the previous building's destruction has been suggested as the mid-3rd century due to the Gothic incursions led by Cniva, but the exact rationale for such a date is unclear.⁴¹⁰ As discussed in the analysis of the city's fortification system, however, it seems likely the walls of Augusta Traiana-Beroe were damaged in the mid-3rd century. Consequently, it is plausible the unidentified building may have suffered a similar fate due to its proximity to the walls and, therefore, the mid-3rd century should be considered the *terminus post quem* for the establishment of the piazza.

Unfortunately, there is no similar convenient dating material for the marble pavement. Due to the lack of material, various dates have been proposed, ranging from the reign of Commodus to the Tetrarchic period.⁴¹¹ The numismatic evidence from the excavations of the piazza have recently been published and some of the earliest coins were issued during the reigns of Caracalla and Geta, which would seem to indicate the square was paved in the Severan period, but this is misleading. Because the coins were collected from above the marble paving rather than below it – that is, not from a sealed context – it is possible they were deposited long after they were struck.⁴¹² Accordingly, based on the

⁴⁰⁹ Ророва (2017), 76-77; Калчев (2001), 110.

⁴¹⁰ Буюклиев, Калчев & Янков (1994), 89.

⁴¹¹ See Nikolov (1987), 103; Ророва (2017), 66; and Буюклиев, Калчев, Янков (1994), 89 for the reign of Caracalla, the Severan era, and the Tetrarchic period, respectively.

⁴¹² Minkova (2017). The earliest coins recovered from the piazza are, in fact, issues of Philip II of Macedon and the Odressian king Seuthes III, and the latest coins are from the 13th century.

previously-established *terminus post quem* for the first phase of the piazza, only the Tetrarchic interpretation seems suitable – although even this dating is speculative to a degree.

The seating gallery, barrier, and statue base all certainly post-date the paving of the piazza in marble since they either overlie or cut the marble slabs. Furthermore, the seating gallery must also post-date the construction of the baths since it was built over the *praefurnia* and abuts the south face of the baths.⁴¹³ The dividing barrier has been dated to the 2nd or 3rd century based on the stylistic elements of the *arae* used in its construction, but several are noted to be either unfinished or reused from elsewhere.⁴¹⁴ Thus, it is possible the barrier was constructed using material gathered from previous structures no longer in use and the stylistic elements should be viewed only as a *terminus post quem*. The equestrian statue base is the most securely-dated feature of the piazza due to the discovery of coins of Constantine and Constantius II in a small test trench beneath the pedestal.⁴¹⁵ The coin of Constantius II, issued in 351-354, provides a *terminus post quem* for the erection of the equestrian statue.

At some point, small structures that have been interpreted as domestic buildings were built on the piazza against the podium of the seating gallery. Similar structures were built inside the baths as well. These supposed homes are dated to the 5th and 6th century due to ceramic and numismatic material. Furthermore, a thick layer of ash and charcoal found within the structures, indicating they were likely destroyed by fire, although the exact cause of their destruction is not apparent.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Nikolov (1987), 103-104 and Fig. 17.

⁴¹⁴ Popova (2012), 77-78.

⁴¹⁵ Minkova (2017), 101.

⁴¹⁶ Nikolov (1987), 107-108.

In summary, except for the erection of the equestrian statue, it is very difficult to determine the absolute dating of the piazza and its associated elements, but a relative dating does emerge. The first phase of the process was the delineation of the square and its paving with gravel. Thereafter, the piazza was renovated and paved with marble, then the seating gallery, dividing barrier, and equestrian statue were erected at the piazza after its repaving. The establishment of the statue (or at least its base) can be dated to the mid-4th century, but the temporal difference between when the piazza was paved and when the seating gallery and dividing barrier were added is entirely unclear. It is important to note there is no indication the additional features were added concurrently. Finally, a series of small buildings with straw roofs were built on the piazza and the equestrian base was converted to be used as a public fountain.

Having established a framework for the chronology of the piazza, it is worth considering the purpose of such an open space. The most prominent interpretation of the piazza was that it was used to stage violent displays such as gladiatorial combats and beast hunts.⁴¹⁷ The primary evidence for this interpretation are the depictions of gladiators on the *arae* used in the barrier separating the piazza from the street as well as the discovery of the marble heads of a bull and a panther during the initial excavation of the area. There are several issues with this interpretation. For example, as has been established previously, the dividing barrier was likely not the original location of the *arae*; therefore, while they may have been originally designed to be displayed in relation to a location related to gladiators, that original purpose is not necessarily reflected in their reuse. Furthermore, there is no indication statues of a bull or a panther were originally situated anywhere near the piazza since they could very

⁴¹⁷ Popova (2017), 75-79.

well been deposited therein at a later date. Two lime kilns were found to have been established in the baths at some point, so the animal heads may simply be the only remaining pieces of marble statues that had been transported to the bath/piazza area in order to be turned into lime. Moreover, as has been pointed out, both the statue base in the middle of the piazza and the marble pavement would not be ideal for gladiatorial combat.⁴¹⁸

Very recently, another interpretation specific to the earliest phase of the piazza has been proposed, which suggests the space was used for activities related to the imperial cult in the Severan period.⁴¹⁹ While there is certainly ample evidence for a thriving religious community in Augusta Traiana-Beroe, particularly in the Severan period, the cult activities did not take place at the piazza. As discussed above, the most likely date for the establishment of the piazza is after the mid-3rd century and many of the other features were not built until much later.

In actual fact, the purpose of the piazza is not discernible at present. There are few comparative examples of similar arrangements and the seating gallery in particular is exceptional. Nevertheless, it is evident the piazza, seating gallery, statue, adjacent street, and even the nearby gate interacted with one another and formed a cohesive unit. Consequently, the interaction of the southwestern gate complex of Augusta Traiana-Beroe with the rest of the city and its comparison to other gate complexes in Thracia is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

⁴¹⁸ Вагалински (2009), 79; Vagalinski (2002), 283-284.

⁴¹⁹ Попова (2017), 82-83.

Water Supply & Management

As with much of the infrastructure of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, most of the city's water supply and management system was organised and built during the 2nd century and continued to be used into Late Antiquity. The main source of water for the city is located in the Besh Bunar district on the southern slope of the Sredna Gora range, approximately 3 km north of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, where the water was collected in a catchment structure consisting of a vaulted gallery (**Fig. 35**).⁴²⁰ From the collection point, the water was transported to the city by means of a subterranean aqueduct for nearly the entire distance; the only exception is a short section where the conduit crosses a small gully on a single-arched bridge.⁴²¹ A segment of the underground channel revealed near the Zagorska Brewery has a rectangular cross-section and measures 0.95 m high and 0.55-0.60 m wide.⁴²² Various other pipes, conduits, and channels have been observed in the area surrounding Augusta Traiana-Beroe, but the details have not been fully published and there is currently no dedicated archaeological study of the material available.⁴²³

Once the subterranean channel reached the northern fortification wall, it appears to have entered the city near Zhelenzi Vrata Street.⁴²⁴ The exact system by which fresh water was distributed within the Augusta Traiana-Beroe is still not completely understood, but two structures are provisionally identified as *castella divisoria* and a number of masonry channels and basins have been observed in the north-west sector of the city.⁴²⁵ Furthermore, individual

⁴²⁰ Kamisheva (2015), 41.

⁴²¹ НИКОЛОВ (1979), 45.

⁴²² Kamisheva (2015), 46 and Figure 1.4-5.

⁴²³ Kamisheva (2015) provides a very helpful summary of the find spots of various water management features.

⁴²⁴ НИКОЛОВ (1979), 47.

⁴²⁵ ЯНКОВ (2009), 399; Калчев (2005), 222.

buildings were supplied with water by means of clay pipes that ran approximately 0.40-0.60 m beneath the street pavement.⁴²⁶

Due to the lack of diagnostic archaeological evidence, it is difficult to date precisely many features of the water supply system. The clay pipes, for example, are not a uniform size and their dimensions vary significantly, making it difficult to determine when they were installed. Based on typological dating, however, investigators suggest the extramural aqueduct and the masonry distribution channels at least were built during the 2nd century.⁴²⁷ Coins issued during the reign of Marcus Aurelius that depict a river god have been cited as evidence the water system was built during his reign, but this numismatic evidence presents the same problem as discussed previously with regards to the city walls – namely, there are coins with parallel motifs issued during the reign of Lucius Verus as well.⁴²⁸ Thus, while the conclusion that the water supply system of Augusta Traiana-Beroe was built during the 2nd century seems reasonable since the city would have required a reliable supply of fresh water soon after its foundation, it is not entirely clear the project can be precisely attributed to Marcus Aurelius.

The 2nd-century water supply network appears to have satisfied the needs of the urban population well into Late Antiquity, but a major overhaul of the system was necessary in the late-4th/early-5th century. At this time, it seems a second entry point for the aqueduct to the north of the city was constructed using pink mortar and reused building material – the latest of which was dated to the 4th century.⁴²⁹ Furthermore, the aqueduct channel north of the city

⁴²⁶ НИКОЛОВ (1965), 16; (1979), 37.

⁴²⁷ Kamisheva (2015), 48.

⁴²⁸ Moushmov (1912), no. 2978-2979 for Marcus Aurelius, cf. no. 2993 for Verus.

⁴²⁹ ЯНКОВ and ИЛЧЕВ (2009), 397. The new entry point is located near Mitropolit Metodi Kusev Blvd., roughly 50 m east of the original location where the aqueduct crossed the city walls. It is unclear how the new entry point interacted with the pre-existing aqueduct – that is, whether there was a new branch added, whether a new aqueduct was constructed, or whether the original branch was still functioning.

was repaired and a new network of clay pipes was laid in conjunction with the process of repaving the streets discussed above. Interestingly, recent analysis of the water supply network has not linked the renovation of the clay pipes with the Hunnic invasions, as is the case with studies of the road system, but rather suggests damage due to earthquakes precipitated the overhaul.⁴³⁰ While a move away from using the Huns as a convenient explanation is refreshing, seismic activity does not appear to be a convincing alternative since there are no recorded earthquakes in the area of Augusta Traiana-Beroe in the 4th or 5th century.⁴³¹ Unfortunately, the cause of the renovations remains unsatisfyingly obscure.

Public Buildings

Baths

The only major public structure currently identified in Augusta Traiana-Beroe is a monumental bath building located adjacent to the city's south-western gate. The initial excavation of the baths was carried out between 1968 and 1972 and, despite being limited to the south and east sections of the baths, resulted in a general clarification of the building's plan.⁴³² Four rooms were arranged along the south side of the building, with the east half mirroring the west half; both of the outer rooms measured 20 x 15 m and had an apse projecting to the south, whereas the central rooms lacked an apse and measured 20 x 11 m. Furthermore, all of the rooms along the south side of the bath were equipped with an

⁴³⁰ Kamisheva (2015), 52. Cf. НИКОЛОВ (1965), 16-18.

⁴³¹ Guidoboni et al. (1994) provides a very thorough catalogue of seismic activity in the Mediterranean during Antiquity and the only earthquakes in Thrace in the 4th and 5th century are recorded at Constantinople, which is too far away to have affected Augusta Traiana-Beroe. A significant seismic event is recorded at Scupi in Dardania in the early 6th century, but even this this seems to be too late to explain the renovations.

⁴³² Nikolov (1987), 105-106. Limited investigations were also undertaken in 1992, which are summarised in БУЮКЛИНЕВ, КАЛЧЕВ & ЯНКОВ (1994).

underfloor hypocaust system, which has led to their identification as the building's *caldaria*. The furnaces supplying hot air to the building's heating system were subterranean channels arranged around the east, west, and south sides of the baths. North of the *caldaria* were found rooms that have been identified as the bath's *tepidarium* and vestibule. Only the easternmost extent of either room was originally investigated, but recent excavations in 2013 uncovered more of the vestibule and clarified the decorative scheme therein; the entire floor of the vestibule was covered by a mosaic in opus tessellatum with geometric motifs and the walls were decorated by mosaics, marble panels, and painted murals.⁴³³ Finally, a small room or passageway – 4 m wide – was located at the north end of the structure and was the site of the main entrance to the baths. Altogether, the baths of Augusta Traiana-Beroe covered an area of approximately 6400 m².

Unfortunately, very few datable materials were recovered during the excavations of the baths of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, which has led to several conflicting proposals for the chronology of the building. The original investigator proposed the baths were built in the mid-2nd century, probably around the reign of Marcus Aurelius, since in his view the baths must have been constructed around the same time as the city was supplied with a water distribution network.⁴³⁴ More recently, however, Popova has suggested the baths were built during the Severan period in the early-3rd century.⁴³⁵ The primary pieces of evidence for her hypothesis are a pair of inscriptions that refer to a Severan gymnasium, which Popova has

⁴³³ Kamisheva and Karamanova-Zlatkova (2017), 171-173. Since the report preliminary report focuses on the decorative scheme of the baths, very few details about the building's structural elements are discussed.

Furthermore, the floor mosaics are dated to the early 3d century, but this is based on the assumption that the baths were built in the Severan period and is not due to internal factors. It is also possible, as discussed below, the wall decorations are from the period in which the vestibule was used as a church.

⁴³⁴ Nikolov (1987), 104.

⁴³⁵ Popova (2017), 64-68.

equated with the combination of the baths and the piazza on its south side.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, she also cites recently-published numismatic evidence from the various excavations of the piazza, which notes coins of Caracalla and Geta were some of the earliest issues found.⁴³⁷ Finally, the directors of the 1992 excavations believe the baths were built in the late-3rd century since they found evidence of a large structure beneath the baths, which they claim was destroyed by the Goths in the mid-3rd century.⁴³⁸

Although the various suggested construction dates are appealing, they are largely unconvincing or rely on a misinterpretation of the evidence. For example, there is no indication from the archaeological material that the bath was built concurrently with the water supply system of Augusta Traiana-Beroe. Moreover, as discussed previously, it is not entirely clear the network of pipes, channels, and basins was even effected by Marcus Aurelius.

Similarly, a close examination of the evidence cited by Popova reveals the inscriptions referring to a Severan gymnasium were found elsewhere in the city and there is no indication the bath-piazza complex near the south-west gate should be considered a gymnasium.⁴³⁹ Furthermore, while it is true some of the earliest coins found during the excavation of the piazza were issued by Severans, the author of the numismatic report clearly states the coins were recovered from above the paved piazza and the strata below the pavement have not been investigated.⁴⁴⁰ Consequently, the numismatic data is not particularly helpful for dating purposes since the Severan coins – and indeed all of the coins – could have been deposited

⁴³⁶ Буюклиев & Шаранков (2007).

⁴³⁷ Minkova (2017), 99-100.

⁴³⁸ Буюклиев, Калчев & Янков (1994), 89.

⁴³⁹ See the discussion of the piazza above for a detailed analysis of the purpose of the gate complex of Augusta Traiana-Beroe.

⁴⁴⁰ Minkova (2017), 99. Unfortunately, no other contextual information is available regarding the coins recovered from the piazza.

onto the piazza long after their date of issue. It also presupposes the piazza and baths were built at a similar time, which has not been confirmed.

The information provided by Buyukliev, Kalchev, and Yankov is interesting since it seems to invalidate the construction dates suggested by both Nikolov and Popova. If the as-yet unidentified structure beneath the baths was indeed destroyed by the Goths, then that would provide a *terminus post quem* of the mid-3rd century for the construction of the baths. Frustratingly, however, the excavators do not provide any supporting evidence as to why they attribute the destruction to the Goths.⁴⁴¹ Nevertheless, as discussed in the analysis of the piazza adjacent to the baths, the area around the southwestern gate of Augusta Traiana-Beroe appears to have suffered damage in the mid-3rd century so the destruction of the unidentified building by the Goths under Cniva is a plausible explanation.

Furthermore, very little detail is provided concerning the construction technique employed for the baths, but there is a brief reference to the use of pink mortar in the walls of the vestibule.⁴⁴² Although the use of pink mortar is not inherently indicative of a construction date, perhaps it can be viewed as a tentative substantiation of a late antique building period to since it is used widely in the Tetrarchic era. Thus, based on the archaeological evidence currently available, the late-3rd or early-4th century appears to be the most compelling construction date for the baths of Augusta Traiana-Beroe.

The chronology of the baths after their foundation is similarly obscure. The presence of subsequent modifications to the baths has been reported and dated to possibly the first

⁴⁴¹ Vagalinski (2002), 284 presents an interesting suggestion that the unidentified building beneath the baths was a structure devoted to public spectacles such as gladiatorial fights and beast hunts. Although it is purely speculation, perhaps the structure could be the Severan gymnasium that Popova is pursuing?

⁴⁴² Kamisheva and Karamanova-Zkatkova (2017), 171.

half of the 4th century, but the nature and scale of the repairs or reconstructions is not provided.⁴⁴³ Furthermore, the baths are described as having been destroyed by the Huns in the mid-5th century without providing details about the character of the damage sustained by the baths, the extent of the damage, why it is connected with the Huns, or any dating material.⁴⁴⁴ Consequently, while it is certainly plausible the baths of Augusta Traiana-Beroe were damaged by the Hunnic invasions, additional archaeological material and/or the clarification of previous results would improve confidence in such an interpretation.

Despite the ambiguity of the baths' chronology in the 4th and 5th centuries, it is clear the building was no longer used as a public bathing facility after its destruction. A number of small single-room structures, which are described as homes, were apparently built over the ruins of the baths using repurposed material.⁴⁴⁵ The use of mortar was observed in some of the structures while the rest used mud as a bonding agent instead. No further information is provided so it is difficult to determine the date at which the buildings may have been construction or why the buildings were identified as having a domestic purpose.

The baths must have retained some of their structural integrity, however, since the vestibule appears to have been converted to a church of sorts. A full discussion of the church is presented in the Religious Buildings section below, but for the purposes of understanding the development of the baths it is important to note here that the church was certainly a later addition. Otherwise, investigation of the church has been limited.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Буюклиев, Калчев & Янков (1994), 89; Nikolov (1987), 106.

⁴⁴⁴ Nikolov (1987), 106.

⁴⁴⁵ Nikolov (1987), 106.

⁴⁴⁶ Kamisheva and Karamanova-Zkatkova (2017) presents a preliminary report following the excavations in the vestibule in 2013, but focuses almost entirely on the decorative scheme from the earlier phases.

Religious Buildings

Vestibule Church

During the initial investigation of the bath complex near the southwest gate of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, evidence that the vestibule was converted to be used as a church of sorts was discovered. At the east end of the room, the excavators uncovered a semi-circular tiered structure that has been identified as a *synthronon* – that is, the stepped bench for members of the clergy that was primarily located in the apse of a church.⁴⁴⁷ The *synthronon* had a diameter of 9.80 m and is estimated to have been approximately 2 m high. Furthermore, it was built using reused materials – crushed stone bonded with mortar formed the core and the steps were made of brick – but the surfaces were covered with mortar and stucco that were painted to resemble marble slabs of various colours.⁴⁴⁸

Other than the *synthronon*, the plan of the church is mostly unknown largely due to the fact that the vestibule has not been excavated in its entirety.⁴⁴⁹ The doorways on the north wall of the vestibule were closed off with earthen masonry, which may indicate the wall was re-used as the north wall of the nave. Furthermore, the walls of the vestibule were decorated in several ways – including marble panels, painted murals, and possibly wall mosaics – but it is not clear whether this is the original decoration scheme of the baths, the decoration of the church, or a combination of both.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Nikolov (1987), 107. For the *synthronon* as an architectural feature, see Krautheimer (1986), 102, 520.

⁴⁴⁸ Kamisheva and Karamanova-Zkatkova (2017), 171.

⁴⁴⁹ The initial excavations in the 1970s focused on only the east end of the vestibule and the recent study in 2013 was limited to an area 13 x 23 m in front of the *synthronon*.

⁴⁵⁰ Kamisheva and Karamanova-Zkatkova (2017), 171-173; Nikolov (1987), 107.

It is generally believed the vestibule was converted to a church after the destruction of the baths in the mid-5th century.⁴⁵¹ As discussed previously, however, the chronology of the baths in the 5th century is far from certain. The *synthronon* was built directly over the floor mosaics from the first period of the baths, indicating it was certainly added after the foundation of the baths, but it is not clear at which point it was added. Nevertheless, the widespread appearance of *synthrona* in church architecture is generally dated to the 5th century, so the vestibule may indeed have been converted around that time.⁴⁵²

Recently, an alternative hypothesis has been suggested, which proposes the vestibule was instead converted into a church in the mid-4th century as part of a wider process of transforming the entire south-western gate complex of Augusta Traiana-Beroe into hub of Christianity.⁴⁵³ As is the case with the 5th-century dating, however, this alternative hypothesis is not supported by archaeological evidence. Popova provides a few examples of *synthrona* that may have been built in the 4th century and claims the vestibule must, therefore, have been converted in the 4th century but there is nothing within the excavated material that would suggest such a dating.

Ultimately, since the dating of the vestibule church is linked to our understanding of the chronology of the wider bath complex, it is not possible at present to determine when the vestibule was converted into a church. A date in the 5th-century seems the most likely, but this is only due to the lack of information currently available and further excavation clarifying the later phases of the baths and the vestibule church may prove otherwise.

⁴⁵¹ Ivanov (2012), 486; Nikolov (1987), 107.

⁴⁵² Krautheimer (1986), 102; Mathews (1971).

⁴⁵³ Popova (2017), 79-82.

Extra-muros *martyrium*

During rescue excavations in 1979-1980, investigators discovered the remains of a centrally-planned building with four exedras and other surrounding features (**Fig. 36**).⁴⁵⁴ Situated approximately 160-200 m east of the east wall of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, the complex is described as having two construction periods. In its first phase, the building with four exedras was erected along with a narthex extending to the west. The size of this configuration of the structure measures 21 x 17 m.⁴⁵⁵ The first phase is dated to the late 4th century, although the justification for such a date is not made clear.

The structure is traditionally identified as a *martyrium*.⁴⁵⁶ Unlike the hexaconch structure in Philippopolis, however, no reasoning is provided for such a conclusion. I can only speculate that the excavators based their identification on the centralised plan of the structure. Assuming the date of the building's construction is correct, it is not impossible the structure was used as a *martyrium* from the outset. Although most centralised *martyria* began to appear in the 5th century, a late 4th century dating is not unknown.⁴⁵⁷

In the late 5th or 6th century, the *martyrium* was provided with an atrium and portico to the west.⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, the function of the building appears to change since fourteen burials were found inside the narthex and at the west wing.⁴⁵⁹ One of the graves is built of brick, covered with stone slabs, and the interior walls are lined with mortar. Small red crosses

⁴⁵⁴ НИКОЛОВ, ЯНКОВ & КАЛЧЕВ (1980).

⁴⁵⁵ ИВАНОВ (2012), 486.

⁴⁵⁶ ИВАНОВ (2012), 486; *TIR – K35/2*, 31.

⁴⁵⁷ Grabar (1946).

⁴⁵⁸ НИКОЛОВ, ЯНКОВ & КАЛЧЕВ (1980), 124-125.

⁴⁵⁹ ИВАНОВ (2012), 486.

are painted onto the walls of the tomb.⁴⁶⁰ Thus, it seems the *martyrium* acquired a funerary role in the later stages of Late Antiquity.

The *martyrium* is conventionally believed to have been destroyed as a result of raids by the Avars or Slavs in the late 6th century. Due to the limited nature of the published material, it is not clear whether this conclusion is based on archaeological evidence or not.

Other Possible Churches

A review of the published archaeological material reveals occasional references to other alleged Christian structures, but the remarks are only in passing and data concerning their location or features is extremely limited. For example, a late antique basilica with three aisles and a single apse is mentioned as having been partially uncovered during the investigation of the interior of the city walls, but no additional information is provided.⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, another Christian building with floor mosaics is mentioned as having been found 50 m north of the *martyrium* and was dated to the 5th/6th century.⁴⁶² Finally, a church appears to have been built over the remains of a peristyle courtyard that was discovered outside the city at a distance of nearly 500 m from the fortification walls.⁴⁶³

I was unable to locate any additional archaeological data concerning the three possible Churches beyond what is presented above. Nevertheless, it is evident even from these brief reports that Augusta Traiana-Beroe was provided with several Christian structures in Late Antiquity – hinting at a prosperous Christian populace. Future excavations will hopefully

⁴⁶⁰ НИКОЛОВ, ЯНКОВ & КАЛЧЕВ (1980), 124-125.

⁴⁶¹ TIR – K35/2, 31.

⁴⁶² TIR – K35/2, 31.

⁴⁶³ Ivanov (2012), 486.

illuminate the character and development of Christianity in Augusta Traiana-Beroe during Late Antiquity.

Private Buildings

The Stoletov Building

The first example of late antique residential architecture from Augusta Traiana-Beroe to have been excavated in detail was a peristyle building near the centre of the ancient city and now located beneath the modern General Stoletov Street (**Fig. 37**). The majority of the structure was investigated in 1964 in conjunction with the construction of the opera house of Stara Zagora, although a section in the north-west of the building had been previously examined separately. Few studies regarding the Stoletov Building beyond the initial reports have been published, but it is possible to establish a basic outline of the layout and development of the structure. Thus, the residence appears to have occupied an entire *insula* and was organised around a central peristyle courtyard, with the main entrance located in the south-west corner of the building.

The nature of many of the rooms in the Stoletov Building are unclear; for example, there is no data regarding most of the central courtyard, the east and north-east sections, and some of the western sector. Some of the small rooms on the east side of the building facing the street, however, were likely shops or workspaces since they are not internally connected to the rest of the building. Furthermore, it has been suggested a room in the north-west sector of the structure may have been a *tablinum* due to the discovery of polychromatic floor mosaics,

but this interpretation is unsubstantiated at present.⁴⁶⁴ An interesting feature of the so-called *tablinum* is an octagonal basin made of marble built into the floor that has been interpreted as a *piscina* – that is, a small artificial water basin.⁴⁶⁵ A similar feature is recorded in the Eirene Building in Philippopolis. Finally, a room in the southern sector of the Stoletov Building appears to have been repurposed from its original function in order to serve as a possible living space or workshop area. Excavators discovered two small rooms had been built into the west end of the room using stone and bricks bonded with mud, while *dolia*, a large stone mortar for grinding material, and a water basin were found in the east end.⁴⁶⁶

The conventional understanding of the chronology of the Stoletov Building is that the structure was built in the Constantinian era, destroyed in the 5th century due to Hunnic activity, and rebuilt in the 6th century.⁴⁶⁷ While there is some validity to this general interpretation, a review of the archaeological evidence reveals the chronology of the building is more complicated than previously understood. The Constantinian date, for example, is apparently partly based on the fact the outer walls of the building are built of *opus mixtum* with bands of bricks.⁴⁶⁸ While this construction technique is often indicative of a late-3rd or early-4th century dating, its use cannot be narrowed to the reign of a single emperor.

Another factor cited in the dating of the Stoletov Building are the floor mosaics in the so-called *tablinum*, which the excavator claims must be pre-Christian because the motifs that are used are secular.⁴⁶⁹ Christian imagery dominates many artistic forms in Late Antiquity,

⁴⁶⁴ Ivanov (2012), 485.

⁴⁶⁵ Kamisheva (2015), 54-55.

⁴⁶⁶ Николов (1965), 19-20.

⁴⁶⁷ Ivanov (2012), 485; Николов (1965), 20

⁴⁶⁸ Hoddinott (1975), 201.

⁴⁶⁹ Николов (1965), 18. The motifs are described as including figural images of people, animals, vines, fruit, and objects.

but secular motifs certainly continued to be used as well. What is more distinctive is the presence of figural motifs in the floor mosaics since such figural depictions tend to disappear from mosaics in Greece and the eastern provinces starting in the late-4th century.⁴⁷⁰ Such figural motifs do not disappear everywhere at this time, however, so further evidence may perhaps be found in the similarities between the so-called tablinum and the mosaics in Room 3 of the Eirene Building in Philippopolis; both rooms have floor mosaics with figural motifs as well as *piscinae* set into the floor. It is perhaps too much to suggest the Stoletov Building and Room 3 were decorated at the same time, but the numismatic evidence from the Eirene Building at least indicates that a room with similar characteristics to could be decorated in the mid-4th century.⁴⁷¹

The final phase of the Stoletov Building is entirely based on the south sector of the residence. It is believed the sub-division and repurposing of the south sector occurred in the 6th century and represents a recovery from the Hunnic incursions.⁴⁷² In fact, there is no specific published dating evidence whatsoever regarding the south sector of the Stoletov Building. As discussed previously, the process of encroachment – that is, the subdivision and repurposing of space – is prevalent across the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity and it is not possible to restrict the practice to the 6th century. Moreover, no evidence of encroachment in the other rooms of the Stoletov Building has been published so it is not clear whether this process was extensive across the entire building or limited only to the southern sector.

⁴⁷⁰ Dunbabin (1999), 176-177, 219.

⁴⁷¹ Coins issued during the reigns of Constans (r. 337-350) and Constantius II (r. 337-361) were found beneath the floor mosaics of Room 3, providing a terminus post quem of the mid-4th century for the room's decoration. See the analysis of the Eirene Building above for a full discussion.

⁴⁷² НИКОЛОВ (1965), 19-20.

Accordingly, while the function of the southern sector certainly changed at some point in the residence's history, the later phases of the rest of the Stoletov Building remain hidden.

The Post Office Building

A second domestic building from Augusta Traiana-Beroe was uncovered in 1983-1984 during the construction of a new wing of the post office on Sveti Knyaz Boris Street.⁴⁷³ The entire residential complex is estimated to cover an area of approximately 3000 m², but due to the limited nature of the rescue excavation, the investigators were only able to uncover c. 1200 m² in the southwest corner of the building (**Fig. 38**). From the exposed sector, it appears the Post Office Building was a large peristyle complex, although most of the courtyard remains concealed. Three rooms adjacent to the southwest corner of the courtyard received particular attention: a large apsidal hall, a room with two apses to the northwest of the large hall, and a vestibule. The large apsidal hall (Room 1) measured 12.70 m x 10.20 m, with an apse 5 m deep, and was heated by a hypocaust system beneath the floor. Conversely, the room with two apses (Room 2) was much smaller – only 3.09 x 3.15 m in the central area and with apses c. 2.20 m deep. Finally, the vestibule (Room 8) provided access to the apsidal hall from the east.⁴⁷⁴ Each of the three rooms had highly-decorated floors.

Despite the impressive size of the structure, few details about the Post Office Building have been published. The excavators have dated the construction of the building to the early-4th century, but it is unclear what evidence led to this conclusion; the only evidence from the Post Office Building's earliest phase is that the large hall was paved with brick and the walls

⁴⁷³ Калчев (1992), 53; Буюклиев, Янков & Калчев (1984), 91-92.

⁴⁷⁴ Valeva (2011), 929-930 and Fig. 2.

were decorated with marble cladding.⁴⁷⁵ Subsequent decorative phases, however, are somewhat better-understood due to analysis of the floor mosaics. The mosaics from Room 1, for example, consist primarily of several geometric patterns, a large central polychromatic circle, panels with *kantharoi* vases with birds, and U-shaped panels with vines and other birds. Although some of the U-shaped panels are severely damaged, their vegetal motifs and particularly their arrangement in a cross are nonetheless distinctive of the late-4th/early-5th century. Furthermore, the geometric motifs used in Room 8 have parallels from the same period.⁴⁷⁶ Thus, it seems at least Rooms 1 and 8 of the Opera House Building were redecorated in the late-4th/early-5th century.

In addition to laying the floor mosaics, the re-decoration phase may have also included changing the wall ornamentation of Room 1, although there is admittedly no specific dating evidence for the wall decorations. The original marble panels decorating the walls of Room 1 were at some point replaced by marble imitations of architectural features, including a pedestal, cornice, pilasters, capitals, and architrave. Some of the decorations were sculpted specifically for use in the Post Office Building, but others were reused from elsewhere.⁴⁷⁷ One of the pilasters is notable due to a Chi-Rho monogram flanked by an Alpha and Omega incorporated into the capital, which suggests the building's owner was thoroughly Christianised by the time of its redecoration.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Valeva (2011), 929; Буюкканев, Янков & Калчев (1984), 91.

⁴⁷⁶ Valeva (2011), 930-936. Unfortunately, the floor decorations from Room 2 are not so easily-dated as the other rooms, so it is unclear when the room with two apses was decorated. Interestingly, the floor of Room 2 was decorated with *opus sectile* rather than the *opus tessellatum* found in Rooms 1 and 8.

⁴⁷⁷ Valeva (2011), 938-939.

⁴⁷⁸ Калчев (1992), 53 suggests instead the owner was a high-ranking civil official.

The Post Office Building is generally believed to have been destroyed entirely in the late-5th century.⁴⁷⁹ As is the case with many other buildings from Augusta Traiana-Beroe, there is no published archaeological evidence to substantiate this conclusion. Modest mudbrick buildings appear on the area of the Post Office Building at some point but there is absolutely no dating evidence for the subsequent construction efforts. It is also believed that *dolia* found buried in the ground to the west of the large apse date to the same period as the mudbrick structures, but there does not appear to be any correlating evidence either.⁴⁸⁰ The later phases of the Post Office Building, therefore, are not adequately represented in the published archaeological material.

Discussion

The assessment of the archaeological evidence from Augusta Traiana-Beroe presented above suggests the character and development of the city were generally similar to what was observed in Chapter 1 regarding Philippopolis. Namely, the city's infrastructure appears to have been in place well before Late Antiquity and continued to be used at least into the 5th century. What differs, however, is the central city square of Augusta Traiana-Beroe has still not been identified. The piazza at the south-west city gate is an intriguing use of space, but it is not the forum or agora of Augusta Traiana-Beroe.

Furthermore, in the later periods of the city's development – purportedly the late 5th and 6th century – there is widespread encroachment visible in a number of the investigated buildings. The process is not limited by the type of building either; evidence of encroachment

⁴⁷⁹ Иванов (2012), 485; Калчев (1992), 53; Буюклиев, Янков & Калчев (1984), 91-92.

⁴⁸⁰ Буюклиев, Янков & Калчев (1984), 91.

was found at the piazza, the baths, the Stoletov Building, and the Post Office Building. Yet again, the modest remains of the encroaching structures did not attract much attention from the excavators, so the later periods of Augusta Traiana-Beroe are poorly understood.

Similarly, it is difficult to discern the character or development of Augusta Traiana-Beroe during the 5th century based on the published archaeological material alone. At almost every site that has been investigated in Augusta Traiana-Beroe, the 5th century is summarised briefly as being the time at which the Huns destroyed or damaged the site. Yet very little supporting evidence is provided. The reasons for this tendency are not clear and hopefully future publications will take greater pains to explain how the Hunnic destruction is visible in the archaeological record.

CHAPTER 5

DIOCLETIANOPOLIS

The Bulgarian town of Hisar (Bulgarian Хисаря) is located on a flat plain to the south of the Sredna Gora mountain range, approximately 40 km north of Plovdiv (**Fig. 39**).⁴⁸¹ The modern town is a popular spa resort and boasts an abundance of thermal mineral springs in the surrounding area. The springs at Hisar, however, have been drawing people to the site since at least the prehistoric era. Moreover, unlike many sites in southern Bulgaria, the ancient city at Hisar has been the target of several successive archaeological projects, including ongoing efforts by Mitko Madzharov.⁴⁸² These excavations identified the first Roman development at Hisar, which appears to have come about in the early 3rd century AD when a bath complex was constructed to take advantage of the natural water sources. The Roman presence at Hisar remained relatively small during most of the 3rd century, but a major period of development was initiated during Late Antiquity. This period saw the construction of massive fortification walls and an explosion in basilica building. The resulting late antique city at Hisar was one of the largest cities of Thracia.

Despite the size of the ancient city at Hisar and the ongoing archaeological investigations, at present, excavators have not discovered any conclusive evidence of the city's identity in antiquity. The most likely candidate seems to be the city of Diocletianopolis, which is attested in literary and historical sources but has not yet been localised by archaeological

⁴⁸¹ While the transliteration of Хисаря as Hisar is inexact, it is the form that has become well-established in recent scholarship and will therefore be used hereafter for ease of reference. Other transliterated forms of the town's name include Hissar, Hissarya, Hisarya, Hisarja, Khisar, Khisarya.

⁴⁸² See especially Tsontchev (1936), Boiadzhiev (1967), M. Madzharov (1989), K. Madzharov (1993), M. Madzharov and M. Madzharov (2013).

means. Designating the city as Diocletianopolis is still only a conjectural identification, however, so in order to highlight the continued uncertainty, the ancient city is referred to as Hisar/Diocletianopolis throughout this chapter. Furthermore, following the analysis of the archaeological material at Hisar/Diocletianopolis, a full consideration of the identity debate concludes this chapter to demonstrate exactly why Diocletianopolis is generally accepted to be the ancient city at Hisar.

Infrastructure

Fortifications

Large sections of the fortification walls can be seen still standing in Hisar/Diocletianopolis today, allowing for a fairly accurate reconstruction of the ancient city's main defences. The walls seem to have been 10 to 12 m tall and between 2.20 and 3.80 m thick, enclosing a roughly rectangular area of about 30 ha.⁴⁸³ Four main gates controlled access into and out of the ancient city, with one gate on each side; the gates on the north, east, and south side were flanked by two rectangular towers each. Including the gate towers, a total of 44 towers lined the outer face of the city walls. The majority of these towers adhere to a standardized design, consisting of a rectangular interior area of 5.0 x 5.3 m and three distinct stories. Evidence of timbers found inside a tower also suggests that it may have had a platform for the deployment of ballistae. The exceptions to this design, however, are the corner towers. The north-west and south-west towers are polygonal and generally rectangular, but larger than their standardized counterparts along the length of the curtain wall. Furthermore, the tower at the

⁴⁸³ *TIB* 6, 245; Ćurčić (2010), 31.

north-east corner of the walls is U-shaped and the south-east tower has a distinctive fan shape. Access to the upper stories of the towers as well as a walkway along the top of the fortifications was provided by a series of staircases on the inside face of the wall; so far, sixteen such staircases have been discovered.⁴⁸⁴

Most of the fortifications at Hisar/Diocletianopolis appear to have been built concurrently in the late-3rd/early-4th century. A *terminus post quem* is provided by inscriptions dated to the reign of Alexander Severus that were reused in the first phase of construction at Hisar/Diocletianopolis.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, an ancient bath building identified outside of the city to the east appears to have been built using very similar masonry as that which was used in the fortifications (*opus mixtum*, with bands of four brick layers, stone, and mortar); this may, therefore, indicate that the city was fortified around the same time that the extramural baths were being built.⁴⁸⁶ Helpfully, an inscription was found at the extramural site, which dated the baths to the years 308-311, when Galerius and Licinius were joint *augusti* with Maximinus and Constantine as their junior partners.⁴⁸⁷ Thus, the evidence from the baths further supports a dating of the fortifications at Hisar/Diocletianopolis to the Tetrarchic period in the late 3rd/early 4th century.

Somewhat more problematic, however, are what appear to be the remains of a previous building phase below the south gate (today the well-known Камилите, or ‘Camels’ gate) and parts of the southern wall (**Fig. 40**). Originally, these remains were thought to have

⁴⁸⁴ Rizos (2010), 71-74.

⁴⁸⁵ Hoddinott (1975), 197-99, 300-12; Rizos (2010), 73.

⁴⁸⁶ The extramural baths have yet to be excavated, but a wall believed to have belonged to the baths remained standing until the early 20th century.

⁴⁸⁷ Stefan (2004), 280-282; *AE* (1991), n. 1405. The full inscription reads: *[anno (?)] dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Maximiani et Licini augg(ustorum) et Maximini et Constantini filio(rum) s[s(uorum?) aedi]ficatum l[...]*

been evidence of an earlier Roman fortification, but this notion has since been disproven.⁴⁸⁸ Instead, the masonry and typology of the remains limit the construction of this first phase to no earlier than the late 3rd century.⁴⁸⁹ K. Madzharov, the excavator who made this observation, suggested the earlier phase was in fact the original Tetrarchic construction phase and that the south gate and a section of the southern curtain wall were rebuilt during the Theodosian period as a result of damage suffered during the Gothic unrest of the late 4th century. Yet as Rizos points out, Madzharov's suggestion is predicated on the assumption that Hisar/Diocletianopolis was targeted and damaged by the Goths – an assumption for which there is no evidence.⁴⁹⁰ The Goths are neither mentioned in the vicinity of Hisar/Diocletianopolis during the conflict of 378 nor has any archaeological evidence of destruction at that time been found within the city; accordingly, it is unlikely that the new construction at Hisar/Diocletianopolis was a result of Gothic violence. Rizos' own hypothesis is more convincing. He proposes that all of the monumental construction at Hisar/Diocletianopolis belongs to a single – albeit protracted and likely interrupted – building period, which started early in the reign of Diocletian and continued until the reign of Licinius or Constantine.⁴⁹¹ Extended construction periods are known to have occurred elsewhere, such as the example cited by Rizos of Tropaeum Traiani (modern Adamclisi, Romania).⁴⁹²

Interestingly, evidence of a second, separate fortification wall – or *proteichisma* – was also found about 10 m to the north of the northern city wall. It measured 3.2 m thick and did not have projecting towers. There is, unfortunately, no conclusive evidence to date the

⁴⁸⁸ Tsontchev (1936).

⁴⁸⁹ K. Madzharov (1993), 36, 59-60.

⁴⁹⁰ Rizos (2010), 73.

⁴⁹¹ I.e. 284 to 324/337. Rizos (2010), 73-74.

⁴⁹² Bogdan Cătăniciu (1999), 265-268.

construction of the *proteichisma*, but it was certainly built after the original fortification of the city. Similar *proteichismata* were built at Augusta Traiana-Beroe, Apollonia-Sozopolis (Sozopol) in the province of Haemimontus, Nicopolis ad Istrum (Nikiup) in Moesia Prima, Serdica (Sofia) in the province of Dacia Mediterranea, and at Philippi (Krinides, Greece) and Thessalonica (Thessaloniki, Greece) in Macedonia Prima. Significantly, the *proteichismata* at Augusta Traiana-Beroe, Nicopolis, and Thessalonica have all been dated to the late 5th century. Moreover, although the *proteichisma* itself at Serdica has not yet been dated, it appears to be part of a wider reconstruction effort – also in the late 5th century – following the Hunnic sack of the city.⁴⁹³ Accordingly, the erection of the *proteichisma* at Hisar/Diocletianopolis likely coincides with a Balkan-wide trend of supplementing a city's main defensive walls with smaller, secondary fortifications.

Barrack buildings

A series of seven long, rectangular buildings were built on the inner face of the south and east walls at Hisar/Diocletianopolis and have been identified as the city's barrack buildings; a building to the north of Barrack Building 5 has also be interpreted as a granary (*horreum*) associated with the military sector. The barracks were built directly abutting the walls and awkwardly incorporated the stairs used to reach the walkway atop the battlements, thereby making it clear that these structures were not part of the original building plans and certainly constructed after the city's initial fortification. Each individual structure consisted of a double row of rooms. The front rooms were more than twice as large (7.0 x 7.0 m) as the rooms in the rear and likely served as the living quarters for the soldiers. The rooms in the rear,

⁴⁹³ Rizos (2010), 128-9.

meanwhile, were built directly against the city walls and were probably used to store equipment and/or supplies. A portico ran along the front of each building and the remains of interior staircases attest to the presence of an upper storey.⁴⁹⁴

The existence of an upper storey is significant since it greatly increases the likely number of soldiers who could be housed at Hisar/Diocletianopolis. Estimates of the soldier population lodged on the ground floor of the southern five barrack buildings (which are those that have been excavated at present) reach at least 500 men. Expanding the estimate to include both the unexcavated eastern barracks as well as an upper storey could very easily double that figure to at least a thousand men – that is, the size of a late antique legion. Nevertheless, the city at Hisar/Diocletianopolis is absent from sources describing the distribution of the army in late antiquity, such as the *Notitia Dignitatum*. A possible explanation for this is that there was in fact no military unit stationed at Hisar/Diocletianopolis when the *Notitia Dignitatum* was compiled at the end of the 4th century.⁴⁹⁵ This explanation would seem to agree with the phases of occupation within the barracks (see below).

The dating of the barrack buildings has been somewhat confused by the lack of published small finds from their excavation. The excavator, Madzharov, has offered a summary of the stratigraphy of the barrack complex, but it appears that the results are in fact more complex than Madzharov has suggested. Namely, the excavations under Madzharov observed two layers of occupation, but an earlier trench in Barrack Building 1 identified four distinct stratigraphic layers.⁴⁹⁶ The bottommost deposits in both excavations appear to

⁴⁹⁴ K. Mazhdarov (1993), 101-12, 150-1.

⁴⁹⁵ Kulikowski (2000), 360.

⁴⁹⁶ For Madzharov's summary, see Rizos (2010), 81-82; for the trench in Barrack Building 1, see Boiadzhiev (1967).

coincide, consisting of a thin (0.50 m) layer that contained mostly red slip fine ware and was located directly atop the barrack floor; this layer likely represents the period of military occupation within the barracks. The second (and final) layer observed by Madzharov was much thicker than the first (1.0 – 1.5 m) and included mostly coarse wares and debris. The stratigraphy of the earlier trench, however, has another thin layer (0.21 m) following the military occupation instead, which contained evidence of coarse ware, a brick floor, and domestic items. This thin layer is then covered by a thicker deposit (0.65 m), which contained mostly debris. The final layer identified in the trench in Barrack Building 1 consisted of a stone pavement, covered with ash and charcoal.

Further complicating matters is that it is unclear whether the stratigraphy identified in Barrack Building 1 was uniform across the entire military quarter of the city, or whether the trench is only representative of the individual building. As noted above, the lowest layer observed by Madzharov seems to match the earliest deposits in Barracks Building 1. It is also possible that the next two layers identified in Barracks Building 1 – namely, the layer with domestic items and coarse ware, and the layer with debris – are a more well-defined identification of Madzharov's second layer, which also contained coarse ware and debris. The top layer in Barracks Building 1 does not have a parallel in Madzharov's excavations of the military quarter, but this may be because Madzharov's stratigraphy does not include 5th or 6th century phases; previous excavations in the early 20th century of Basilica 1, built on top of the barrack buildings, likely destroyed the evidence of these later phases. Thus, it is possible the layer of stone pavement with ash and charcoal found in Barracks Building 1 could be remains of later occupation not observed by Madzharov.

Accordingly, the chronology of the military quarter appears to consist of four phases, as per the trench in Barracks Building 1. The first phase was the initial construction of the barracks and its military use. This phase must post-date the initial fortification of the city, and therefore likely falls in the early 4th century. Most military quarters in Thrace and the Balkans remain in use throughout the century, only being abandoned or neglected around the year 400, and the situation at Hisar/Diocletianopolis is likely similar.⁴⁹⁷ The military phase was then followed by a period of civilian occupation, as evidenced by the presence of domestic items and coarse wares. The third phase, consisting mainly of debris, is likely a result of the collapse of the barrack structures. Although the specific cause of the destruction remains undetermined, it must pre-date the erection in the late 5th century of Basilica 1 on top of the ruined barracks.

Public Buildings

Baths

As noted in the introduction to this section, the natural springs at Hisar/Diocletianopolis have attracted people to the site since the prehistoric era. Hisar/Diocletianopolis is not, however, unique in this respect, and the Romans exploited many natural springs throughout the Diocese of Thrace by building baths at them, including at Traianopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Anchialos.⁴⁹⁸ The springs at Hisar/Diocletianopolis were likewise used by the Romans, who built two different bath complexes at the site. Only the intramural baths at Hisar/Diocletianopolis have been excavated so far, but the suburban baths in the present

⁴⁹⁷ Rizos (2010), 84.

⁴⁹⁸ Hoddinott (1975), 202-205; Rizos (2010), 268-271.

Momina Banja district did preserve an inscription until the beginning of the 20th century. Further information about the extramural baths must await additional archaeological investigation.

In contrast, the baths within the ancient city at Hisar/Diocletianopolis have been the focus of a number of projects, although they have still not been fully investigated. These intramural baths appear to have been first built in the early 3rd century, well before the late antique fortification and organization of the city at Hisar/Diocletianopolis (**Fig. 41**). Nevertheless, the Severan bath buildings certainly continued to be used during the 4th century and may have also functioned well into the 5th and 6th centuries. This initial phase of construction included both cold water pools (*frigidaria*) and hot water pools (*calderia*), as well as a room with a hypocaust floor. The water for the *calderia* was provided by thermal springs located only about 60 m north of the baths, but the *frigidaria* were supplied by springs much farther away. In fact, following the fortification of Hisar/Diocletianopolis, the springs that supplied the cold water for the baths were located outside of the city's walls. The water from these springs was directed along an underground channel until it reached the baths.⁴⁹⁹

In addition to its continued use during the 4th century, the intramural bath complex was also expanded during the tetrarchic period. The baths themselves were left mostly untouched it seems, but massive vaulted structures were erected to the north and southeast of the baths at some point during the 4th century (**Fig. 42**). It is not immediately apparent what the purpose of these buildings was, but their proximity to the baths makes it seem likely that they were public buildings somehow associated with the baths. Further excavation will hopefully clarify their exact function. Regardless, the addition of the vaulted buildings resulted

⁴⁹⁹ Tsontchev (1936).

in a sprawling bath complex, which covered nearly 1500 m² in the western half of the city.⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, another building was then built in the 5th or 6th century amidst the complex, yet the purpose of this building is also unclear. It is worth noting this building, however, because it appears not to have encroached on any of the other bath structures, suggesting that the baths may indeed have still been in use during the 5th and 6th centuries.⁵⁰¹ Nevertheless, the baths ultimately did fall out of use, probably due to damage sustained during an earthquake.⁵⁰²

Amphitheatre

In addition to the baths, the citizens of late antique Hisar/Diocletianopolis were also able to enjoy the use of a local amphitheatre. Located within the city's walls about 50 m south of the bath complex, the amphitheatre at Hisar/Diocletianopolis was built in a depression in the terrain so that the seats on the west side incorporated the slope of the hill (**Fig. 43**). As a result of these constraints of the landscape, the amphitheatre as a whole has an irregular oval shape. Furthermore, seating on the east side of the amphitheatre was possibly provided by a wooden gallery since the terrain is relatively level on that side. Although the exterior dimensions of the amphitheatre are not currently known, the arena proper measured 38.60 x 23.50 m along its north-south and east-west axes, respectively.⁵⁰³ Uncertainty regarding the exact size of the amphitheatre has also made estimates of the audience size difficult, but Vagalinski suggests it could accommodate up to 1000 spectators.⁵⁰⁴ A wall about 3 m high (although only surviving to a height of 2 m today) separated these spectators from the action,

⁵⁰⁰ K. Madzharov (1993), 112-121; M. Madzharov (2007).

⁵⁰¹ Tsontchev (1936), 128-163; K. Madzharov (1993), 112-121.

⁵⁰² Rizos (2010), 273.

⁵⁰³ Rizos (2010), 254.

⁵⁰⁴ Vagalinski (2002), 281.

while multiple doorways provided access to the arena floor for the participants and organizers. The most important of these entrances were on the north and south sides of the long (north-south) axis; these doors likely served as the points of entry for the men and animals taking part in the spectacle. Three more doors were situated along the short (east-west) axis and were probably used by the workers or assistants who helped organize the shows.⁵⁰⁵

The amphitheatre has been dated to the tetrarchic period (late 3rd/early 4th century), but some of the reasoning for this attribution is rather weak. The excavator, Madzharov, associates the building of the amphitheatre with this period because it is when the site probably gained the status of a city.⁵⁰⁶ Such an interpretation is, however, based on a preconceived idea of the identification of the late antique city at Hisar/Diocletianopolis and not on archaeological data.⁵⁰⁷ Furthermore, Vagalinski cites a relief sculpture found 50 m south of the amphitheatre as additional evidence of a tetrarchic construction. The relief depicts a pair of male acrobats “in an arena about to vault over an attacking animal” and Vagalinski interprets it as an invitation to attend a similar spectacle in the amphitheatre. He then assigns an early 4th century date to the invitation, at which point these acrobatic animal shows are purportedly replacing the more traditional beast hunts (*venationes*).⁵⁰⁸ There are a number of flaws with this line of reasoning. First, it was recovered 50 m away from the arena and there is no indication it was in any way associated with the local amphitheatre. Moreover, although the less deadly (and less expensive) *venationes* do indeed begin to appear in Late

⁵⁰⁵ K. Madzharov (1993), 121-124; Vagalinski (2002), 280-281.

⁵⁰⁶ K. Madzharov (1993), 123-124.

⁵⁰⁷ For the identification of Hisar and the date of its rise to the status of a city, see below.

⁵⁰⁸ Vagalinski (2002), 281.

Antiquity, they are by no means restricted to the early 4th century; a diptych displaying an acrobatic *venatio* involving a bear attests to the continuation of these shows until at least the consulship of Anastasius in 517.⁵⁰⁹

The only persuasive archaeological evidence for dating the amphitheatre's erection to the tetrarchic period is the similarity in building techniques used at the amphitheatre with those used for the city walls and for the baths in the Momina Banja district.⁵¹⁰ The similar use of *opus mixtum* consisting of brick bands of four layers and with stone and mortar suggests a shared design, which can be fairly confidently dated to the early 4th century based on the epigraphic evidence from the baths. The amphitheatre, therefore, was probably also built in the early 4th century, but it is impossible to identify the extent of its use beyond its inception.⁵¹¹

Religious Buildings

Basilicas

The remains of two basilical churches have been discovered within the walled area of the city, and a further eight were located in the surrounding suburban area.⁵¹² These ten churches appear to have been built during three broad periods of development. The first period of ecclesiastical building at Hisar/Diocletianopolis is represented by the modest Basilica 4, located 100 m to the northwest of the city. This basilica had three colonnaded aisles and a

⁵⁰⁹ Epplett (2014), 515.

⁵¹⁰ Vagalinski (2002), 281.

⁵¹¹ Vagalinski (2002) suggests that the amphitheater may have been damaged and fallen out of use due to Gothic attacks on the city in the late 4th century, but this hypothesis is based on Madzharov's flawed chronology of the site. There is no evidence of Goths in the vicinity of Hisar/Diocletianopolis during that time. Moreover, the baths are located only a short distance away and seem to have continued in use during the 5th century.

⁵¹² Most publications will state there are only 9 basilicas at Hisar/Diocletianopolis, counting Basilicas 4 and 4a as a single basilica. E.g., M. Madzharov (1989).

semi-circular apse, and was relatively unsophisticated in design – as far as can be determined, it did not possess a narthex or any exterior buildings (**Fig. 47**). It seems to have been built in the course of the 4th century, possibly over the remains of an earlier pagan temple, although there is not much information regarding this structure.

A second phase of church construction at Hisar/Diocletianopolis appears to have taken place at the beginning of the 5th century. This period seems to have been a particularly busy time for ecclesiastical building, as Basilicas 2, 5, 7, and 8 are all said to have been built at this time (**Figs. 45, 49, 50**).⁵¹³ Basilica 2 was one of two basilicas inside the city walls and was the result of converting a pre-existing public building into a basilica.⁵¹⁴ In its basilical form, Basilica 2 had a triple nave, a semi-circular apse, and a deep narthex. Moreover, it was the largest of all basilicas excavated at Hisar/Diocletianopolis, measuring 39 x 24 m.⁵¹⁵ Basilicas 5, 7, and 8 were constructed in a similar fashion to Basilica 2 and all had triple naves, deep narthexes, and semi-circular apses. Basilica 8 also included a baptistery. These basilicas, however, were built outside of the city's walls; Basilica 5 was 200 m north of the northwest corner of the city, Basilica 7 was just outside the east gate, and Basilica 8 was even further to the east in the present Momina Banja district.⁵¹⁶ There is little doubt that these buildings were used as churches, as attested by the small finds recovered in the excavations. For instance, a marble reliquary and bronze cross were recovered during the excavation of Basilica 5, and a marble chancel found in Basilica 7.⁵¹⁷ Furthermore, evidence of a reliquary pit – a smaller

⁵¹³ M. Madzharov (1989), 2526; K. Madzharov (1993), 124-141.

⁵¹⁴ Rizos (2010), 354.

⁵¹⁵ *TIB* 6, 246.

⁵¹⁶ M. Madzharov (1989); *TIB* 6, 246.

⁵¹⁷ M. Madzharov (1989), 2531-2535.

imitation of an actual burial in which holy relics were deposited – was identified in Basilica 8.⁵¹⁸

The final period of ecclesiastical building at Hisar/Diocletianopolis during Late Antiquity took place in the late 5th and early 6th century and appears to reflect the city's recovery following the Hunnic invasion of the Balkans in the mid-5th century.⁵¹⁹ As mentioned previously, the erection of Basilica 1 on top of the remains of Barrack Building 1 belongs to this period of development (**Fig. 44**). This basilica had an apse that was semi-circular in the interior, but had three flat sides on the exterior. It was also a unique basilica at Hisar/Diocletianopolis because it had only two naves; as a result of its construction directly against the inside of southern city wall, a staircase used to reach the top of the walls obstructed the addition of a third, southern nave. Basilica 1 was almost certainly a church, based on a marble altar table (*mensa*) that was found within it.⁵²⁰

Basilica 4a was also constructed in the late 5th century over the destroyed Basilica 4.⁵²¹ Basilica 4a was similar in design to Basilica 1 since it also had a three-sided apse, but Basilica 4a was an extramural basilica and therefore not confined to only two naves – rather, it had the ubiquitous triple-nave plan with narthex. Interestingly, however, Basilica 4a also included a transept, which may have served as additional space for the display or deposition of relics.⁵²² A baptistery and a building for aspiring catechumens included in the design indicate the

⁵¹⁸ Rizos (2010), 364.

⁵¹⁹ K. Madzharov (1993), 124-141.

⁵²⁰ M. Madzharov (1989), 2531, 2535.

⁵²¹ Although it is termed Basilica 4a, this basilica should be considered a separate building in its own right (i.e. Basilica 10) as it is a very different structure than its predecessor and does not incorporate any of Basilica 4's architectural features. The only thing the two buildings share is their axis of alignment and the placement of the north wall.

⁵²² Ćurčić (2010), 155.

ecclesiastical role of Basilica 4a.⁵²³ Moreover, evidence of settlement has been identified in the area immediately surrounding Basilica 4a, suggesting it served as the parish church for a suburban population.⁵²⁴

Another late 5th century basilica, Basilica 3, was located about 120 m south of the ancient city's south gate. It is a three-aisled building with a three-sided apse and a narthex (**Fig. 46**). The basilica's plan also included an exterior courtyard and a silver reliquary was found amidst its remains. An inscription was also discovered at Basilica 3, which indicated the basilica was undoubtedly a church and was dedicated to St. Stephanos.⁵²⁵ Furthermore, evidence of a semi-circular structure was uncovered beneath the three-sided apse during excavation, and Madzharov has identified it as a semi-circular apse belonging to an earlier, possibly 4th century basilica.⁵²⁶ Ćurčić has tried to explain this structure as the foundation for the current apse, but this is unconvincing and it seems more likely that the excavators' original interpretation is correct.⁵²⁷ Regrettably, nothing else is known about the earlier phase of the building.

An additional two basilicas have been dated to the early 6th century, namely Basilicas 6 and 9 (**Figs. 48, 51**). Basilica 6 was found 500 m to the southeast of the city and had a semi-circular apse and a triple nave. It also had a narthex with three doorways, two rectangular rooms flanking the apse, and an outer courtyard. A crypt was discovered in front of the apse and has been interpreted as a reliquary tomb.⁵²⁸ Basilica 9, meanwhile, was located even further to the south of the city, at a distance of nearly 700 m. Like Basilica 6, Basilica 9 had

⁵²³ M. Madzharov (1989), 2526.

⁵²⁴ Rizos (2010), 360.

⁵²⁵ Beševliev (1964b), n. 224.

⁵²⁶ M. Madzharov (1989), 2531.

⁵²⁷ Ćurčić (2010), 136.

⁵²⁸ M. Madzharov (1989), 2531; Ćurčić (2010), 136.

three aisles and a central semi-circular apse, but it had two smaller apses on either side of the central one as well. The central apse also had two rooms connected by doorways on either side, and these rooms were probably a presbytery and *diaconium*; it is possible the two rooms in Basilica 6 served a similar purpose.⁵²⁹

Having summarized the basilica construction at Hisar/Diocletianopolis, it is important to take a moment now to draw attention to a couple of important points. The dating of the basilicas has been neatly organized into three relatively broad phases, but this is due to a lack of precise chronological evidence and may actually be unhelpful for understanding the ecclesiastical development at Hisar/Diocletianopolis. For instance, Basilicas 5, 7, and 8 have all been dated based only on their design elements; the deep narthex, triple nave, and semi-circular apse are purportedly characteristic of basilicas founded in the early 5th century.⁵³⁰ This ignores, however, the fact that many of the other basilicas shared these features. Indeed, except for Basilica 1, all of the basilicas at Hisar/Diocletianopolis had triple naves, and many also had deep narthexes. Furthermore, Basilicas 6 and 9 have are said to have been built in the early 6th century because the rooms on either side of central apse, yet Basilica 6 had a semi-circular apse – ostensibly an early 5th century design element.⁵³¹ It is clear, then, that a purely typological analysis can be problematic and that the chronology of the church building process at Hisar/Diocletianopolis may be more complicated than is currently acknowledged.

Moreover, the imprecise nature of the dating for the basilicas – that is, their grouping into broad early 4th century, early 5th century, or late 5th century phases and not being able to

⁵²⁹ M. Madzharov (1989), 2531; *TIB* 6, 246.

⁵³⁰ M. Madzharov (1989), 2526.

⁵³¹ Ćurčić (2010), 136.

assign a more exact dating – hinders the analysis of a more precise chronology of the site. Accordingly, while a basilica may be said to have been built in the late 5th century, it is at present impossible to know at what point the construction falls in that spectrum. This may seem like a superficial distinction as it is a discrepancy of only a few decades, but there are significant differences between the political and economic situation of the 460s and that in the 490s.⁵³² Thus, the erection of a basilica in the ‘late 5th century’ may be part of a local rebuilding effort in the 460s following the Hunnic invasions, or it may just as easily be part of a centralized building program under Anastasius in the 490s. The lack of such distinctions, therefore, restricts the analysis of the ecclesiastical development at Hisar/Diocletianopolis to unhelpful generalizations.

Private Buildings

Residential Buildings 1 & 2

Two structures in Hisar/Diocletianopolis have been identified as being private residential buildings from Late Antiquity.⁵³³ They are aptly named Residential Building 1 (RB1) and Residential Building 2 (RB2). RB1 is situated near the centre of city and occupies nearly an entire insula, covering an area of over 2000 m². The remains of RB1 were completely uncovered during excavation in the 1960s, exposing the entire floorplan. The building appears to have consisted of over twenty rooms of varying sizes, two of which ended in an apse at

⁵³² Most significantly, the 460s were the years immediately following the Hunnic invasion of Thrace and a point at which the central government had limited control over the area. Conversely, the 490s is an era when the central government under Anastasius sought to reclaim its authority and engaged in widespread building projects. See Thompson (1975).

⁵³³ Малжаров, К. (1993), 141-149; Малжаров, К. (1988); Малжаров, К. (1967). There are actually five residential buildings that have been investigated in Diocletianopolis, but the other three are much more modest and therefore not studied in as much detail as RB1 and RB2.

their east end (**Fig. 52**). Moreover, large open courtyard with a portico of sorts on three sides appears to have been situated at the west end of the building. It is unclear if RB1 was a traditional peristyle *domus* or if the courtyard was used for some other purpose. Due to the construction technique of the building, which was made in opus mixtum, RB1 is generally dated to the 3rd or 4th century. The full numismatic materials have not been published, but coins of Caracalla, Maximian, and Valens were found during excavation.⁵³⁴

Conversely, RB2 is located in the south-west sector of the city between the remains of the amphitheatre and the barracks.⁵³⁵ It was built in the same manner as RB1 – namely, in *opus mixtum* – and, therefore, is also dated to the early 4th century. Furthermore, RB2 is nearly the same size – covering an area of 2064 m². Nevertheless, despite being quite similar in these regards, RB1 has a rather different layout and plan (**Fig. 53**). The street network of Hisar/Diocletianopolis is not well-defined in the south-west sector, but the angle at which RB2 was built seems to indicate it did not respect the orthogonal grid system. Moreover, the plan of RB2 is much more characteristic of a conventional peristyle building. A colonnaded portico lined the front of RB2 and a short corridor lead into the interior of the building, which opened up into a central courtyard surrounded by a peristyle. Rooms surrounded the courtyard on every side, but the function of these spaces are not understood at present.

Unfortunately, much of the chronology of the residential buildings of Hisar/Diocletianopolis is unclear. Both RB1 and RB2 were certainly damaged in the course of their use and were subsequently rebuilt; the incorporation of reused building material in the repaired sections, and the new phases are identified as being “much cruder”.⁵³⁶ The date

⁵³⁴ Маджаров, К. (1993), 142.

⁵³⁵ Маджаров, К. (1993), 143.

⁵³⁶ Madzharov, M. (2012), 458.

and circumstances of the damage, however, is not known. As usual, the common explanation is the buildings were damaged due to the various military engagements with Goths, Huns, or Avars, but there is no archaeological evidence to corroborate such a conclusion.

Identification

With massive fortification walls enclosing an area of c. 30 hectares, the city at Hisar was only smaller in size than ancient Augusta Traiana-Beroe and the provincial capital of Philippopolis, which were c. 34.5 and c. 80 hectares respectively.⁵³⁷ The remains of an extensive barracks complex in the southern sector of the city further demonstrate the military importance of the site. Moreover, excavations have uncovered more than ten churches within or very near the city, suggesting it may have also served an important ecclesiastical role.⁵³⁸ Yet despite the obvious prominence of the city at Hisar, no precise evidence – whether epigraphic, literary, or otherwise – has yet been discovered to allow for a definite identification of which late antique city is represented by the archaeological material. Nevertheless, a close examination of the literary sources can allow for a tentative but reasonable identification to be made.

Following the administrative reforms of Diocletian and Constantine, the city at Hisar fell within the territory of the province of Thracia. As mentioned above, the capital of the province was Philippopolis, located on the site of modern Plovdiv. Other cities of late antique Thracia that can be positively identified include Augusta Traiana-Beroe (Stara Zagora) and Cabyle (Kabile).⁵³⁹ There are, however, a number of cities that are attested in various literary

⁵³⁷ K. Madzharov (1965), 21-31; K. Madzharov (1993). For Philippopolis: Kesiakova (1994), and for Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Kalchev (1992).

⁵³⁸ M. Madzharov (1989), 2526-2537.

⁵³⁹ Ivanov and Velkov (1982), (1991).

sources but which have not yet been identified archaeologically, namely: Diospolis, Diocletianopolis, and Sebastopolis. It is likely that Diospolis can be linked with the later Diampolis (Yambol), thereby leaving Diocletianopolis and Sebastopolis as potential identities for the city at Hisar.⁵⁴⁰

Both Diocletianopolis and Sebastopolis are mentioned only rarely in the literary sources. The two cities appear in Hierocles' *Synecdemus*, but the author provides no explicit information except for the names of the cities and the fact that they belonged to the province of Thracia.⁵⁴¹ It is reasonable to assume the cities listed in the *Synecdemus* existed at the time of its composition, thus we may also infer from the text that both Diocletianopolis and Sebastopolis were inhabited and operational in the early sixth century. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the placement of Diocletianopolis in the third position, following the major cities of Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana-Beroe, may be an indication of the relative size and importance of that particular city – namely, that Diocletianopolis was the third most important city in late antique Thracia.⁵⁴² A glance at the cities listed under other provinces, however, exposes the weakness of this approach. For instance, in the section on the province of Europa, Hierocles lists the city of Eudoxiopolis (formerly Selymbria) ahead of the much more politically and commercially important capital city of Heraclea-Perinthus.⁵⁴³ A complete study of the *Synecdemus* would help a great deal in understanding the choices of organization of the text, but unfortunately such a study does not currently exist; at the very least, it is

⁵⁴⁰ *TIB* 6, 239, 247; Dimitrova (1986).

⁵⁴¹ Hierocl. 635.6-7.

⁵⁴² *TIB* 6, 245.

⁵⁴³ Hierocl. 632.1-2.

apparent that a direct correlation between a city's placement within the list and its relative importance in antiquity cannot be assumed without justification.

In addition to the *Synecdemus*, Diocletianopolis and Sebastopolis also feature in the late antique episcopal records. Bishops of Diocletianopolis attended the Councils of Serdica (343) and Ephesus (431), but there are problems with identifying whether these men represented the city of Diocletianopolis in Thracia or one of the other cities named Diocletianopolis. It seems likely that they did indeed represent the Thracian city, but there is not enough evidence to support anything more than conjecture.⁵⁴⁴ The first definite attestation of a bishop of Thracian Diocletianopolis specifically is during the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when the bishop Epictetus signed his name with the other bishops of Thracia from Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana-Beroe.⁵⁴⁵ The same Epictetus also signed the response of the provincial synod at Philippopolis to the circular letter of Leo I in 458.⁵⁴⁶ Sebastopolis, on the other hand, is much less visible in the episcopal registers. As with Diocletianopolis, there are a number of cities in Late Antiquity that share the name Sebastopolis, and it is not possible to distinguish between the Thracian city and the others in most cases; the only definite appearance of a bishop of Thracian Sebastopolis is in the bishop lists of Epiphanius and subsequent lists derived therefrom.⁵⁴⁷ Thus, it is possible that Diocletianopolis was a centre of some ecclesiastical importance, since its bishop was definitely present at one great church council (and possibly two more) as well as an important figure in the local synod at Philippopolis, whereas Sebastopolis seems to be of relatively less religious importance. The

⁵⁴⁴ *ACO* 3, 45. Besevliev (1964a), 49-51.

⁵⁴⁵ *ACO* 7, 401 A-B.

⁵⁴⁶ *ACO* 7, 542 f. Nr. 29.

⁵⁴⁷ Darrouzès (1981), Not. 1, 242.

episcopal registers, therefore, provide only slightly more information than Hierocles to help with the identification of the city at Hisar.

Sebastopolis is not mentioned in any further sources, but Diocletianopolis appears one final time in the *Historia* of Theophylact Simocatta. During the Avar invasion of Thrace in 586/7, the Khagan Bayan attempted to besiege the inhabitants of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, but was stymied by their resistance and received only a modest tribute as a result. Bayan then decided to move his army from Augusta Traiana-Beroe to Diocletianopolis. The Khagan was no more successful at Diocletianopolis, however, due to the defences of the city and decided to abandon this siege as well in favour of marching on Philippopolis and then Hadrianopolis.

⁵⁴⁸ This series of events provides a few important pieces of information regarding the nature of Diocletianopolis. First, not only was it located in Thracia, but it was specifically somewhere between Augusta Traiana-Beroe and Philippopolis. Secondly, the defences at Diocletianopolis must have been significant, including both stout fortifications as well as siege machinery – the latter are named explicitly by Theophylact Simocatta. Lastly, Diocletianopolis was likely viewed by Bayan as a fairly important and/or wealthy centre since he made a concerted effort to capture the city, as he had for the other major cities of Augusta Traiana-Beroe, Philippopolis, and Hadrianopolis.

After reviewing the available evidence regarding the cities of Diocletianopolis and Sebastopolis, it seems more probable that the city at Hisar can be identified as the former. Sebastopolis is nearly invisible in the literary record, so it is unlikely that the city was very noteworthy in Late Antiquity. Conversely, the size of the city at Hisar was impressive compared to other, contemporary cities in the region; the fortified area at Hisar covered about

⁵⁴⁸ Theoph. Simoc. 2.16.12 – 2.17.4.

30 ha., whereas the second-city of Thracia, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, was only slightly larger at approximately 34.5 ha.⁵⁴⁹ As a result, the city at Hisar could have certainly attracted the attention of Bayan as a profitable target to invest. Moreover, Hisar is only a short distance to the west of the road the Khagan used to travel from Augusta Traiana-Beroe to Philippopolis, and could very well have been a city he besieged along the way.⁵⁵⁰ Additionally, as was discussed previously, the ruins of the city walls at Hisar are quite substantial and it is possible that siege machinery was in use at the site. These could therefore be the remains of the defensive works that so frustrated the Avars at Diocletianopolis. Finally, the large number of churches that have been found at Hisar may be an indication that the site had an important religious role, as was the case at Diocletianopolis.

It must be stated that this evidence is by no means definitive and most of the reasoning is speculative. Nevertheless, the similarity between the city at Hisar and the Diocletianopolis of the literary sources is remarkable and cannot be ignored. Consequently, it is entirely reasonable to associate the two cities, albeit tentatively and with an eye to further discoveries that may aid in identification.

Discussion

The excavations at Hisar/Diocletianopolis allow for a fairly reasonable reconstruction of the development of the city. Roman settlement at the site began during the Severan period, but it did not become a proper city until the reign of Diocletian. At this point, in the late 3rd century, the Tetrarch elevated the spa resort to the status of a full city, began the process of

⁵⁴⁹ The provincial capital of Philippopolis is much larger than either at a size of c. 80 ha., but it dwarfs most other cities in the Diocese of Thrace, regardless of province.

⁵⁵⁰ Besevliev (1964a), 56.

fortifying the new city, and gave his name to it. Construction of the new fortifications took several decades, and the south gate may have been damaged or had its design change during the building. A suburban bath complex and an intramural amphitheatre were also built at about the same time as the fortifications. Soon after the completion of the walls, a very large military quarter was established along the interior of the south and east walls. The Severan baths were expanded to include large vaulted structures to the north and south in the early 4th century, and another building, built using buttresses, was added to the bath complex (which may have still been operating) in the 5th or 6th century. The chronology of the basilical construction at Hisar/Diocletianopolis is problematic, but as far as the evidence that is currently available indicates, a modest basilica was also built during the 4th century outside of the city to the northeast. Then, in the early 5th century, a total of five basilical churches were built in or around Hisar/Diocletianopolis, and many are used to house relics. The barracks appear to have no longer been used by the army by this point and were instead occupied by civilian residents. The civilians were then displaced from the barracks as well, which was destroyed around the mid-5th century. The destruction of the barracks may be linked with the Hunnic invasion of Thrace at this time, but there is no definite link. The fate of the extramural basilicas is unclear, but they may have also been destroyed by the Huns. Hisar/Diocletianopolis then experienced another surge in church building in the late 5th and early 6th century, possibly in an effort to rebuild what had been damaged or destroyed due to the Huns. At least one suburban community existed north of the city in the 6th century and had their own parish church. The abundance of churches may reflect the ecclesiastical importance of Hisar/Diocletianopolis during the 5th and 6th centuries. The city withstood a siege by the Avars in the late 6th century and appears to have survived into the 7th century.

Despite such an apparently thorough reconstruction, there continue to be some major questions about the site. As mentioned throughout this section, the dating and chronology of the city is at present inexact and could greatly benefit from refinement. These imprecisions obscure important chronological distinctions that occur within the broader time periods and permit only an oversimplified view of the development of Hisar/Diocletianopolis. Such a generalized nature of the site's chronology seems to be attributable to a focus on monumental architecture in most of the previous excavations, and the value of small finds, stratigraphy, ceramics, botanical remains, and zoological remains have often been overlooked. Moreover, an exhaustive analysis of the neglected archaeological remains could provide significant data about the lives of the people who lived in the city. For instance, it would be useful to investigate what the inhabitants of Hisar/Diocletianopolis ate, which goods they produced, where they hunted, and how they were connected with other cities in the area. Intensive surveys of the city's hinterland could also contribute significant data relating to settlement patterns in the suburban areas.

CHAPTER 6

THE CITIES OF LATE ANTIQUE THRACIA:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A Comparison of Gate Complexes as Indicators of Urban Character

By the early 4th century, most urban centres in the Roman Empire were protected by defensive fortifications. This included, by necessity, the construction of monumental city gates as well since the gates allowed for the movement of traffic through the walls. Due to their size and solid construction, gates are often one of the most impressive features of a city's urban architecture to survive to the present and have consequently been the subject of great scholarly attention. There have been studies focused on a single notable example, such as Jonathan Bardill's analysis of the Golden Gate of Constantinople, as well as holistic methodologies that adopt a broader scope.⁵⁵¹ An article by Ine Jacobs from 2009, for instance, examined gates across the eastern Mediterranean, including those of Side, Perge, Aphrodisias, Resafa, Zenobia, and Sagalassos.⁵⁵²

The result of these studies has been the clarification of the basic facts about city gates, such as their dating and construction methods, but also the advancement of our understanding of the role gates played in the ancient world. The gates were – and still are in some cases – enormous structures that dominated the surrounding landscape. Accordingly, their size, decoration, and architecture were conspicuously displayed for every traveller who

⁵⁵¹ Bardill (1999).

⁵⁵² Jacobs (2009). See also van Tillburg (2008), Bührig (2006), and Richmond (1933).

approached the city. City gates also served as the formal location where visiting officials were met before entering the city and through which military and religious processions paraded.⁵⁵³ Thus, the ideal place for a city to present its self-image is at its gates since that is where the image will be most visible to an external audience.

A city gate was not, however, an isolated architectural element. Very often, buildings and other features of various types have been found flanking the gate on the interior of the city wall, lining either side of the street leading from the gate, or were situated directly outside the gate. This entire collection of features – including the gate itself as well as the surrounding elements – are what I refer to hereafter as a gate complex. Furthermore, in some cases the marked lack of features in the vicinity of a city gate may also be considered part of a gate complex since the absence of structures near a gate is a notable deviation from the usual practice. It stands to reason, therefore, that since gates play such a prominent role in the exhibition of urban character, gate complexes – which occupy a spatial context directly associated with gates – may provide further evidence for how cities intended to represent themselves.

Based on this definition of a gate complex, it should be clear that every city gate was part of a gate complex. Despite not being defined as such previously, some well-known examples of gate complexes from across the ancient Mediterranean include the entrance of the Via Egnatia into Constantinople at the Golden Gate and its continuation thereafter as the Mese, the oval piazza inside the Damascus Gate at Palmyra, and the combination of the Temple of Zeus and the elliptical piazza near the south gate of Gerasa in Arabia Petraea (modern Jerash, Jordan).

⁵⁵³ Liebeschuetz (1972), 208-209.

What differs between the various gate complexes, however, is their role and status in their respective urban topography. For example, the North Gate of Sergiopolis (modern Resafa, Syria) is differentiated from the other main gates of the city by its decorative scheme. Another example is the late 3rd century gate of Pergamon, which is the only gate in the city where wheeled carts were able to pass through the fortification walls.⁵⁵⁴

Accordingly, the two primary factors to consider when evaluating a gate complex are 1.) the features in the area surrounding the gate and 2.) the nature of the gate itself. The various features around the gate indicate the type of information that was intended to be conveyed to travellers, including for example military, ceremonial, commercial, and religious connotations. Conversely, the nature of the gate clarifies the reasons why such information may be relevant. Thus, a gate complex around the main gate of a city may be interpreted much differently than a gate complex with the same arrangement of features but around a different gate with a different character. Through the combination of these two factors, it is possible to better understand the ways in which the character of ancient cities was demonstrated and explore how this character can be seen in the archaeological record.

The gate complexes found in the cities of Thracia in Late Antiquity are particularly interesting case studies for several reasons. The three main urban centres of the Thracian Plain are situated in relatively close proximity; Diocletianopolis is located approximately 45 km north of Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana-Beroe is about 100 km to the east. Furthermore, new development was undertaken at each of the cities in the Tetrarchic period, which resulted in new gate complexes appearing at each site at roughly the same time. Thus,

⁵⁵⁴ Jacobs (2009), 207-208.

regional and temporal variability in design, construction techniques, or attitudes to urban development and topography ought to be reduced and enable valid comparison to be made.

Moreover, the differences between the cities themselves provide interesting avenues for exploration. For example, this chapter investigates whether it is possible to discern the different gradations of urban status in the arrangement of a city's gate complex, such as the difference between a provincial capital – Philippopolis – and other nearby cities. It also examines the difference between urban centres that are new foundations in the Tetrarchic period and those that had been established prior to Late Antiquity. Finally, this chapter explores whether the analysis of gate complexes as a holistic unit may help illuminate the character of ancient cities that are otherwise poorly understood, such as in the case of Augusta Traiana-Beroe.

Philippopolis

The only city gate at Philippopolis to have been discovered at present is the so-called East Gate. As discussed in Chapter 1, a series of renovations in the late 3rd or early 4th century transformed the character of the East Gate (**Figs. 2-4**).⁵⁵⁵ The original gate, which had been part of the 2nd-century fortification of the city, was demolished and the circuit wall was extended to incorporate a pre-existing honourary arch dedicated to the emperor Hadrian. Such re-purposing of honourary arches as city gates is not uncommon in Late Antiquity. The Golden Gate of Constantinople, for example, was likely originally built as a triumphal arch

⁵⁵⁵ For the complete archaeological details and a full discussion of the so-called East Gate of Philippopolis, see Chapter 1 – Section I.i. It is worth repeating that the term “East Gate” is used here since this is the terminology that has become established in modern literature, but it is not at all clear this particular gate was indeed the eastern gate of Philippopolis. It is likely a gate was situated near the Small Basilica in Late Antiquity, which would perhaps be the more appropriate candidate to be considered the city's East Gate.

celebrating the emperor Theodosius I and the phenomenon can be seen elsewhere as well, such as the Damascus Gate at Jerusalem.⁵⁵⁶

In addition to the renovations of the East Gate, a broad colonnaded street was built in the late 3rd or early 4th century as well, which likely coincided with the gate's overhaul. The street was the broadest in the entire province of Thracia, measuring over 13 meters in width, and was lined on either side by two-storied colonnaded porticoes. Moreover, small single-room structures were arranged behind the porticoes along the length of the street that has been investigated to date. Although the interpretation of the small structures is not entirely certain due to the paucity of published archaeological materials, it is likely they were used as shops; analogous arrangements are observed elsewhere, such as at Palmyra.⁵⁵⁷

The entire length of the colonnaded street has not been investigated, but its alignment suggests it likely intersected with the northernmost *decumanus* of the orthogonal street network near the southern projection of Taksim Tepe. It is unclear if the street continued beyond this point. If, however, the colonnaded street ignored the pre-existing street grid and did continue past the *decumanus* – as has often been supposed – it would extend to near the centre of Philippopolis and the Episcopal Basilica.

Thus, the East Gate complex of Philippopolis in the late 3rd and early 4th century included the new monumental gate, the broad street leading into the city, and the colonnaded porticoes on either side of the street. All of these features combine to exude pomp and ceremony. Thus, each element of the East Gate complex of Philippopolis serves to highlight the grandeur of the city to visitors.

⁵⁵⁶ Arnould (1997), 210-212.

⁵⁵⁷ Intagliata (2018).

Some of the rationale behind the decision to establish a lavish complex around the East Gate can be determined by examining the nature and location of the gate. The East Gate was situated in a particularly conspicuous location since the *Via Militaris* passed just to the north of the gate. Evidence of a bridge over the Maritsa River was also discovered nearby, designating the spot where the military road crossed from the right to the left bank of the river.⁵⁵⁸ The *Via Militaris* was a major travel route that ran from Singidunum (modern Belgrade, Serbia) to Constantinople and was the primary military road that linked the legionary bases of the Middle Danube with Constantinople and the Mediterranean.⁵⁵⁹ Prominent cities such as Naissus, Serdica, and Hadrianopolis were also situated on the route of the road. Thus, the proximity of the *Via Militaris* indicates the East Gate of Philippopolis would have been the main point of entry to the city for visiting civil and military officials.

Furthermore, the location of the gate and the broad colonnaded street leading from it suggest the East Gate was the threshold where important processions entered the city. The most significant of such processions was the formal imperial *adventus* ceremony, whereby an emperor entered the city and received the acclamation of the populace.⁵⁶⁰ Similar ceremonies could also be held for administrative officials, clergy, and occasionally members of the social elite.⁵⁶¹ If indeed the colonnaded street linked the East Gate with the city centre, then this function may have even influenced the construction of the Episcopal Basilica near its southern terminus at the end of the 4th century.⁵⁶² The East Gate is, therefore, extremely well-

⁵⁵⁸ Маджаров (2009), 97-98.

⁵⁵⁹ Маджаров (2009), 70-130; Wendel 2005, 108-141.

⁵⁶⁰ Several emperors visited Philippopolis during Late Antiquity, e.g. Diocletian in 293 (Barnes 1981, 8-9; 1982, 4, 38) and Valentinian and Valens in 364 (*CTh*.6.37.0; 8.5.19).

⁵⁶¹ MacCormack (1981).

⁵⁶² Modern publications often explain the construction of the colonnaded street as a deliberate effort to link the East Gate with the Episcopal Basilica. This ignores, however, the fact the colonnaded street was built prior to the basilica. See Chapter 3, Infrastructure – Street Network.

placed to display the representative character of the city to a large number of travellers, onlookers, and prominent members of the administration in particular.

Finally, in an analysis of gates from the eastern Mediterranean, it has been demonstrated that the incorporation of triumphal arches as city gates is seen primarily in “imperial capitals and new Christian foci”.⁵⁶³ The archaeological evidence seems to indicate most of Philippopolis’ religious architecture is built starting from the late 4th century, indicating it is unlikely the city was a new Christian focus when the East Gate complex was built. Yet Philippopolis gained new administrative duties as the capital of Thracia as a result of the reforms of Diocletian, when the former capital of Thrace – Heraclea-Perinthos – was located in the province of Europa. Moreover, while it does not appear Philippopolis was ever the official residence of an emperor, it was certainly the site of imperial visits. Thus, the incorporation of the arch of Hadrian may reflect the ascendancy of Philippopolis as a new major administrative centre.

From the analysis of the features of the East Gate complex and the nature and location of the East Gate itself, the character of Philippopolis in the late 3rd and early 4th century becomes apparent. The monumentality and opulence of the gate complex features conveys a message of grandeur and importance, and the complex’s location at the primary ceremonial entrance to the city suggests an particular interaction with the civil, military, and religious elite of late antique society. Thus, the East Gate complex of Philippopolis reflects the city’s new role as a provincial capital following Diocletian’s administrative restructuring.

⁵⁶³ Jacobs (2009), 206.

Diocletianopolis

Whereas Philippopolis had a long history of urban development before Late Antiquity, the city of Diocletianopolis (modern Hisar, Bulgaria) was previously no more than a spa resort and is only founded as a proper urban centre during the Tetrarchic period. Accordingly, its municipal layout follows closely the regular plan often used by the Romans for new urban foundations, and city gates are located at each of the cardinal points. At the present stages of excavation, the north, west, and east gates of Diocletianopolis do not appear to have had surrounding structures of any significance.

Beginning in 1960, however, excavations around the south Kamilita gate at Diocletianopolis revealed five distinct structures flanking the entrance to the city – three are located to the east of the gate, and the other two can be found to the west (**Figs. 39-40**). Furthermore, at least two buildings of similar design have been identified adjacent to the interior face of the city's east wall, although these remain unexcavated at present. Each of these buildings has a similar scheme consisting of a narrow, rectangular plan with two rows of rooms and a portico running along the front. Moreover, each building was constructed using the same masonry – namely, *opus mixtum* with belts of four rows of bricks. Evidence of internal stairs also indicates the presence of a second storey.⁵⁶⁴

It is immediately clear from the layout of these buildings that they were initially conceived as military barracks. The typical Roman barracks is divided along its long axis into two rows of rectangular rooms, with one of the rows being larger than the other. Additionally, a covered portico is often found running along the front of barracks in order to provide some

⁵⁶⁴ Малджаров (1993). The archaeological evidence is reviewed in full in the section in Chapter 3 that discusses barrack buildings.

protection from the elements when moving between buildings.⁵⁶⁵ Examples of this design can be found across the Roman Empire, as demonstrated by the legionary forts of Vindobona and Novaesium, and the Severan supply base at South Shields in northern England.⁵⁶⁶ In most cases, however, the rooms in the rear of the barracks are the larger; these likely served as sleeping accommodation for the soldiers, while the smaller rooms facing the street may have been used for storage or work space. At Diocletianopolis the typical plan is flipped and it appears the soldiers slept in the larger front rooms. Unfortunately, the small finds from the excavations of the barracks have not been published, thereby hindering a more detailed analysis of the buildings, but a few *dolia* were found in the rear rooms and may be further proof of their use as storage space.

Moreover, it is difficult to overstate the sheer size of the military presence in the city. For instance, if it assumed each barracks was inhabited by a century of 80 men, and recalling there is evidence of a second floor, then the seven barracks would represent a force of 1120 soldiers. This figure is likely to be too high, since not all of the barracks are the same size and none of them have the full suite of ten rooms, but even conservative estimates are considerable. If an 8-man squad is assumed for each sleeping quarter, of which there are about 40, the size of the total garrison would have been about 640 soldiers.⁵⁶⁷ Any estimate of the exact number of soldiers stationed at Diocletianopolis is problematic, however, since it is not clear if all of the barracks were inhabited simultaneously, or the length of their occupation, or even if every barrack building has been discovered. Moreover, the obscure

⁵⁶⁵ Hodgson & Bidwell (2004), 122-123.

⁵⁶⁶ Johnson (1983), 32-33, 166-176, 289.

⁵⁶⁷ The debate regarding the size of Roman army units in Late Antiquity is still ongoing, but the general consensus seems to be that the average size was about 500-1000 soldiers, depending on the type of unit, whether it was stationed at the frontier or not, and the year. For some of the debate, see especially Elton (1996); Duncan-Jones (1990); Jones (1964).

nature and timetable of the Tetrarchic and Constantinian military reforms make any analysis of the composition or size of legions or auxiliaries very difficult.

Regardless of the exact number of soldiers stationed at Diocletianopolis, the Kamilite military gate complex is exceptional among cities of late antique Thracia and the Balkans. No other city has nearly such a large garrison as the barracks suggest was present at Diocletianopolis. In fact, the only real comparisons in the region are the Danubian legionary and auxiliary camps, such as Iatrus, Troesmis, or Drobeta.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, if we compare the gate complex of Diocletianopolis with the one at Philippopolis, it is apparent that there is something very different going on at Diocletianopolis. While the south Kamilite gate presents an impressive monumental facade to the city similar to the arched entrance to Philippopolis, once that threshold is passed the situation changes drastically. Instead of the bustling colonnaded street lined with shops on either side, a visitor to Diocletianopolis would have entered the city into the heart of large a military encampment. It is also worth noting that the military gate complex of Diocletianopolis is situated primarily around the south gate, which is where the road from Philippopolis reaches the city.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, any delegations from the provincial capital would have presumably entered Diocletianopolis by passing through the military gate complex.

In light of the analysis of the Kamilite gate complex, the history of Diocletianopolis is clearly more complicated than currently presented in published material. The city is not widely attested in literary sources, appearing only in the *Synecdemus* of Hierocles and the *Historia* of Theophylact Simocatta – both written in the sixth century – and there is also a

⁵⁶⁸ von Bülow (2007); Zahariade (1997); Ivanov, T. (1966).

⁵⁶⁹ Маджаров (2009), 211-212, 239; Маджаров (2004).

brief attestation of a bishop of Diocletianopolis in Thrace in the mid-fifth century.⁵⁷⁰ Importantly, there is no mention of Diocletianopolis in any source during the Tetrarchic or Constantinian period – which is when the Kamilite gate complex was built at Diocletianopolis. Thus, it is possible that the image presented in Hierocles and Theophylact – of a successful ecclesiastic and civilian urban centre – has been projected backwards to describe the city's earlier history, and is not entirely accurate for the early 4th century. It certainly appears from the Kamilite gate complex that there was a very strong military presence at Diocletianopolis in the early 4th century, and it may be the case that the city played an important – as yet unknown – military role at that time, perhaps garrisoning a legionary or auxiliary unit.

Unfortunately, the exact nature of the city at this time cannot be determined until either the results of previous excavations have been published or new excavations are undertaken and properly published. Nevertheless, the gate complex at Diocletianopolis is a tool that provides an indication that the current assessment of the urban character of the city in the early 4th century is incomplete.

Augusta Traiana-Beroe

Much of the urban layout of Augusta Traiana-Beroe remains buried beneath the modern city of Stara Zagora, but two of the ancient city gates have been discovered (**Figs. 31-32**). Although the South Gate was the first to be archaeologically attested, the West Gate and the area surrounding it has received much more scholarly attention and has been thoroughly excavated. Furthermore, very few of the results from the South Gate complex have been

⁵⁷⁰ Hierocl. 635.6-7; Theoph. Simoc. 2.16.12 – 2.17.4; *ACO* 3, 45; Besevliev (1964a), 49-51.

published, impeding any thorough discussion or analysis. Consequently, the West Gate complex is the focus of this analysis.

The chronology of the West Gate complex of Augusta Traiana-Beroe is complicated, to say the least, but it is not unreasonable to accept that at least the majority of the constituent features had been established by the mid-4th century.⁵⁷¹ The gate itself bears no particularly notable features; it is nearly identical to the South Gate. The road leading from the gate into the city, however, appears to be the widest street of Augusta Traiana-Beroe – but not quite as wide as the colonnaded street of Philippopolis. No evidence for porticoes was discovered on either side of the street. Farther into the city, however, a series of small shops lined the road, leading to the suggestion that the street was one of the main commercial avenues of the city.⁵⁷²

The most interesting feature of the West Gate complex is the open-air piazza located directly adjacent to the road (**Fig. 34**). The square was paved with marble slabs and a seating gallery topped by a colonnade directly faced the open space. An equestrian statue was also erected in the centre of the square and a marble barrier separated the piazza from the street at one point. Unfortunately, it is not clear what was situated south of the street at present.

Interpretations of the purpose of the piazza include that it was the city's forum or agora, that it played a part in Severan imperial cult rituals, and that it was a miniature venue for *venationes* or gladiatorial bouts. As has been discussed in detail elsewhere, these interpretations are unconvincing and the exact purpose of the piazza is unclear.

⁵⁷¹ As discussed in Chapter 2, Section II.ii and Section II.iii it is not possible to determine absolute dates for most of the individual features, but a relative dating is possible. In sum, the gate and the marble pavement likely date after the mid-3rd century and the other features post-date the paving of the piazza. The statue base probably dates to around the reign of Constantius II.

⁵⁷² Ivanov (2012), 478-479.

Although the obscurity of the piazza's function is frustrating, there are some interesting analogies to this type of open complex. At Jerusalem, for example, there appears to have been an open piazza with a column established prominently in the centre inside the city's Damascus Gate, as evidenced by the representation of Jerusalem on the Madaba Map.⁵⁷³ The influence of a second example can perhaps be observed even today at the city of Erzurum in Turkey – known as Theodosiopolis in Late Antiquity – where an open space in front of the Çifte Minareli Medrese may be the remnants of a similar square on the interior of the ancient city's gate.⁵⁷⁴ Additional piazzas directly inside of city gates are also found at Gerasa and Palmyra, and at Stobi a semi-circular area is only a short distance from the city gate.⁵⁷⁵ The piazza of Augusta Traiana-Beroe is not, therefore, a unique feature in the Roman Empire.

Unfortunately, however, the comparanda do not help very much in ascertaining the purpose of the piazza of Augusta Traiana-Beroe. This complexity is mostly due to the fact that the specialized purpose of the other squares have not been explored in detail either, but also because an open-air piazza near a city gate could serve many purposes. For example, such a square could operate as a traffic overflow area around the city gate, or perhaps small temporary commercial stalls were set up on the square – similar to a modern farmer's market. It could also possibly have some role in the reception and acclamation of distinguished visitors to the city. Regrettably, there is simply not enough evidence to decide one way or another without speculating completely.

⁵⁷³ Jacobs (2013), Fig 2.

⁵⁷⁴ Crow (2017).

⁵⁷⁵ Intagliata (2018), 3, Fig. 2; Lichtenberger & Raja (eds.) (2018); Jarić (2017), 410, Fig. 2; Kennedy (2007).

Conclusions

The cities of Late Antique Thracia are woefully under-studied outside of Bulgarian publications, with some exceptions of course. This may be in part due to a language barrier, but it is also a result of the general paucity of published materials from the sites' excavations. Thus, where we have imperfect excavation records, it is necessary to turn to other forms of evidence to further our understanding of cities in Late Antiquity. This chapter represents an ongoing effort to grapple with these problems and an attempt to provide an original solution.

The analysis of gate complexes from the cities of late antique Thracia presented above demonstrates the value of such an approach. Through the examination of the East Gate complex of Philippopolis, for instance, it is possible to see the city's emerging status as a new provincial capital in the Tetrarchic period. Moreover, what is perhaps even more significant is that a similar process is not observed at either Augusta Traiana-Beroe or Diocletianopolis. What this seems to indicate, therefore, is the combination of features found at the East Gate complex of Philippopolis – or at least their intended representative message of ascendant urban status – may perhaps be indicative of a typology specific to new provincial capitals. A typology of this sort is less useful in the case of Philippopolis since its position is well-attested in the historical sources, but would be very useful for analyzing sites where the literary or historical record is more incomplete.

The analysis of the Kamilite Gate complex of Diocletianopolis further demonstrates the benefit of the approach for the examination of cities that are represented poorly in the historical record. There is a clear discrepancy between the archaeological material recovered from the Kamilite Gate complex and the picture of Diocletianopolis in the historical sources, suggesting the conventional understanding of Diocletianopolis may be inaccurate. Thus, the

previous analysis demonstrates the need for a closer examination of the city of Diocletianopolis and its place in the geo-strategic organisation of the empire during the early 4th century.

Finally, although the West Gate complex of Augusta Traiana-Beroe is frustratingly vague, it is nonetheless a useful exercise as it demonstrates the limitations of this analysis. The study of gate complexes relies on accurate and (ideally) abundant archaeological data. Of utmost importance is establishing the purpose of the features of a gate complex. Where such data is not available, or has not been examined in detail, it is increasingly difficult to make any conclusions beyond conjecture. Nevertheless, this brief study will hopefully stimulate further conversations and considerations of the cities of late antique Thracia and the roles of their respective gate complexes.

A Comparative Analysis of Urban Development in Moesia Secunda

As discussed in the Introduction, studies of the riparian province of Moesia Secunda have predominated in the previous few decades, resulting in an impressive output of published material for sites such as Novae, Abritus, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and Iatrus. Thus, while many unanswered questions remain, the archaeological investigations in the Lower Danube region have produced a detailed model of urban development in Moesia Secunda during Late Antiquity.

A corresponding model does not currently exist for the regions south of the Stara Planina. Consequently, the results from the Lower Danube have often been applied to the

entire Diocese of Thrace, despite geographic and historical differences between the riparian and inland provinces.

Accordingly, this chapter explores the character of urban development in Thracia by comparing the archaeological data presented in the preceding sections with the traditional understanding of urban development in Moesia Secunda. By highlighting where and how inland cities diverged from the riparian urban paradigm - as well as where they followed a similar course - this analysis takes the first steps towards establishing an interpretation specific to Thracia. Future investigations of additional sites, of the urban-rural interaction, and of the surrounding landscape will hopefully add to this analysis and further illuminate the nature of Thracian urbanism.

The Tetrarchic-Constantinian Building Programmes

During the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, the cities of both Thracia and Moesia Secunda benefited from the widespread building efforts undertaken by several successive emperors. Tetrarchic-Constantinian construction is attested, for instance, at Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis in Thracia, as well as at Novae, Durostorum, Abritus, Odessos, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and Marcianopolis in Moesia Secunda. The building projects at these sites are often characterised as either Diocletianic or Constantinian construction programmes, but the poor resolution in the dating material makes it difficult to attribute specific projects to individual emperors. Nevertheless, the period c. 284-337 was evidently one of fruitful urban development for both of the areas under consideration.

One of the foremost priorities during the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period was the repair and upkeep of existing infrastructure and public buildings. At Philippopolis, for

example, the level of the agora was raised and repaved, the city walls were repaired in some sections, and the Western Baths were reconstructed. Furthermore, the city's two major spectacle buildings - the theatre and stadium - as well as the local synagogue were repaired. Similarly, the walls of Augusta Traiana-Beroe were also likely strengthened in the late 3rd or early 4th century, but its water supply system does not appear to have required significant maintenance as it operated as normal until the end of the 4th century. The exception to this pattern is Diocletianopolis, however, since it was a new foundation and did not have any pre-existing infrastructure to maintain; nevertheless, the new city was equipped with an amphitheatre *de novo*, which demonstrates the priority ascribed to entertainment buildings (**Fig. 43**).

The concern for the upkeep of infrastructure and public buildings was not limited to Thracia, as evidenced by building projects undertaken at Marcianopolis - namely, the extension of the city walls and the repairs to the amphitheatre. Due to an interesting trend in the Tetrarchic-Constantinian fortification efforts in Thracia and Moesia Secunda, the new city walls will be discussed in a larger comparative section below. The amphitheatre of Marcianopolis, however, was situated in the southwest corner of the fortified area of the city and, with the exterior measuring c. 70 m x c. 60 m, is estimated to have seated approximately 4000 spectators (**Fig. 54**).⁵⁷⁶ There has been some debate surrounding the date of the amphitheatre's initial construction, but analysis of the epigraphic evidence suggests it was built in the early 3rd century.⁵⁷⁷ The repairs of the amphitheatre have also been difficult to

⁵⁷⁶ Vagalinski (2002), 279.

⁵⁷⁷ Vagalinski (2002), 279-280. For other suggested dates, see Tončeva (1981), 142; Петров (1967), 8; Gerov (1975), 53. Respectively, they propose the second half of the 3rd century, 3rd century, and the beginning or middle of the 3rd century, although often without adequate supporting evidence.

date precisely, although estimates range from the late 3rd to the early 4th century, which is sufficient to conclude they were a Tetrarchic-Constantian endeavour.⁵⁷⁸

Another instance of the rehabilitation of public spaces was the renovation of the agora of Nicopolis ad Istrum and its associated buildings (**Fig. 57**). The agora was built contemporaneously with the foundation of the city during the reign of Trajan (r. 98-117) but was refurbished several times; thus, the development of the agora in the early 4th century represents the third phase of development. At this time, the public buildings on the west side of the open square are rebuilt and two other structures to the north are converted to have a basilical plan. The open square itself, meanwhile, measured 42.0 m x 40.9 m.⁵⁷⁹

The widespread repairs and renovations undertaken throughout the provinces of Thracia and Moesia appear to be a period of recovery following the chaotic mid-3rd century troubles. It is difficult to trace the exact progression of this recovery due to the lack of precise dating material, so it is not clear whether one area or city recovered more quickly than any other, but it is nevertheless evidence of the attention devoted to restoring some sense of stability in the late 3rd and early 4th century.

In addition to the restoration of previous structures, there are also discernible priorities for new buildings erected during the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period. The widespread construction of new bath buildings, for instance, is observed at most urban sites in Thracia and Moesia Secunda. Both the Eastern Baths of Philippopolis and the baths adjacent to the southwestern gate of Augusta Traiana-Beroe were built in the late 3rd or early fourth century, and even the newly-founded Diocletianopolis was equipped with new

⁵⁷⁸ Vagalinski (2002), 280; Tončeva (1981), 142.

⁵⁷⁹ Динчев (2009b), 69-78.

extramural baths during the reign of Galerius and Licinius, while the existing intramural baths were expanded significantly (**Figs. 15, 34, 41, 42**). Furthermore, in Moesia Secunda, Tetrarchic-Constantinian baths were built at Novae, Durostorum, Abritus, and Odessos (**Figs. 59 & 61, D**).⁵⁸⁰ While some of the latter baths were built as replacements for earlier *thermae* that had been destroyed or abandoned, it is nevertheless evident that the provision of bathing facilities was essential in urban centres.

The other focus of Tetrarchic-Constantinian building was large private residences. At Philippopolis alone, three new residential complexes were built in the late 3rd or early 4th century: the Eirene Building (**Figs. 22-24**), the Residence Building (**Fig. 25**), and the Knyaz Tseretelev Building. In addition to these three structures, the Stoletov Building at Augusta Traiana-Beroe (**Fig. 37**) and the two Residential Buildings from Diocletianopolis (**Figs. 52-53**) were also built in the same time frame. North of the Stara Planina, the House of Antiope in Marcianopolis was a peristyle residence, possibly built during the reign of Constantine, with several elaborate mosaics - one of which depicts Antiope and gives the building its modern name (**Figs. 55 & 56**).⁵⁸¹ Moreover, at Novae, a new courtyard house was constructed over the damaged remains in the southeast corner of the former legionary *valetudinarium* (hospital) (**Fig. 60**).⁵⁸² Finally, the remains of four smaller peristyle buildings were discovered at Abritus; although a much larger residential complex was later built over the site, epigraphic and numismatic evidence indicates the earlier buildings were constructed in the early 4th century (**Fig. 61, E**).⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Novae: Rizos (2010), 281; Durostorum: Angelova & Buchvarov (2007), 76; Abritus: Ivanov & Stojanov (1985), 29; Odessos: Rizos (2010), 261.

⁵⁸¹ Minchev (2002), 246ff.

⁵⁸² Lemke (2015), 93; Milcheva & Gentscheva (1996), 191-192.

⁵⁸³ Carrié & Moreau (2015), 606; Ivanov & Stojanov (1985), 6. The evidence includes a reused inscription from the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period, which provides a *terminus post quem*.

The combination of these two building priorities - the erection of bath complexes and large residential buildings - plainly attests to the prosperity and security afforded by the Tetrarchic and Constantinian regimes. After the tumult of the mid 3rd century, and the invasion of Cniva's Goths in particular, the late 3rd and early 4th century was a period in which urban elites and municipal communities felt comfortable investing in expensive building projects. One question that remains to be explored is whether the higher number of new residential buildings at Philippopolis is significant - for example, whether it indicates a greater number of urban elite in the new capital of Thracia, or whether it is merely a quirk of excavation. Further studies at Marcianopolis will hopefully provide useful comparanda.

One important caveat to keep in mind with regards to the prevalence of baths and large residential buildings, however, is that these structures are among the most visible in the archaeological record. For example, the House of Antiope in Marcianopolis is c. 1400 m² and the Eirene Building in Philippopolis is estimated to have covered 1000-1300 m², making them very easy to discern. Furthermore, both baths and residences are regularly decorated with intricate mosaics and other decorations, which quickly draw the attention of excavators and scholars from other fields. As a result of these factors, it is possible that baths and elite residential buildings are overrepresented in the archaeological record, particularly where protracted and systematic excavations are not convenient. Nevertheless, this caveat only strengthens the point made concerning the prosperity of the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period; if baths and residences are overrepresented, then there are even more building projects undertaken at this time than currently known, indicating an even higher level of prosperity.

The final point of comparison between the cities of Thracia and those of Moesia Secunda is the built Christian environment. This is a relatively straightforward but often

underappreciated juxtaposition - in Thracia, the earliest purpose-built churches appear much earlier than those in Moesia Secunda. The ostensible Christian basilica that was found under the present-day church of St. Petka in Philippopolis appears to be the first instance of church-building in Thracia, which has been tentatively dated to the beginning of the 4th century. Furthermore, the Christian basilica built to replace the city's temple of Apollo Kendriseus appears to have been a contemporaneous construction as well.⁵⁸⁴

Conversely, the first appearance of distinctive church buildings in Moesia Secunda did not emerge until at least several decades later. At Iatrus, a fortified settlement on the Danube, a Christian basilica of about 150 m² was built in the mid to late 4th century - likely during the reign of either Constantius II (337-361) or Valens (364-378).⁵⁸⁵ Other than the basilica at Iatrus, however, the other churches in Moesia Secunda were only constructed in the 5th century; for instance, the next earliest church seems to have been built at Dichin, and is dated to roughly 400.⁵⁸⁶

The distinction between the development of the built ecclesiastical environment on either side of the Stara Planina has obvious relevance for tracing the spread of early Christianity. Based on the structure beneath the church of St. Petka, it would seem Philippopolis had one of the earliest Christian communities in Thrace, which may be part of the reason why it was chosen as the site of counter-council of Philippopolis in 343/4.⁵⁸⁷ Yet as discussed in the preceding discussion of Philippopolis, the archaeological evidence for the

⁵⁸⁴ See Chapter 3, Religious Buildings – Early Churches.

⁵⁸⁵ Ivanov, T. (1966).

⁵⁸⁶ Poulter (2007), 88.

⁵⁸⁷ See Chapter 1, p 34. The geographic position of Philippopolis as the last major urban centre along the route to Serdica was certainly also a consideration.

so-called basilica under St. Petka is somewhat obscure, so further investigation is really required to firmly establish the identity and dating of the structure.

The Fortification of Urban Centres

While Tetrarchic-Constantinian construction is recognised in both Thracia and Moesia Secunda, modern studies typically do not compare the respective building efforts or analyse how variations in the programmes may reveal idiosyncratic urban characteristics. For example, it has been generally accepted that defensive concerns were of utmost priority in both provinces, evidenced by the construction of fortifications at most urban sites. A closer examination of the relevant fortifications, however, reveals a significant distinction in the manner in which sites were strengthened.

At Novae, the walls were extended to include an additional 10 ha area to the east of the existing *castrum*, thereby increasing the size of the settlement to c. 26 ha (**Fig. 58**). The new wall was 1.60 m thick and was likely erected in an effort to protect part of the civilian *canabae* that had previously developed outside the legionary fort, although a sizeable portion of the extramural settlement remained unfortified.⁵⁸⁸ Similarly, there is some evidence to suggest the civilian suburb around the *castrum* at Durostorum was also fortified in the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period; a section of wall discovered near the northern extent of the *canabae* was built directly over remains dated to the 3rd century, which may indicate the new circuit was erected in the 4th century (**Fig. 63**).⁵⁸⁹ Thus, the fortified areas of both legionary

⁵⁸⁸ Press & Sarnowski (1990), 240-241.

⁵⁸⁹ Angelova & Buchvarov (2007), 67-68. The fortification of the *canabae* was in addition to the reinforcement of the legionary camp as well as the construction of what seems to be a smaller fortlet nearer to the Danube bank.

headquarters in Moesia Secunda - Novae and Durostorum - were expanded by the construction of entirely new sections of walls.

Conversely, the traditional urban centres that did not have a primary military role maintained their previous layouts and the existing circuits were only repaired or strengthened where necessary. The 2nd-century walls of Philippopolis, for example, continued to be the main defences of the city, albeit with some sections being repaired or rebuilt in the late 3rd or early 4th century; the only major Tetrarchic-Constantinian addition was the modification of the east gate into a monumental bastion. Furthermore, the second fortification phase at Augusta Traiana-Beroe also involved the repair and reconstruction of the pre-existing 2nd-century defences, with no major changes to the course of the walls.⁵⁹⁰ This pattern was not limited to the cities of Thracia either; there is no indication of any significant change to the fortifications of Odessos or Nicopolis ad Istrum between 284 and 337.⁵⁹¹

An ostensible exception to this dichotomy is perhaps seen at Marcianopolis, which became the provincial capital of Moesia Secunda following Diocletian's administrative reforms. The archaeological investigation of Marcianopolis has been intermittent and the results are poorly published, but it seems a new wall built in *opus mixtum* and 1.90 m thick extended the fortified area of the city to the northwest. While the dating of the new wall has not been firmly established, the tentative consensus is that the city was expanded in the 4th century and it is possible the extension of the fortified area was effected by Marcianopolis' new role as a provincial capital.⁵⁹² The extension at Marcianopolis should not be viewed as an

⁵⁹⁰ The second fortification phase is traditionally dated to 376-378, but as discussed previously at Chapter 4, Infrastructure – Fortifications it may in fact be a much earlier process.

⁵⁹¹ Rizos (2010), 51.

⁵⁹² *TIR* K-35/2, 213-217; Rizos (2010), 51.

outlier, however, since the city was a prominent military centre as well. The Gothic campaigns of Constantine (332) and Valens (366-369) wintered in Marcianopolis, and it was also the headquarters of Lupicinus, the *comes rei militaris per Thracias*, at the outset the Gothic War (376-382). Furthermore, a military armoury was located in Marcianopolis, as attested in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.⁵⁹³

Thus, concerning the manner in which existing sites were fortified in the late 3rd/early 4th century, the distinction between Thracia and Moesia Secunda appears ancillary; rather, the prime consideration seems to have been whether a given locality had a significant military function, as demonstrated by the lack of expansion at the civilian centres of Nicopolis ad Istrum and Odessos. Yet as a frontier province, Moesia Secunda certainly had a higher proportion of sites actively engaged in the defence of the empire than a province such as Thracia, which was well-defended behind the Stara Planina and the Moesian armies. As a result of the prevalence of military sites in Moesia Secunda, the Roman army had a very real impact on the urban character of the province, as demonstrated by the process of urban expansion at Novae, Durostorum, and Marcianopolis. Conversely, the minimal presence of military units in Thracia resulted in a very different fortification effort south of the Stara Planina, where cities favoured modest repairs and reconstruction efforts instead of expensive and complicated expansions.

New Fortress Towns

In addition to fortification projects at existing sites, the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period also saw the foundation of new fortress towns at Diocletianopolis and Abritus, which were located

⁵⁹³ *Not. Dign.* XI, 34.

in Thracia and Moesia Secunda respectively. While both sites were inhabited prior to Late Antiquity, they gained proper city status only with the monumental building programmes of the late 3rd and early 4th century.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 5, the extent of the construction at Diocletianopolis between 284-337 was substantial; massive walls were built to enclose an area of c. 30 ha and the city was provided with an amphitheatre, a new extramural bath complex, and the existing intramural baths were expanded. Additionally, two large private residential complexes were built concurrently with the establishment of the city and a substantial military sector - including a *horreum* - was likely added a short time later. The earliest Christian basilica at Diocletianopolis may also have been built in the early 4th century, but its dating is too broad to definitively ascribe it to the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period at present.⁵⁹⁴

The site of Abritus (modern Razgrad, Bulgaria) has not been investigated to the same extent as Diocletianopolis, but urban development in the late 3rd/early 4th century is nevertheless evident. In the early 4th century, an area of c. 15 ha was enclosed by a fortification wall with an average thickness of 2.70 m and a proposed height of 10-12 m (**Fig. 61**). Furthermore, a total of 35 towers projected from the curtain; the majority (n=25) of the towers were U-shaped, but also included fan-shaped towers at the corners, square towers along the east wall, and rectangular towers along the south wall.⁵⁹⁵ These defences, therefore, represented a significant investment in the security of Abritus.

The reason for such concern may be gleaned from the discovery of a *horreum* directly south of the west gate of Abritus. *Horrea* were public warehouses often used in Late Antiquity

⁵⁹⁴ See Chapter 5, Religious Buildings – Basilicas.

⁵⁹⁵ Carrié & Moreau (2015), 605.

as depots for the military *annona*, and so were essential for the regular supply and maintenance of the army; their protection, therefore, was an utmost priority.⁵⁹⁶ The *horreum* of Abritus was sizeable, measuring 56.25 m x 20.20 m, and was provided with extra support in the form of external buttressing (**Fig. 62**).⁵⁹⁷ The construction of the *horreum* has been dated to the early 4th century and likely occurred immediately after the erection of the city's fortifications.⁵⁹⁸ Due to the sporadic nature of the excavations at Abritus, the city's walls and the *horreum* are the only Tetrarchic-Constantinian foundations identified at present, although further building undertaken later in the 4th century is discussed below.

A recent analysis by Rizos of new urban foundations in the eastern provinces between 250 and 350, including Diocletianopolis and Abritus, offers some insight into the role of the fortress towns.⁵⁹⁹ While Abritus may have been the only new foundation in Moesia Secunda, six other contemporary foundations are attested in the other provinces along the Lower Danube, each with comparably strong fortifications and located at a distance between 20 and 50 km south of the Danube itself.⁶⁰⁰ Thus, Abritus is clearly part of a centrally-planned string of inland fortified centres that were intended as an integral feature of the Tetrarchic-Constantinian defensive system.

The case of Diocletianopolis, however, is notably different in several key areas. Perhaps the most apparent difference is the size of Diocletianopolis; with a fortified area of

⁵⁹⁶ See Rizos (2013), 659-660 for a brief summary of *horrea* in Late Antiquity, and especially notes 7 and 8 for thorough bibliographies of the *annona* and its infrastructure.

⁵⁹⁷ Carrié & Moreau (2015), 606; Rizos (2013), 674.

⁵⁹⁸ *TIR* K-35/2, 7. A second *horreum* was later built north of the west gate - i.e. across the street from the initial storehouse - but this did not occur until the later 4th century.

⁵⁹⁹ Rizos (2017).

⁶⁰⁰ Rizos (2017), 25-26. Roughly from west to east along the Lower Danube, the other new foundations are Bononia (modern Vidin, Bulgaria) and Augustae (Hurlets, Bulgaria) in Dacia Ripensis, as well as Zaldapa (Abrit, Bulgaria), Tropaeum (Adamclisi, Romania), Ibida (Slava Rusa, Romania), and Acrae (Cape Kaliakra, Bulgaria) in Scythia Minor.

c. 30 ha, it is not only twice the size of Abritus, but in fact larger than all of the new fortress towns along the Lower Danube.⁶⁰¹ Furthermore, the Tetrarchic-Constantinian building programme at Diocletianopolis included not only military structures, but also public entertainment, baths, private residences, and possibly a church. As a result, when compared with the singular military focus at Abritus, Diocletianopolis had a much more traditional urban character from the outset. Finally, the only other new fortress town in the Diocese of Thrace south of the Stara Planina is Maximianopolis (near modern Komotini, Greece).⁶⁰² Thus, the inland provinces also lacked the interconnected network of fortress towns that is found across the riparian provinces.

Despite these differences, the massive fortifications and the extensive military sector along the south wall clearly indicate that Diocletianopolis certainly had a military function as well. It is not entirely clear what the city's exact military role may have been, but it seems likely to have been related to Diocletianopolis' strategic position near the Stryama Gorge and the road linking Philippopolis with the Danubian legionary bases. From this location, a garrison stationed at Diocletianopolis could control the approach to the Thracian Plain from the north and was well-positioned to support the forts guarding the main passes over the Stara Planina. The vague dating of the barrack buildings, however, somewhat complicates the question of which enemy the garrison at Diocletianopolis was meant to oppose - the defences could have been a prescient anticipation of major trans-Danubian invasions or perhaps they were an attempt by Licinius to strengthen Thracia after the first civil war against Constantine. Nevertheless, that Diocletianopolis was a new, centrally directed foundation with a

⁶⁰¹ Rizos (2017), 27.

⁶⁰² Rizos (2017), 29-30.

demonstrable role in the Tetrarchic-Constantinian defensive system is noteworthy because it indicates an active concern for the security of the inland provinces at the highest levels of the imperial hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with an overview of historical events that have shaped modern views of Thrace and Thracia. Chapter 1 necessarily adopted a broad scope, both temporally and geographically, in order to accurately convey the diversity of events that affected the region during Late Antiquity. Thus, in addition to the most well-known historical episodes, such as the Gothic War of 376-382 and the Hunnic invasions of c. 447, several other, more obscure incidents were also discussed. Thus, despite being omitted by many modern studies of late antique Thracia, events such as the revolt of Procopius in 365-366 and the residence of the Thracian Goths in the 470s were included in this overview. Thus, by presenting a comprehensive review of the historical background, this chapter provided the necessary context for an informed analysis of the archaeological data recovered from the cities of Thracia.

Chapter 2 explored the interaction between the cities of Thracia and their surrounding landscape in order to better understand the ways in which the geographic features specific to the region may have affected the character and development of urban centres. The defensive role of the Stara Planina, Sredna Gora, and Rhodope Mountains was analysed, as well as the manner in which these mountains influenced the travel vectors into and across the province. A brief consideration of the impact of mountains on urban industrial production was also included. Similarly, the prevalence of rivers in the Upper Thracian Plain was discussed in relation to riverine transportation and the ready availability of fish as a common dietary component. The chapter also investigated the position of major urban centres within the ecclesiastical landscape, confirming the prominence of urban centres within the religious

organisation of Thracia. By examining these key case studies, Chapter 2 demonstrated the bilateral interaction between urban sites and their surrounding landscape, which is essential for appreciating the role that geography played in the development of the cities of Thracia.

Having established in detail the historical and geographic context unique to Thracia, the bulk of this thesis then reviewed the archaeological material that has been recovered from the cities of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 also assessed the archaeological evidence through critical analysis to determine whether prevailing interpretations were valid. In fact, the analysis of these three case studies demonstrated several instances where the traditional understanding of Thracian cities relied on the misinterpretation or misunderstanding of key archaeological evidence. For example, while the destruction of the first phase of the Western Baths of Philippopolis is traditionally attributed to the Gothic capture of the city in c. 250, this thesis demonstrated the archaeological evidence cannot be dated so precisely. In a like manner, analysis of the dating evidence for the baths of Augusta Traiana-Beroe concluded that they were likely built nearly a century later than is usually assumed. Despite these misinterpretations and the limitations discussed in the Introduction, it was possible to ascertain and analyse the general development and character of the cities of late antique Thracia.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 concluded that, following the establishment of the province of Thracia in the late 3rd century, the region was dominated by three large urban centres: Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis. In the 4th century, cities that existed prior to Late Antiquity displayed a high level of continuity with previous eras, particularly in their public buildings and infrastructure. The first Christian buildings also

began to appear in the cities of Thracia during the mid-4th century, although the development of a Christian urban topography truly accelerates only starting in the 5th century. Conversely, the private domestic buildings of the urban elite were some of the most varied elements of each Thracian city but no new residential buildings were built after the 4th century. Instead, the existing residences were maintained, repaired, or used for a different purpose. The division and repurposing of space was not limited to domestic areas, however, and was particularly prevalent in Thracian cities after the late 5th century. In the 6th and early 7th century, most of the public buildings are no longer in use but the cities continue to exhibit vitality and are inhabited into the later periods, which challenges the existing paradigm in modern literature that focuses on the destructive effects of the various Gothic, Avar, and Slavic incursions on the fortified urban centres of Thracia. These findings constitute the core of this thesis.

Once the character and development of cities in Thracia had been established, Chapter 6 explored the value of the findings through comparative analysis. The first part of the chapter determined whether the nature of a city can be identified through an evaluation of their respective gate complexes, concluding that it is possible to observe the emerging status of Philippopolis through comparison of its gates with those from Diocletianopolis and Augusta Traiana-Beroe. Of particular significance, however, was the comparison of the results from Thracia with the established model of urbanism for the province of Moesia Secunda. This comparison demonstrated several similarities between the two provinces, such as the penchant for building baths and large residential buildings during the Tetrarchic-Constantinian period, but also highlighted important differences. The new cities of Diocletianopolis and Abritus, for instance, were contemporaneous foundations but only

Diocletianopolis was provided with the monumental architecture expected at a proper city, which is perhaps indicative of a more military focus in Moesia Secunda than in Thracia. As a result, it was demonstrated that a model of urbanisation based on the cities of Moesia Secunda cannot be applied directly to the cities of Thracia.

This archaeological assessment of the Thracian cities also highlighted several methodological limitations of previous research that have affected – and continue to affect – the study of material remains in the Balkans. Foremost among these limitations is the need for improved publishing practices. As discussed in the Introduction, the situation has improved somewhat in recent years with the digitisation of some resources, but the nature of rescue excavations seems to seriously hinder many archaeological investigations. Furthermore, future investigations would benefit greatly from the publication of material that has historically been overlooked, despite being collected – e.g. numismatics (including contextual information), ceramics, mortar and masonry, etc. It might also be beneficial to formulate excavation methodologies that incorporate neglected information from the outset, such as using sieves where zoological or botanical data might be reasonably expected. Such an approach would expand the archaeological data available for analysis beyond information strictly limited to monumental architectural features and mosaics and may facilitate the exploration of more nuanced research questions. Publishing information regarding coins, ceramics, and contextual stratigraphy, for example, may improve the accuracy and precision in dating methods. It may also clarify the use and changing uses of buildings over time and bring attention to less-monumental structures and processes that are often overlooked in excavations due to their modest nature.

As an additional consideration, it is hoped that this thesis will also act as an impetus for further research into questions about late antique urbanism, such as how sheltered inland provinces differ from heavily-militarised border provinces and the role of archaeology in exploring issues of urban character. It is anticipated that this thesis will spur additional critical analysis of the Thracian cities as well as other urban centres that have not been addressed herein – there is a wealth of material waiting to be explored. Of particular interest is the question of non-elite housing and the reuse of space, since evidence of encroachment has been identified at several sites and has largely been overlooked so far. Another interesting avenue for future research that has only been touched on briefly in this thesis is a detailed analysis of the interaction between the traditional urban centres and their respective hinterlands, including the investigation of agricultural production, industrial activity, and rural occupation. It may also be rewarding to look beyond the temporal limits of this thesis, into the 7th and 8th centuries, to explore how the cities of Thracia were affected by the rise of the First Bulgarian Empire.

This thesis was primarily a study of the archaeological evidence from the cities of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis during Late Antiquity. It was principally concentrated on the character and development of these cities within their respective historical and geographic contexts and challenged the prevailing interpretations of Thracian cities. Additionally, it explored the advantages and disadvantages of archaeology as an analytical method for the study of cities in antiquity. This thesis ultimately concluded that the cities of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana-Beroe, and Diocletianopolis exhibited an urban character specific to their being within Thracia – a character that differs significantly from

the model of Moesia Secunda, which has formed the basis of contemporary understanding of urbanism in the wider Diocese of Thrace.

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Abbreviations

Cyrillic

АОР: *Археологически Открития и Разкопки*. Sofia.

ГАМП: *Годишник на Археологическия Музей Пловдив*. Plovdiv.

ГНАМП: *Годишник на Народния Археологически Музей в Пловдив*. Plovdiv.

ГПНБМ: *Годишник на Пловдивската Народна Библиотека и Музей*. Plovdiv.

ИАИ: *Известия на Археологическия Институт*. Sofia.

ИБАД: *Известия на Българското археологическо Дружество*. Sofia.

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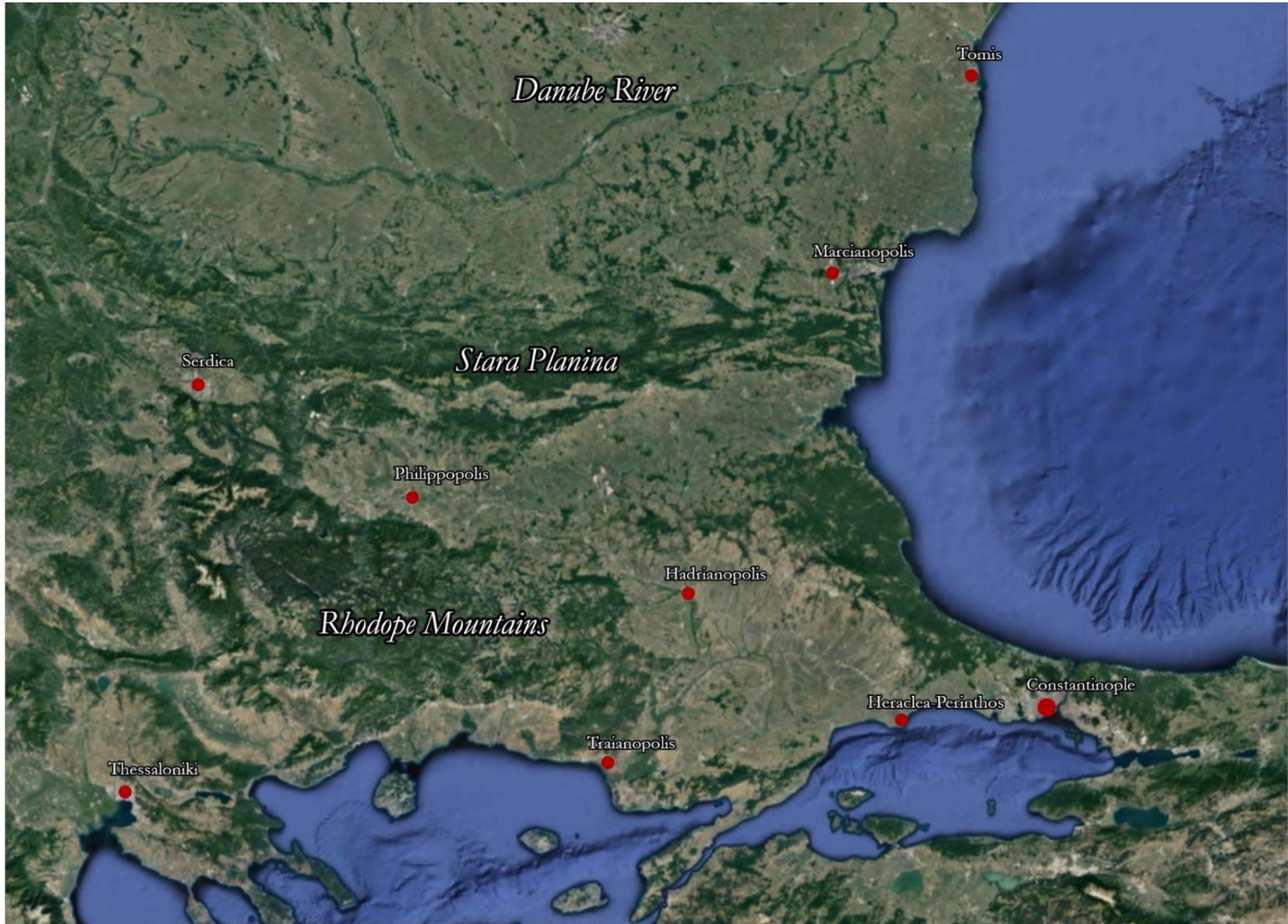
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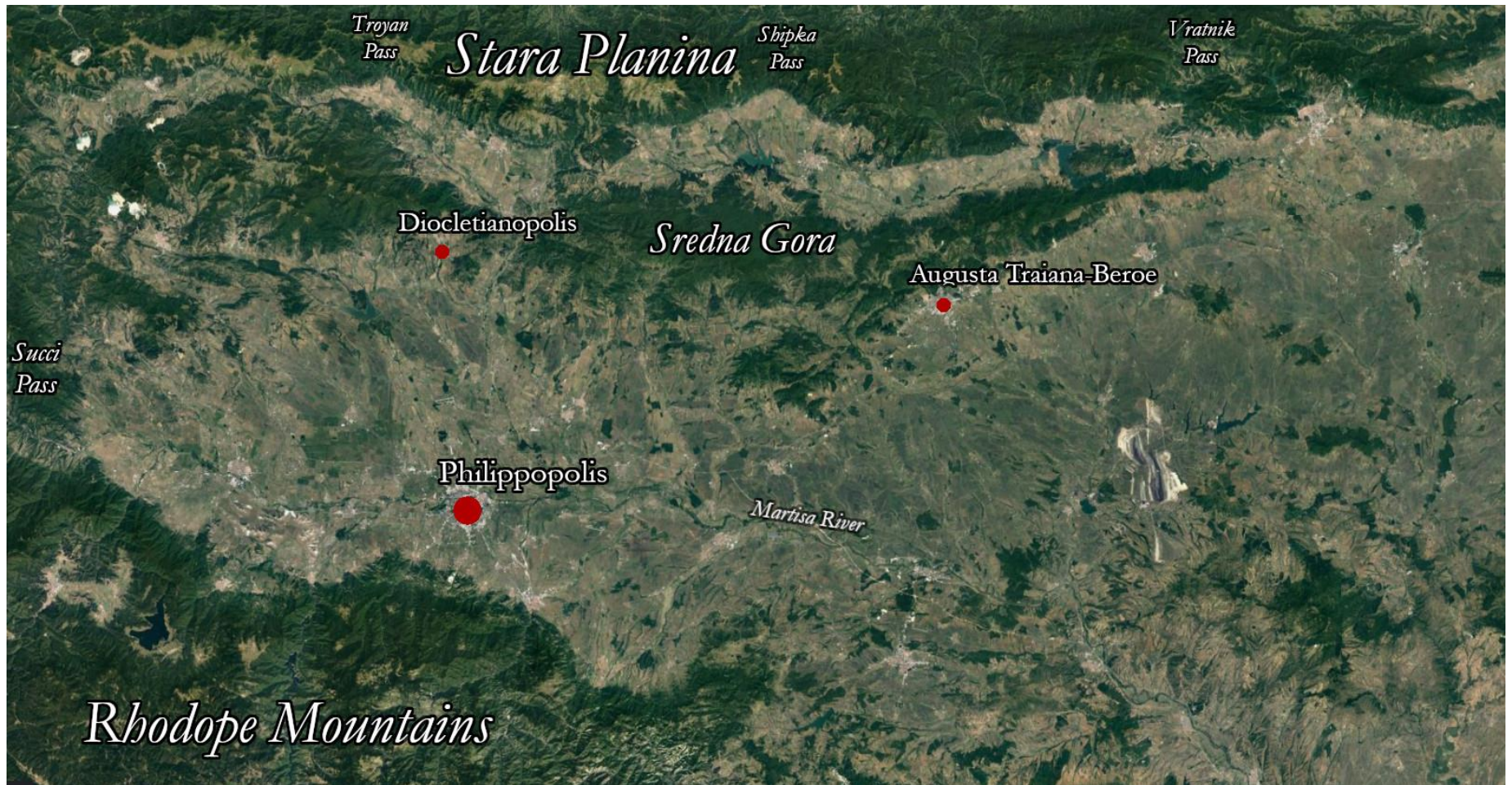
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MAPS & FIGURES



Map 1 – The Diocese of Thrace with Provincial Capitals



Map 2 – The Province of Thracia with Major Cities and Geographic Features



Map 3 – The Province of Moesia Secunda with Major Cities and Geographic Features

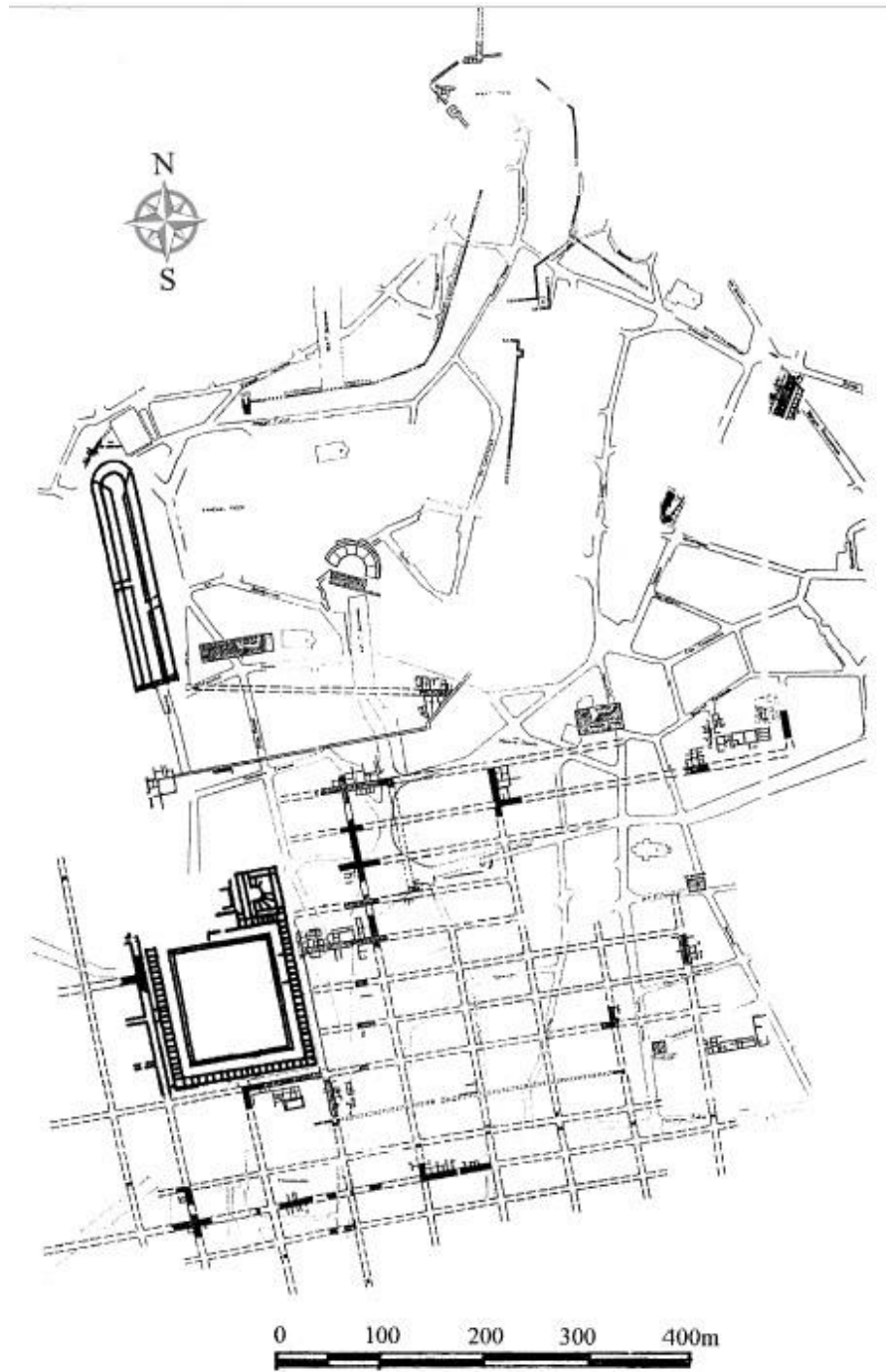


Fig. 1. Philippopolis: City plan (Topalilov 2012)

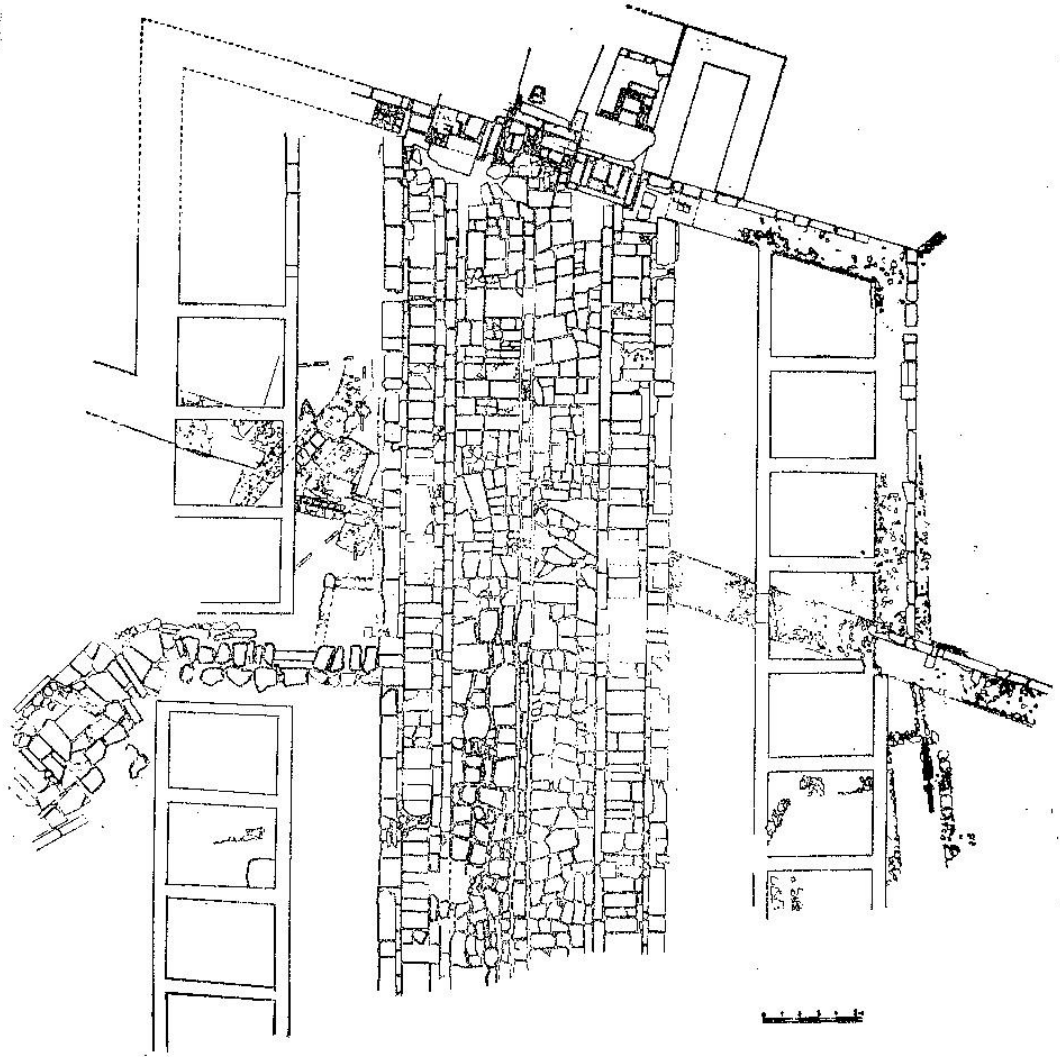


Fig. 2. Philippopolis: East Gate extension (Botušarova & Kesjakova 1983)

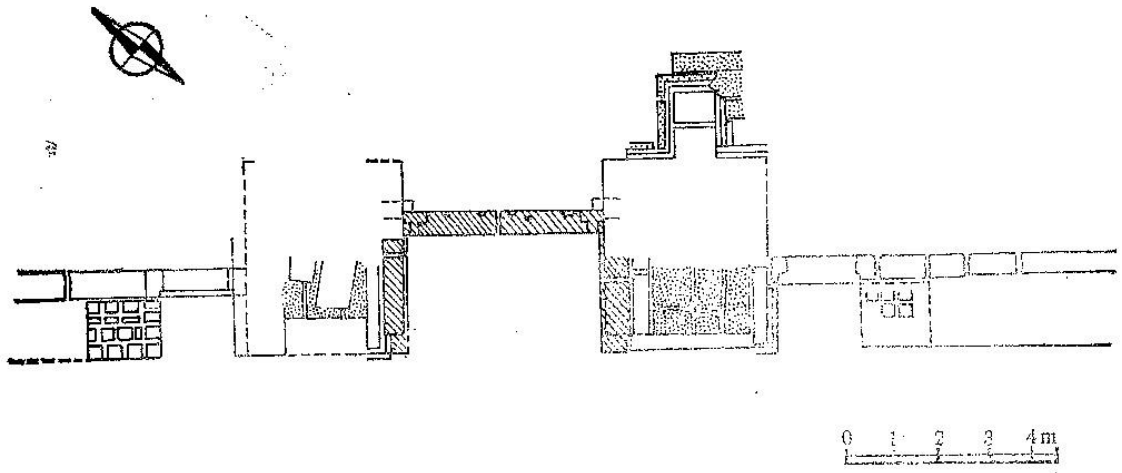


Fig. 3. Philippopolis: East Gate initial restoration (Botušarova & Kesjakova 1983)

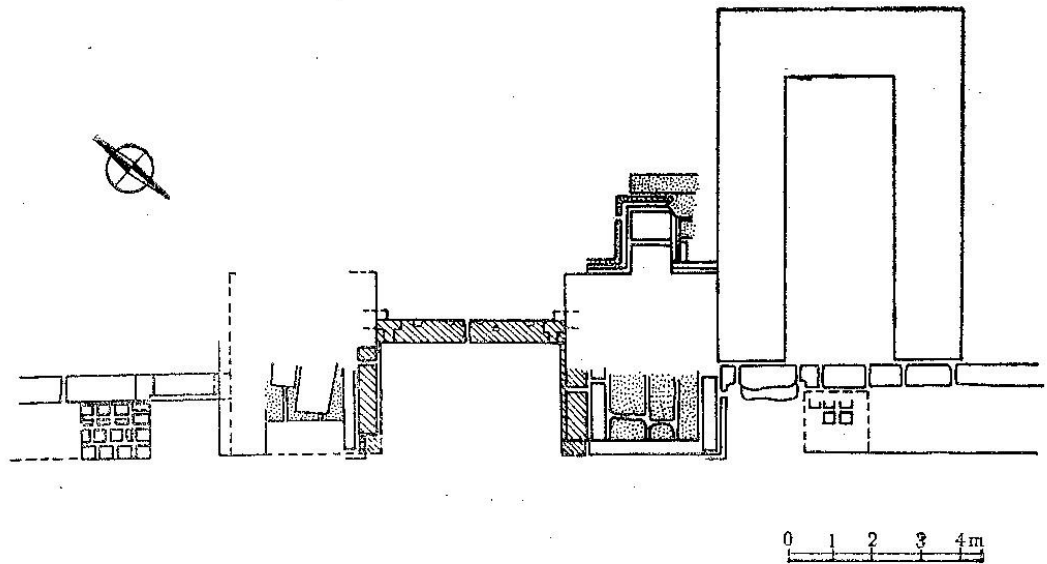


Fig. 4. Philippopolis: East Gate with additional bastion (Botušarova & Kesjakova 1983)

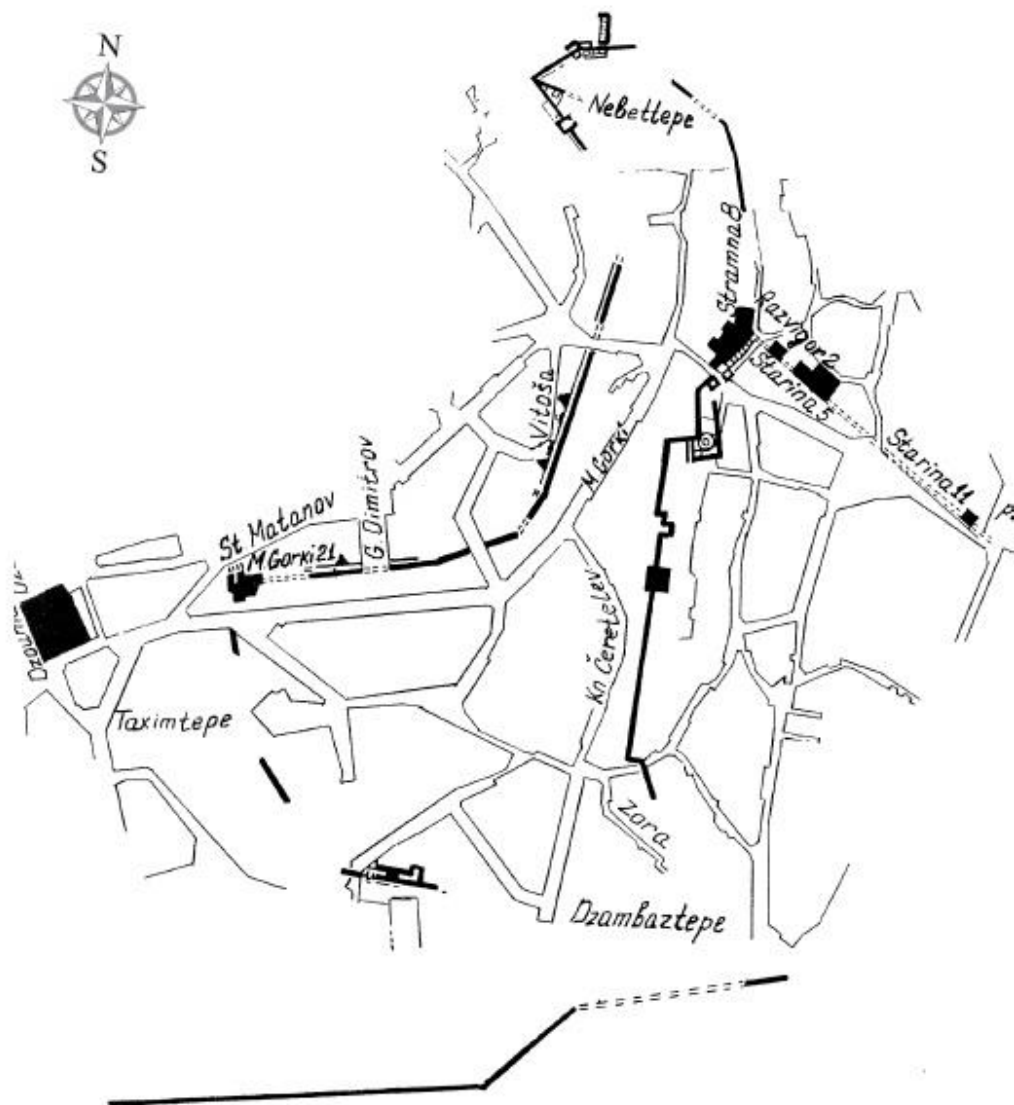


Fig. 5. Philppopolis: 6th century fortification circuit (Кесякова 2001)

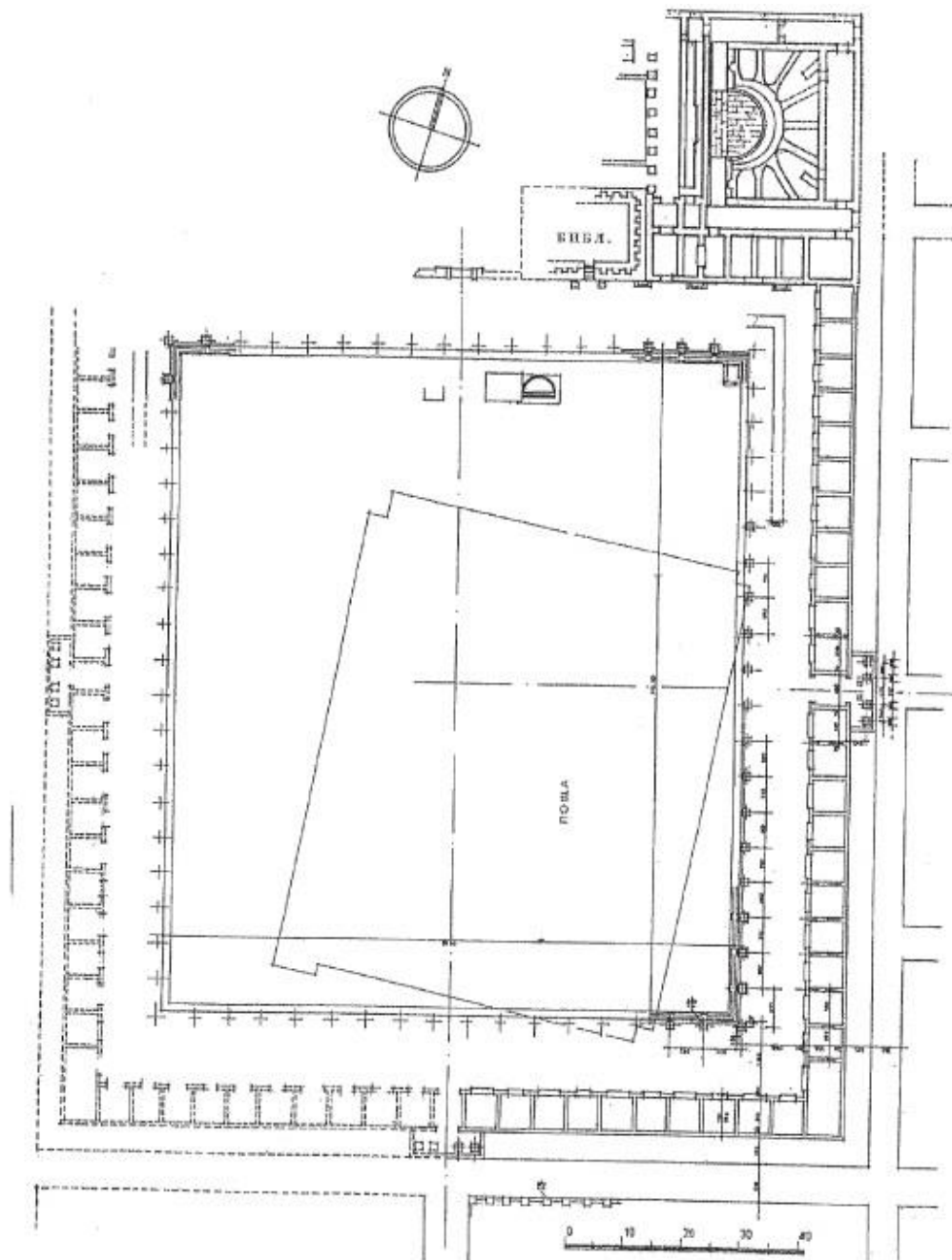


Fig. 6. Philippopolis: Agora (Мартинова-Кютова 2006)

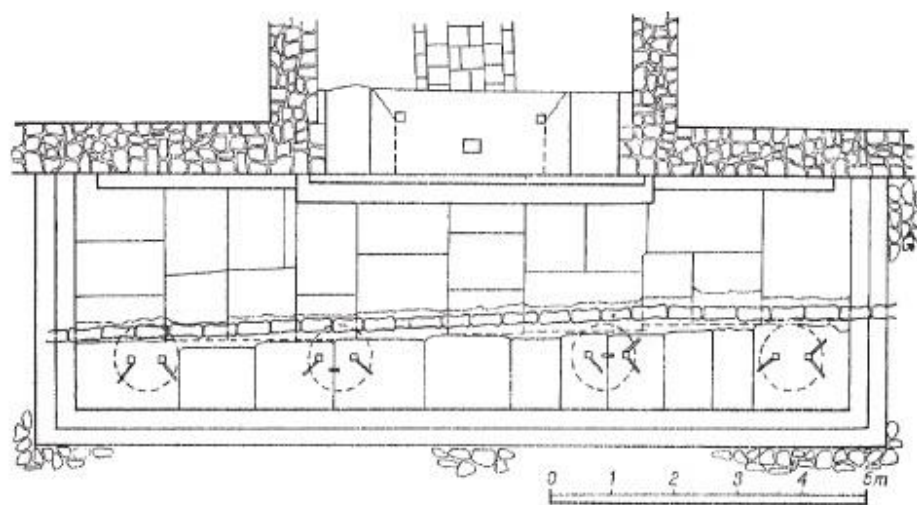


Fig. 7. Philippopolis: East propylaea of the agora (Djambov & Matheev 1980)

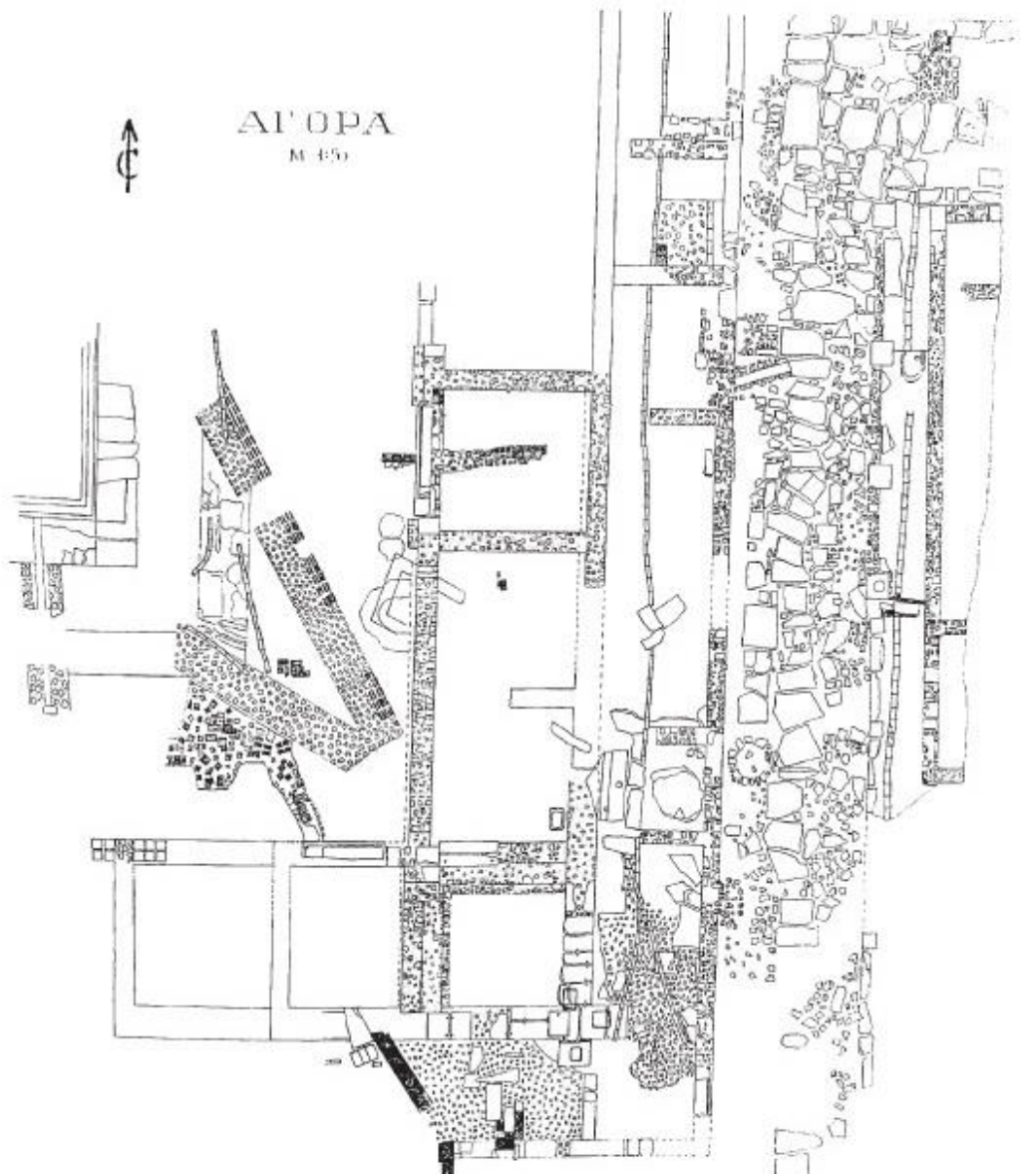


Fig. 8. Philippopolis: Southeast corner (Кесякова 2004a)

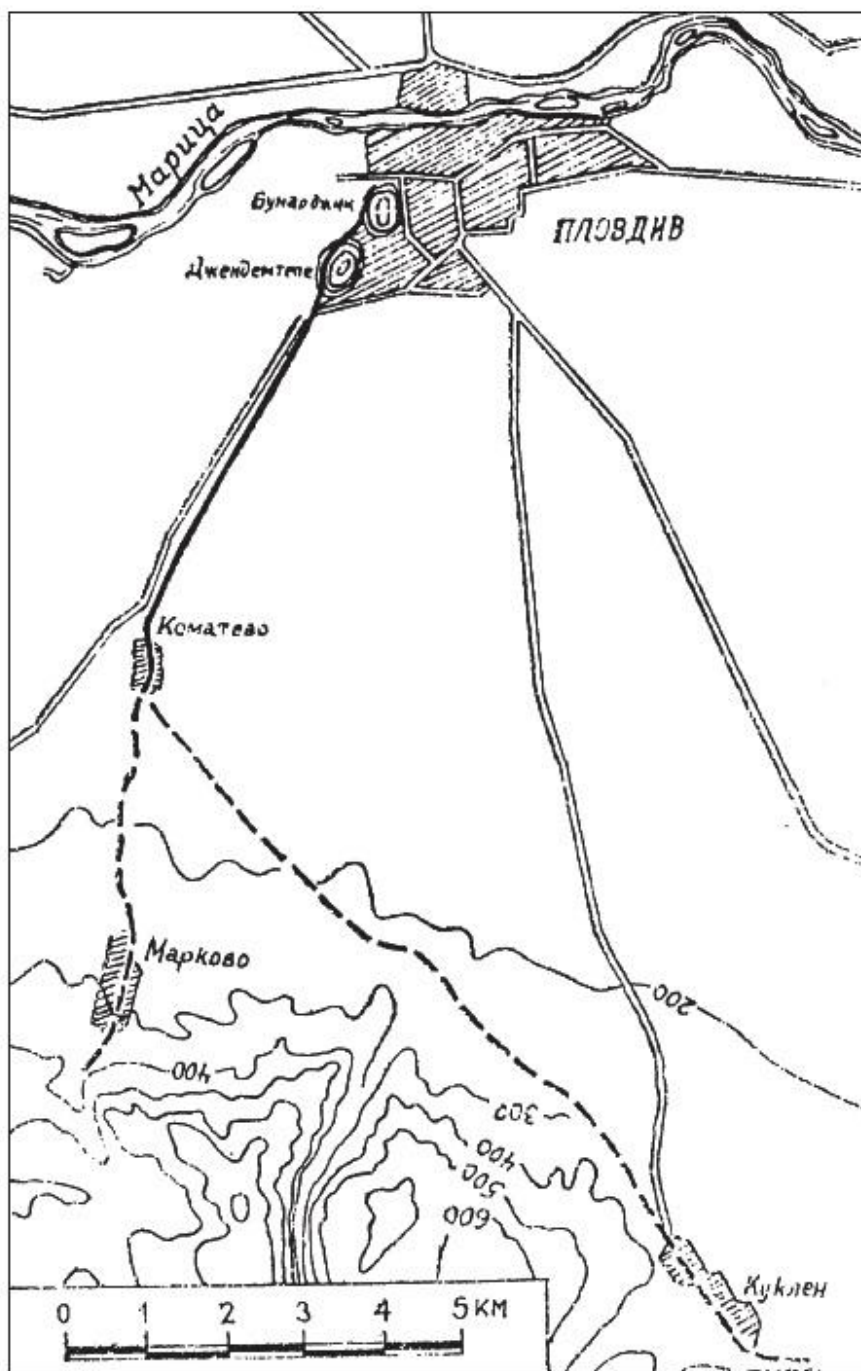


Fig. 9. Water sources at Kuklen and Markovo and the course of the aqueducts (Цончев 1938)

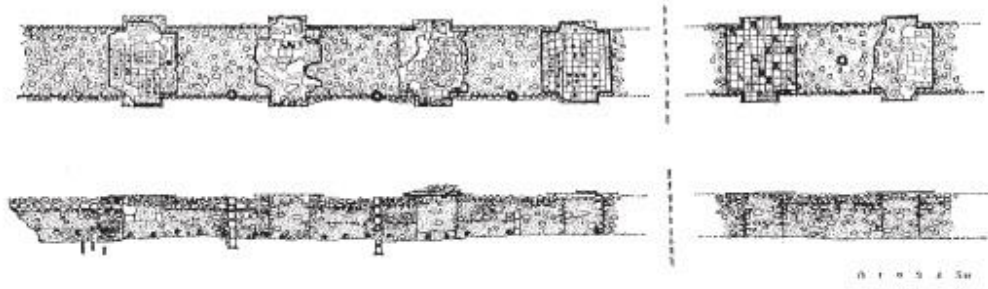


Fig. 10. Philippopolis: Arcaded aqueduct pillars (Кесякова 1983)

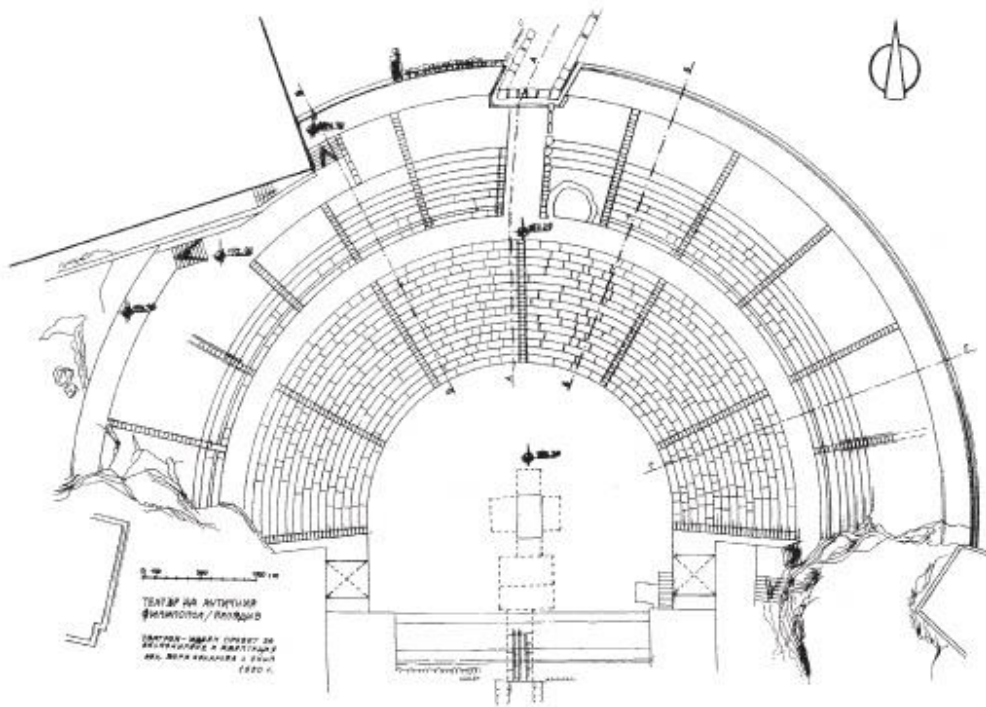


Fig. 11. Philippopolis: Theatre (Vagalinski 2002)

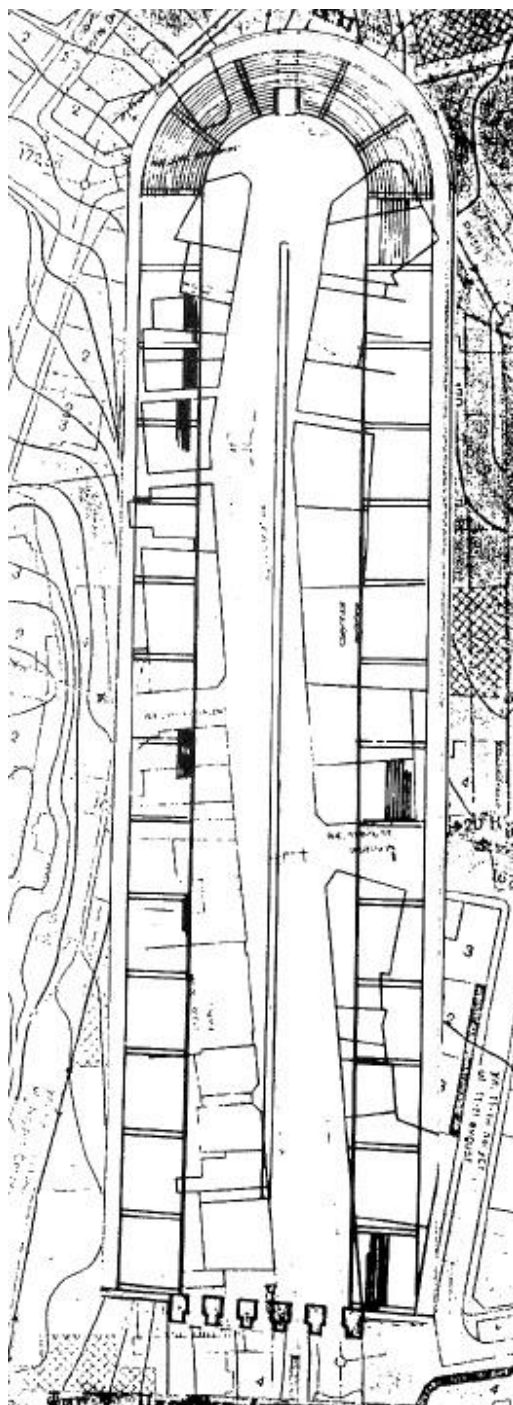


Fig. 12. Philippopolis: Stadium (Mareev 1993)

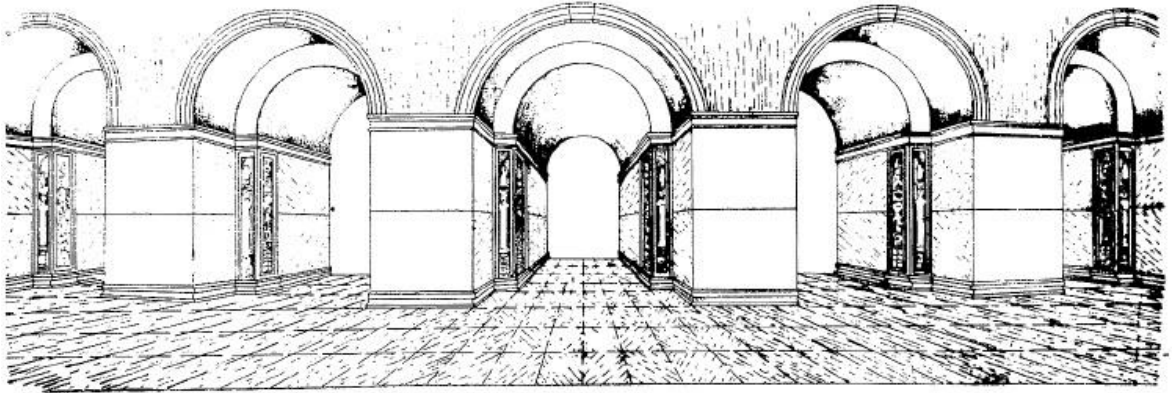


Fig. 13. Philippopolis: Stadium – Proposed south entrance reconstruction (Mareev 1993)

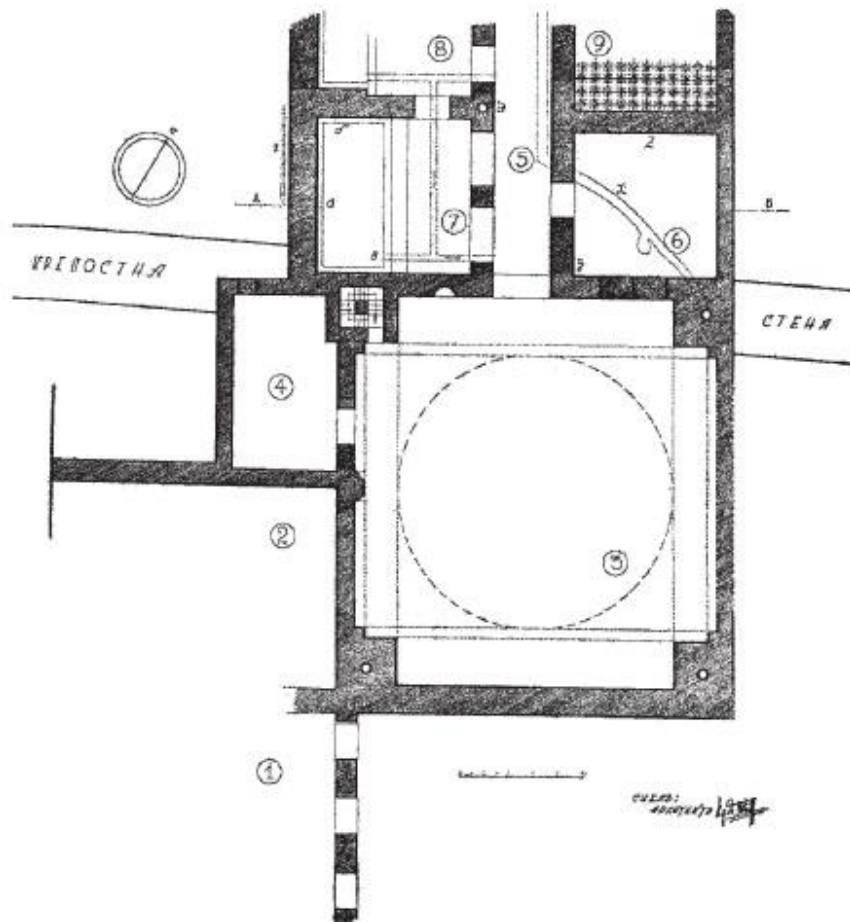


Fig. 14. Philippopolis: Western Baths (Цончев 1940)

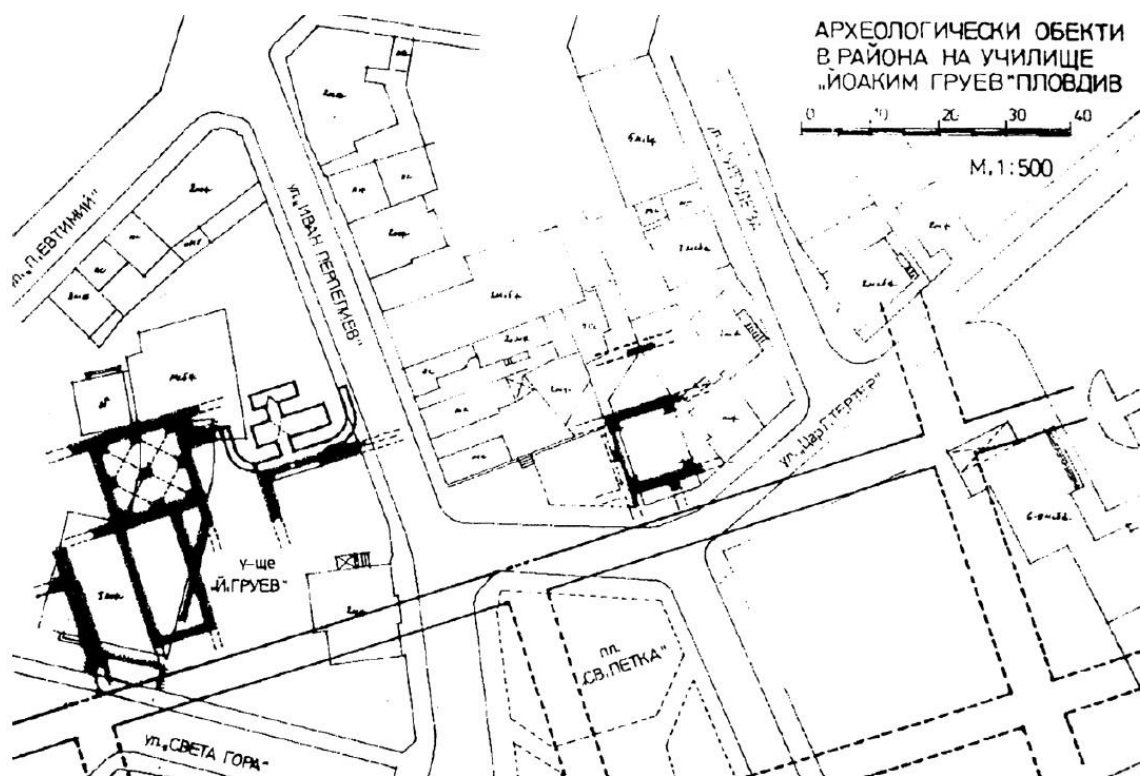


Fig. 15. Philippopolis: Eastern Baths (Bospatchieva 2002)

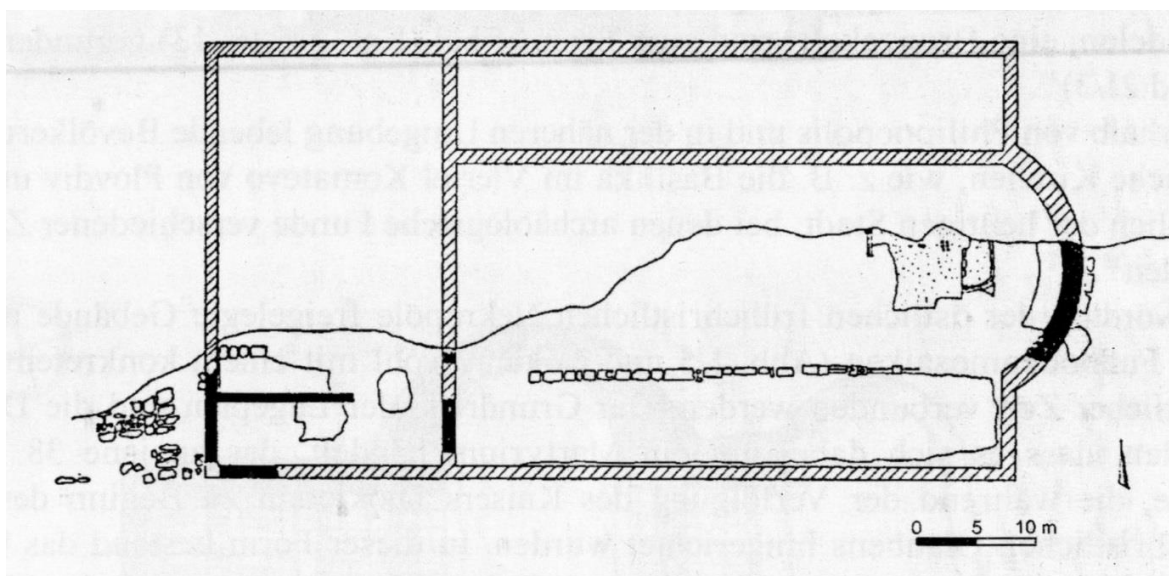


Fig. 16. Philippopolis: Episcopal Basilica (Bospačieva 2005)

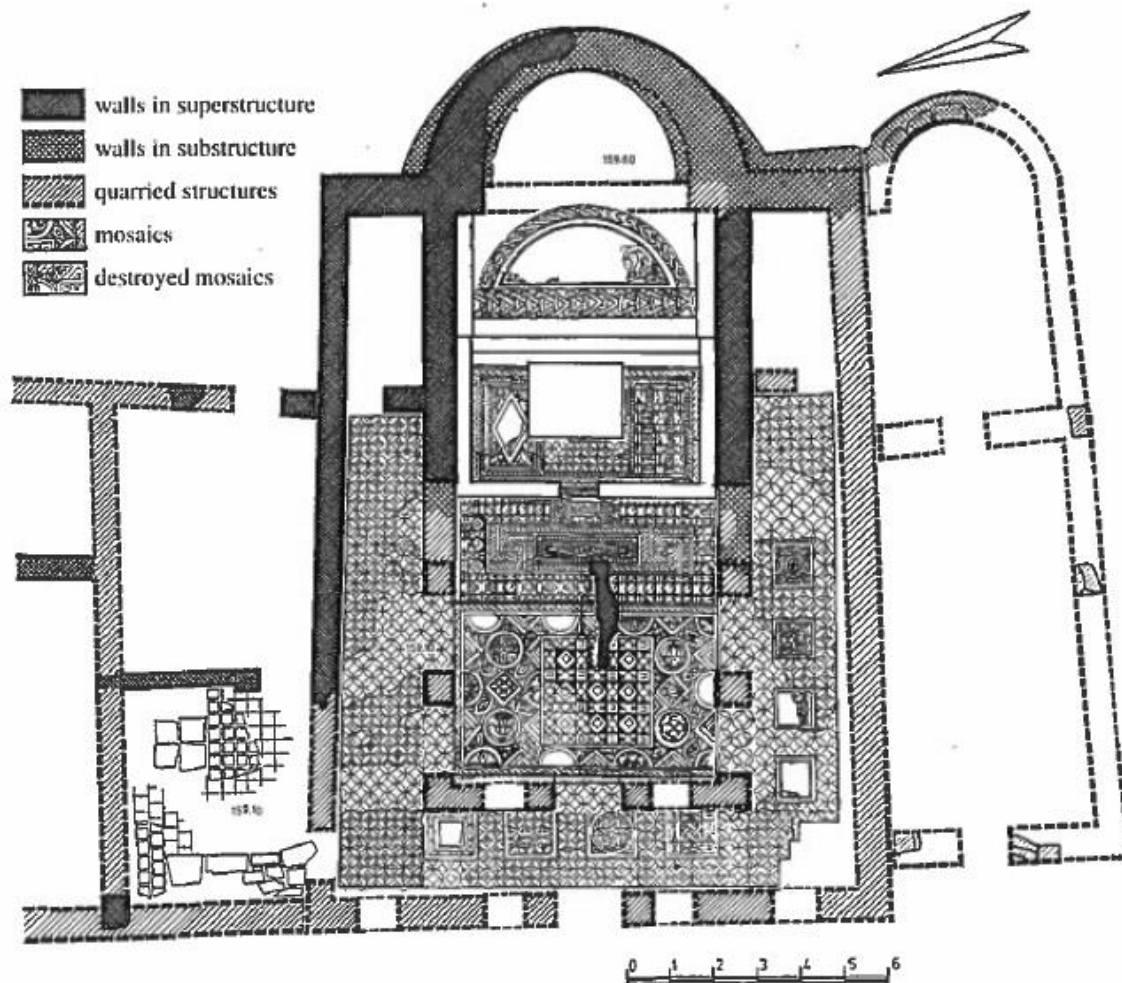


Fig. 17. Philippopolis: Small Basilica – First Phase (Bospachieva 2002)

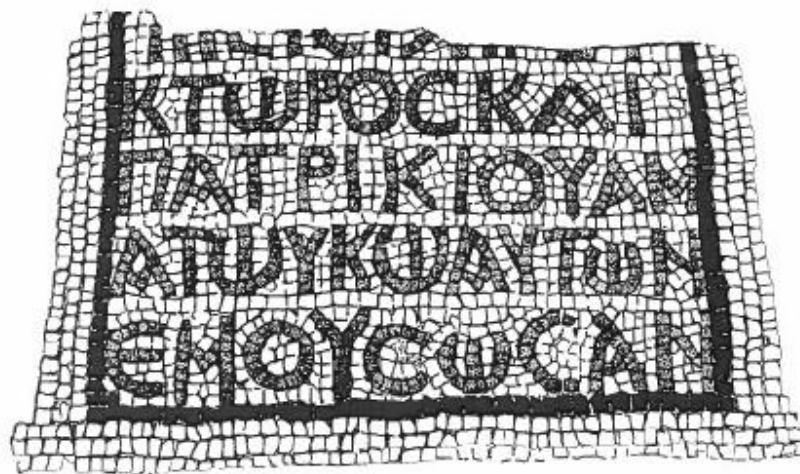


Fig. 18. Philippopolis: Small Basilica – Dedicatory inscription (Gerassimova 2002)

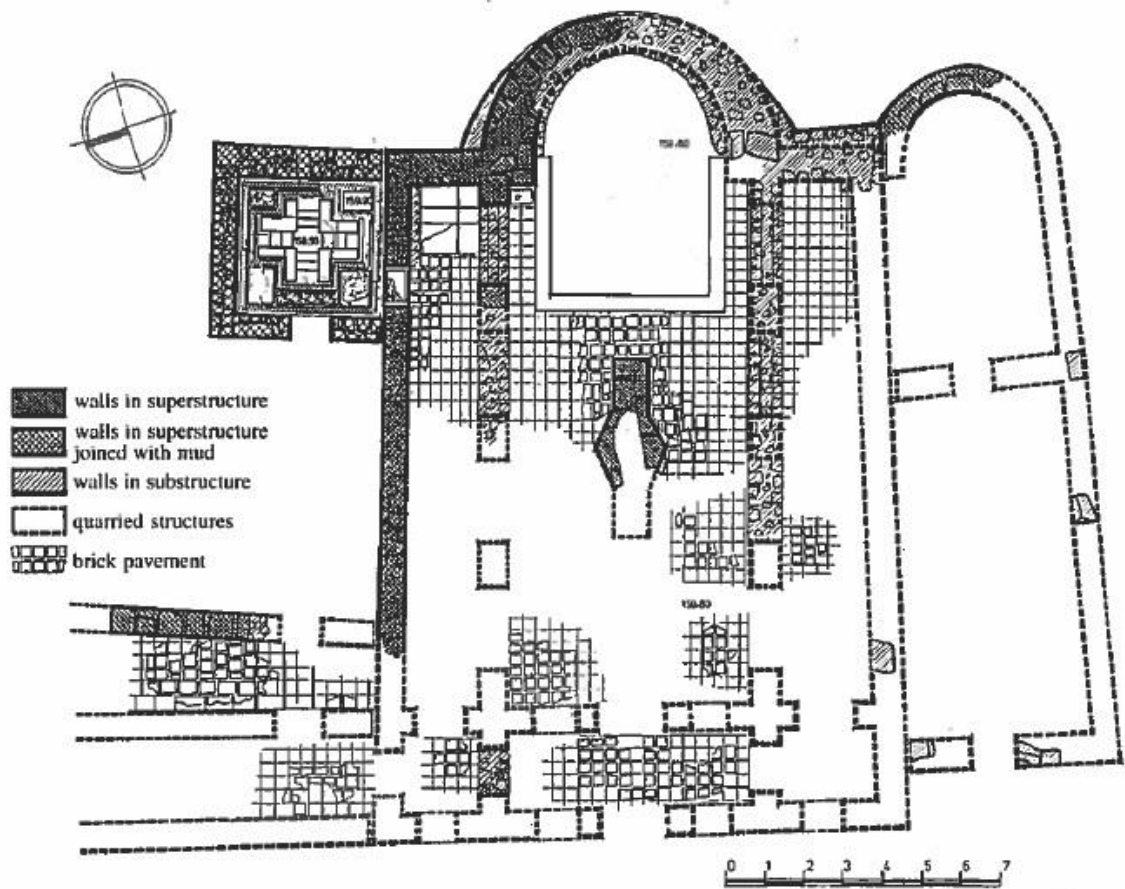


Fig. 19. Philippopolis: Small Basilica – Second Phase (Bospachieva 2002)

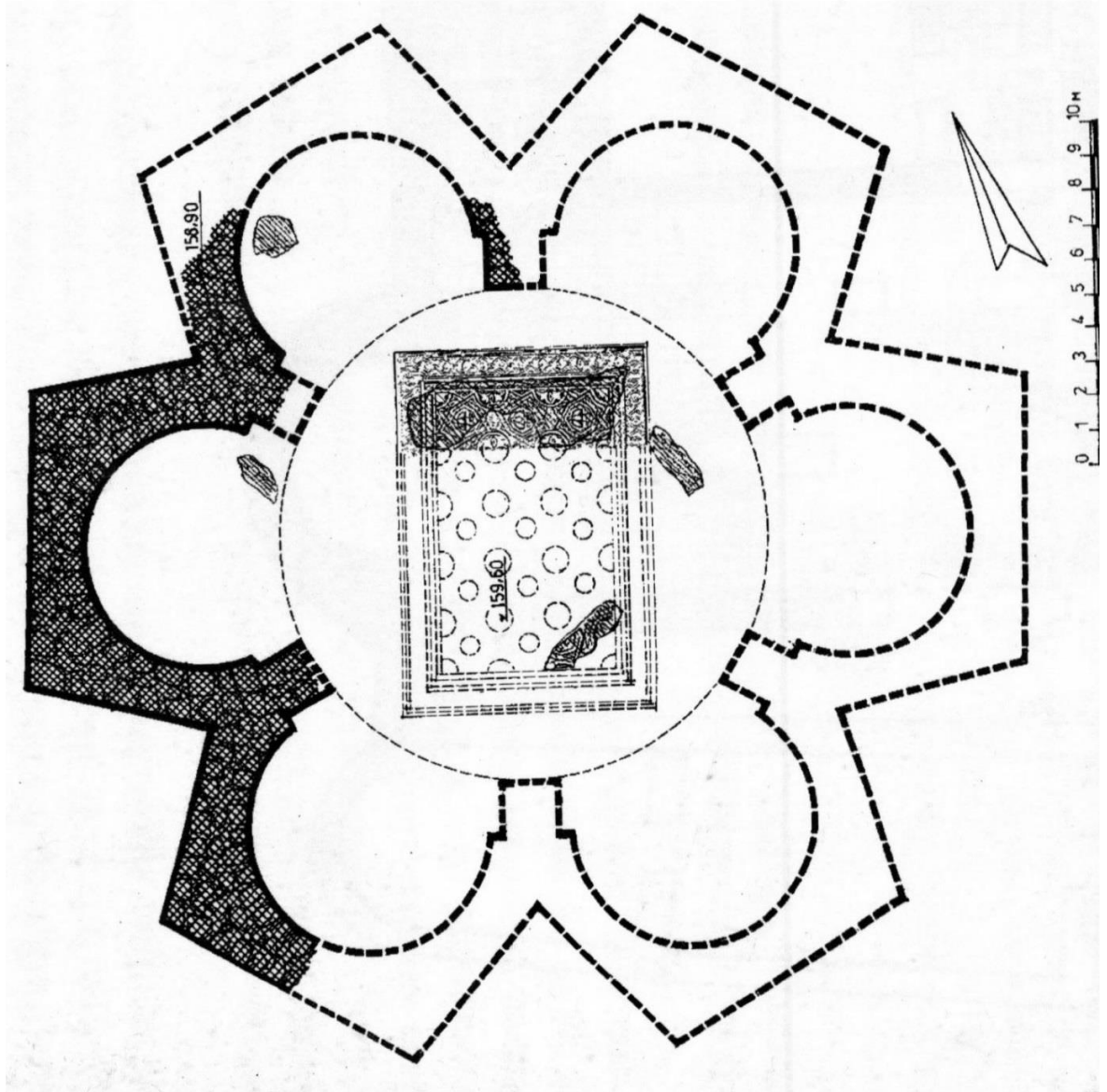


Fig. 20. Philippopolis: Hexaconch Structure (Bospačieva 2005)

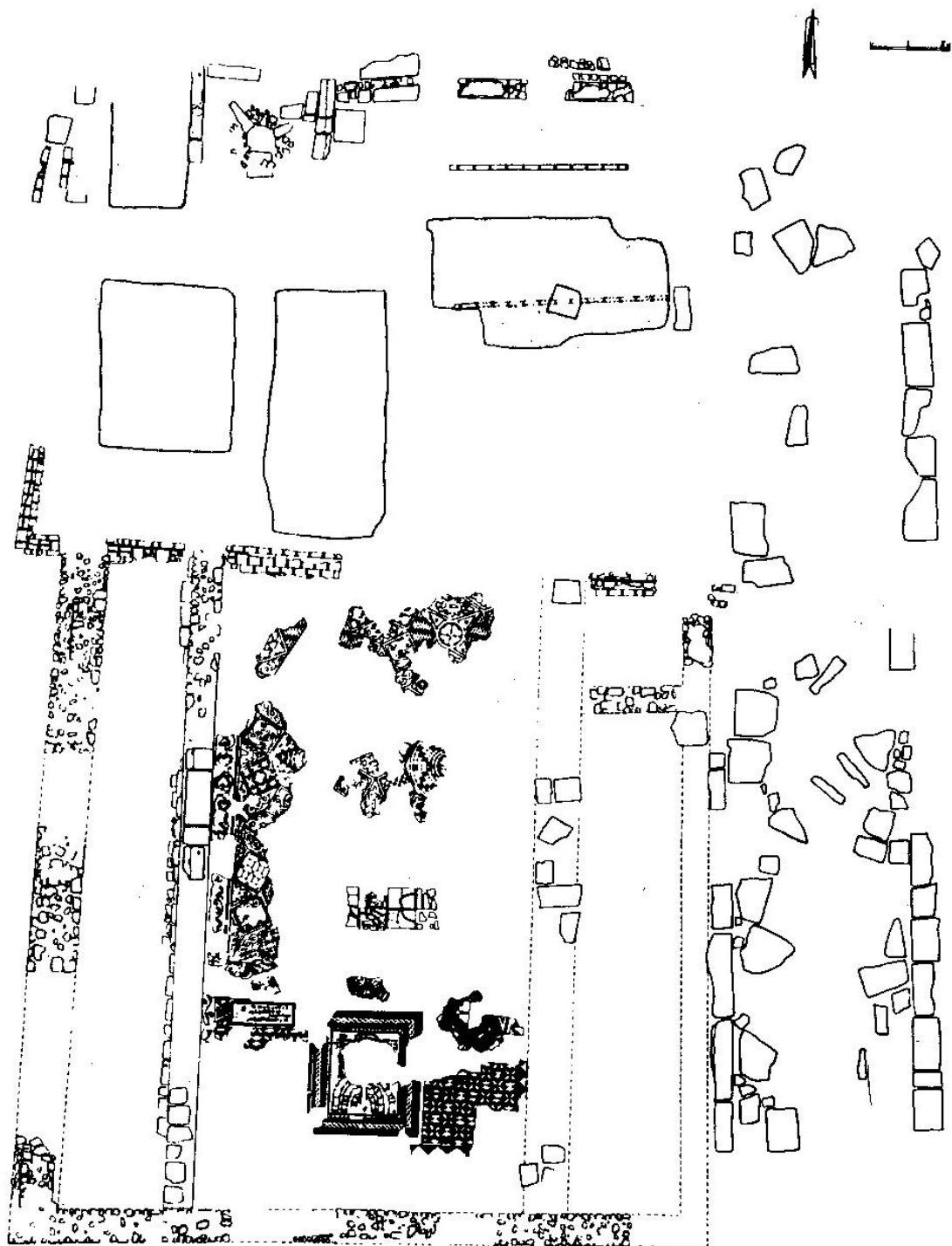


Fig. 21. Philirropolis: Synagogue (Кесякова 1989)

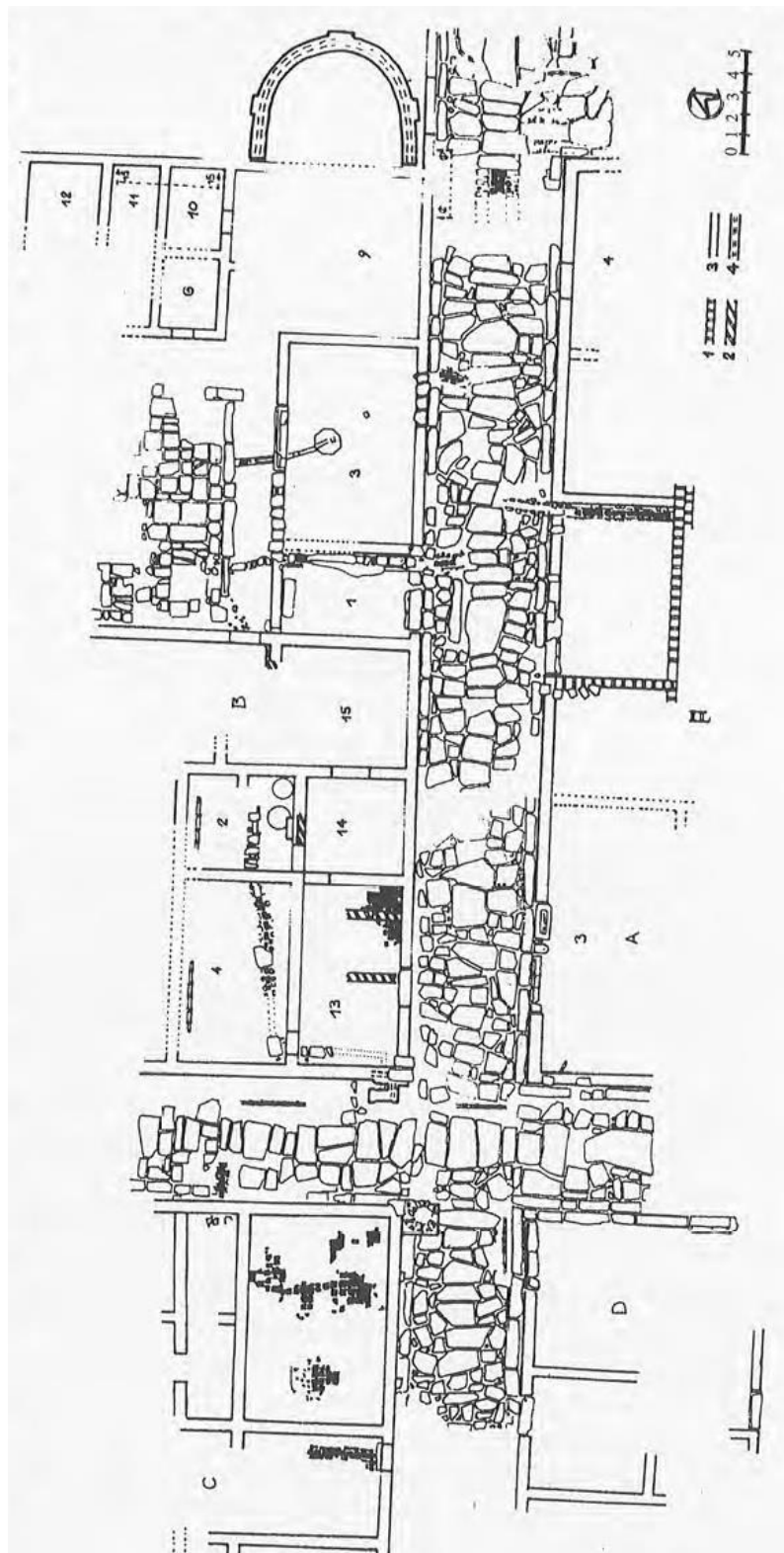


Fig. 22. Philippopolis: Eirene Building (Bospachieva 2003)

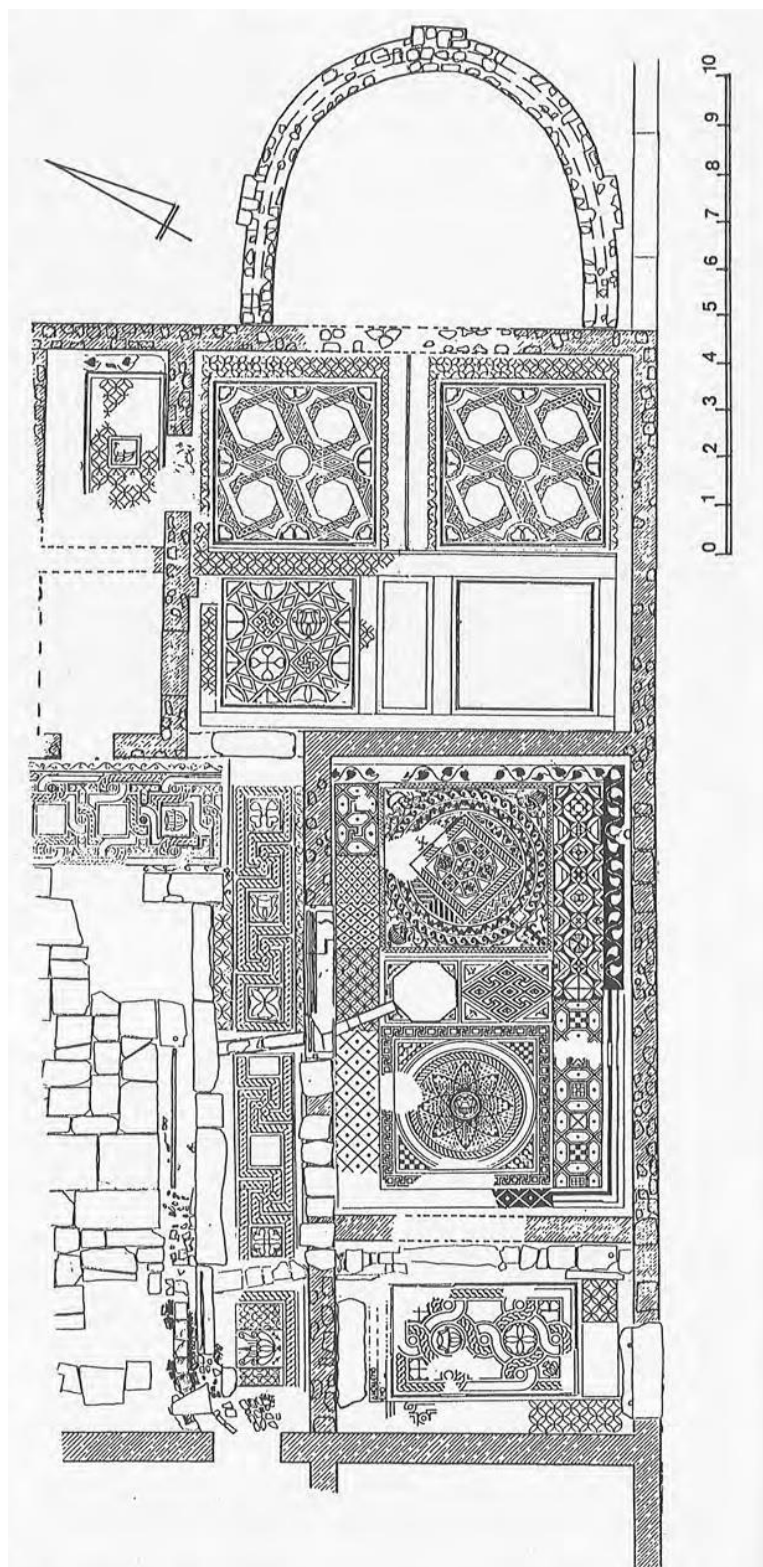


Fig. 23. Philippopolis: Eirene Building – Residential quarter (Bospachieva 2003)

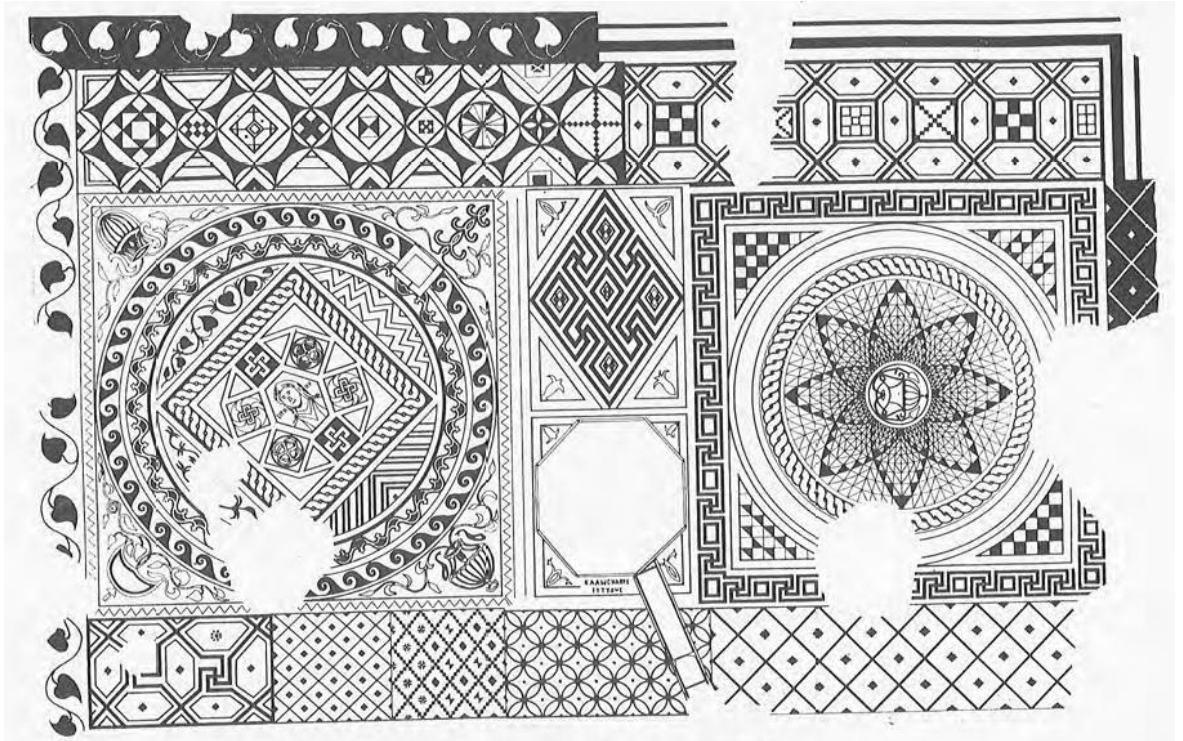


Fig. 24. Philippopolis: Eirene Building – Room 3 (Bospachieva 2003)

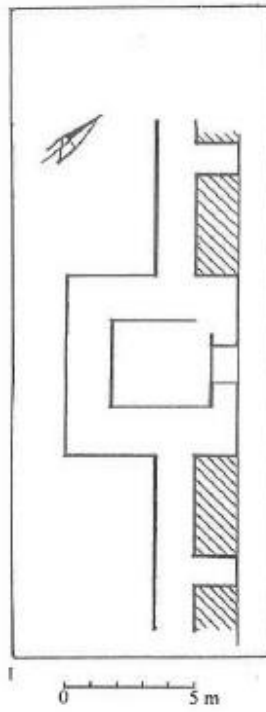


Fig. 27. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Square tower – First fortification phase (Kaltschev 1998)

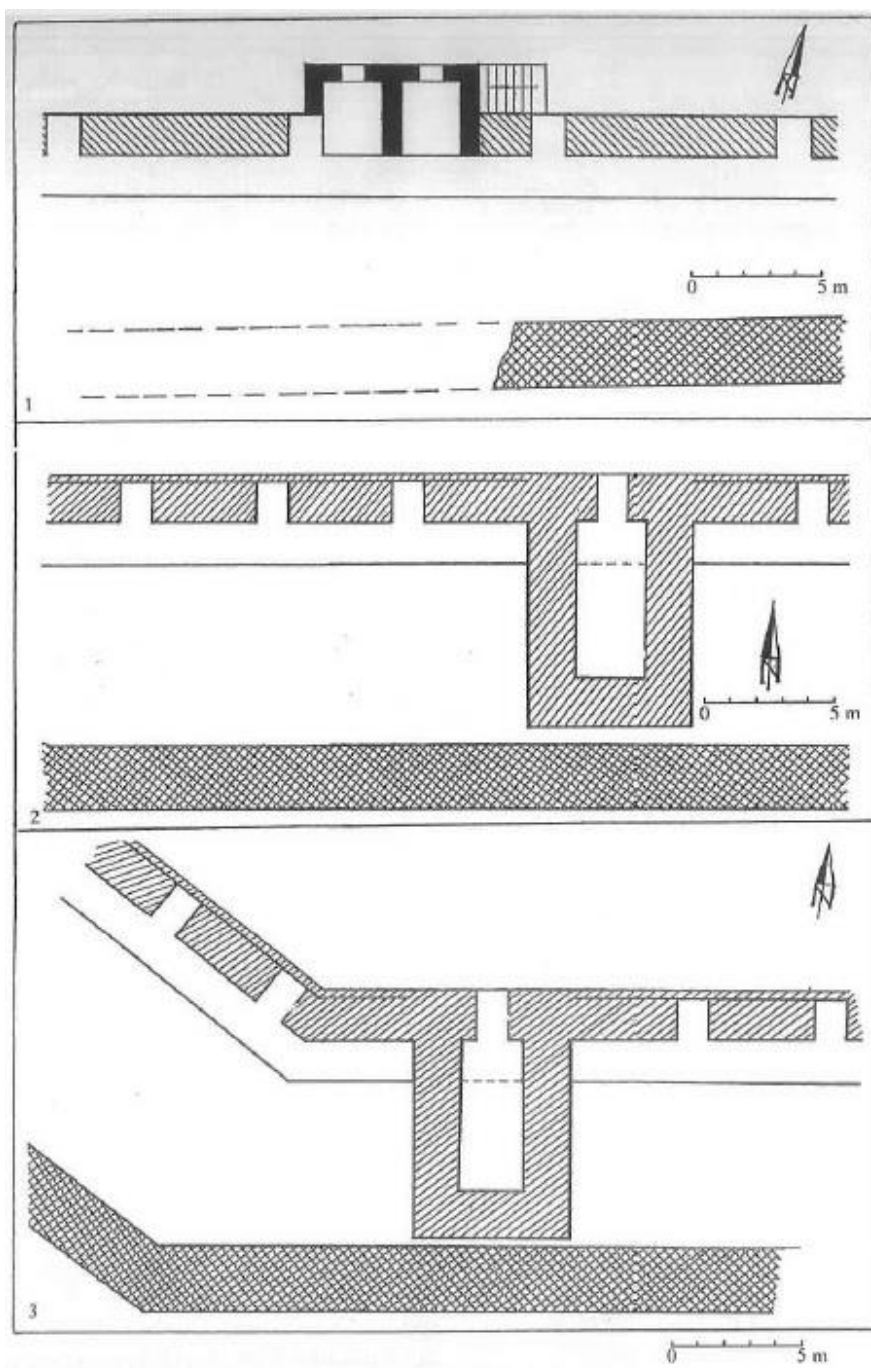


Fig. 28. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Towers – Second fortification phase (Kaltschev 1998)

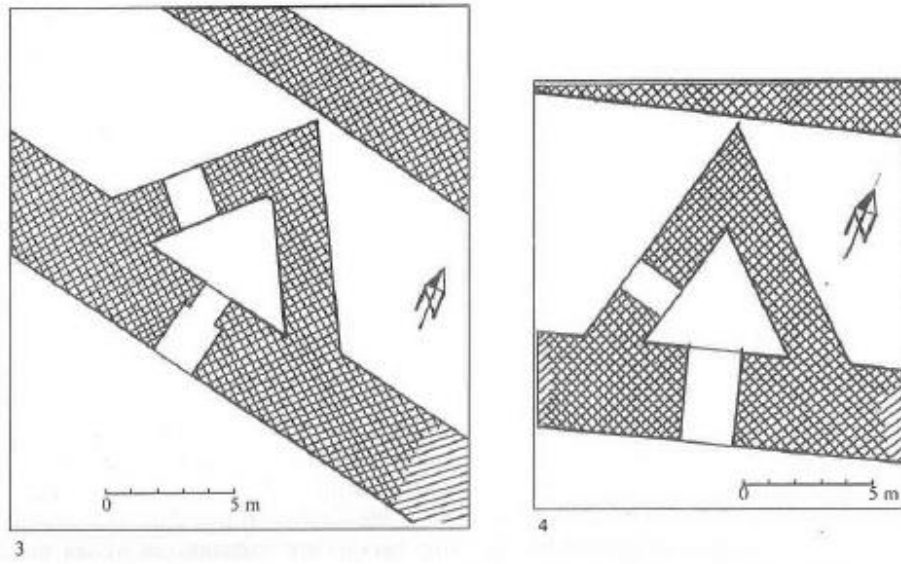


Fig. 29. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Triangular towers – Third fortification phase (Kaltschev 1998)

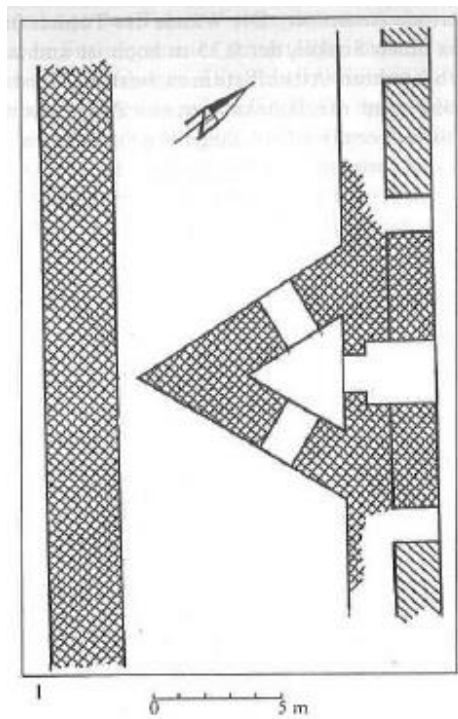


Fig. 30. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Three fortification phases (Kaltschev 1998)

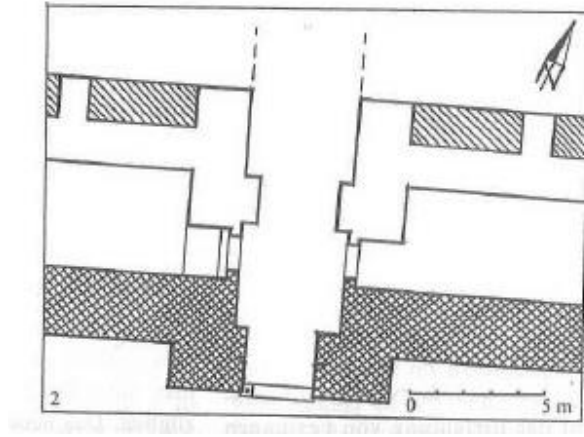


Fig. 31. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: South Gate (Kaltschev 1998)

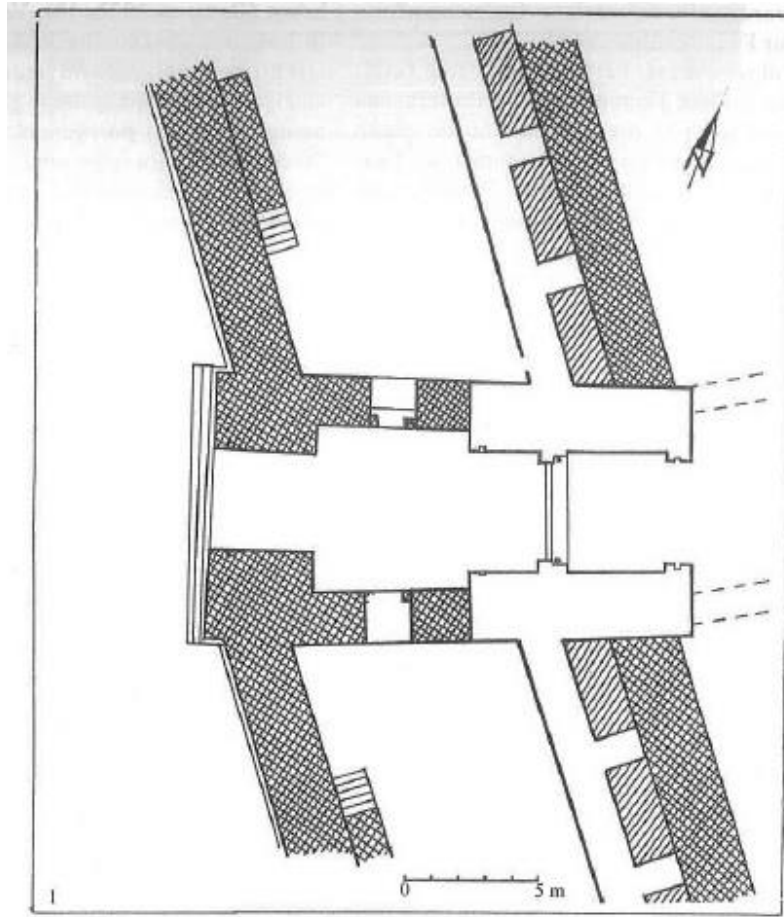
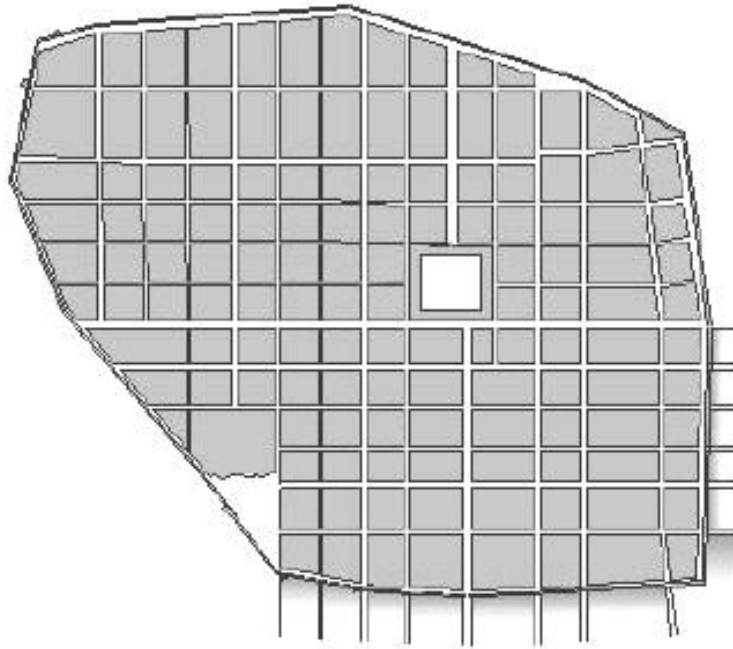


Fig. 32. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: West Gate (Kaltshev 1998)



АВГУСТА ТРАЯНА

Fig. 33. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Proposed forum/agora location (Popova 2012)

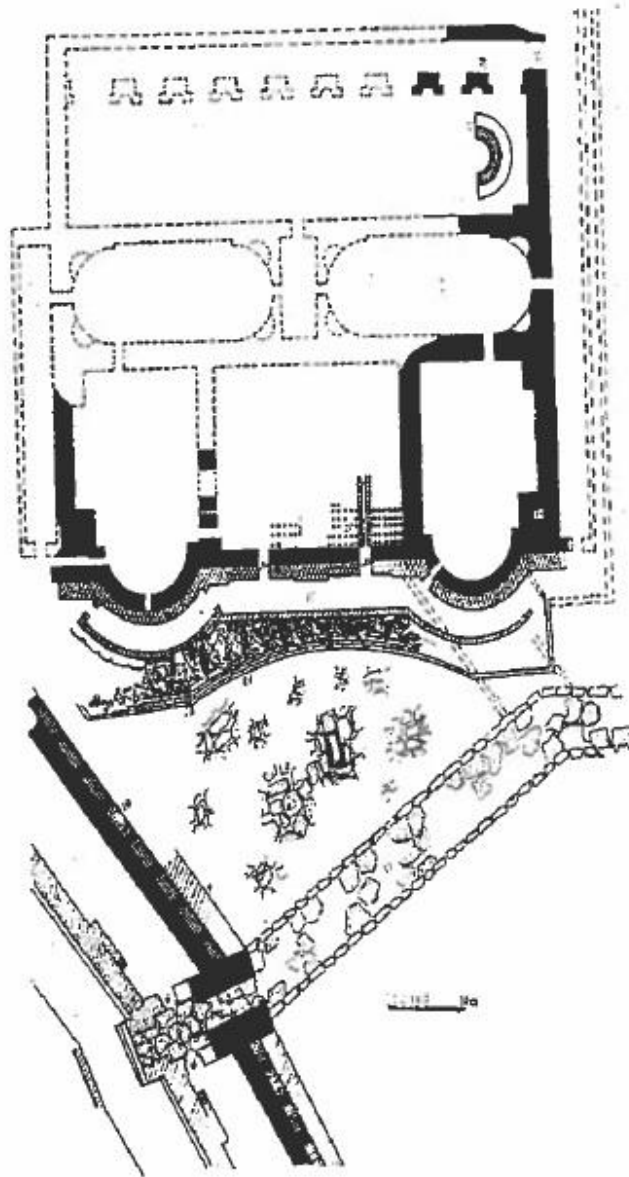


Fig. 34. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Piazza adjacent to the West Gate and the baths (Ivanov 2012)

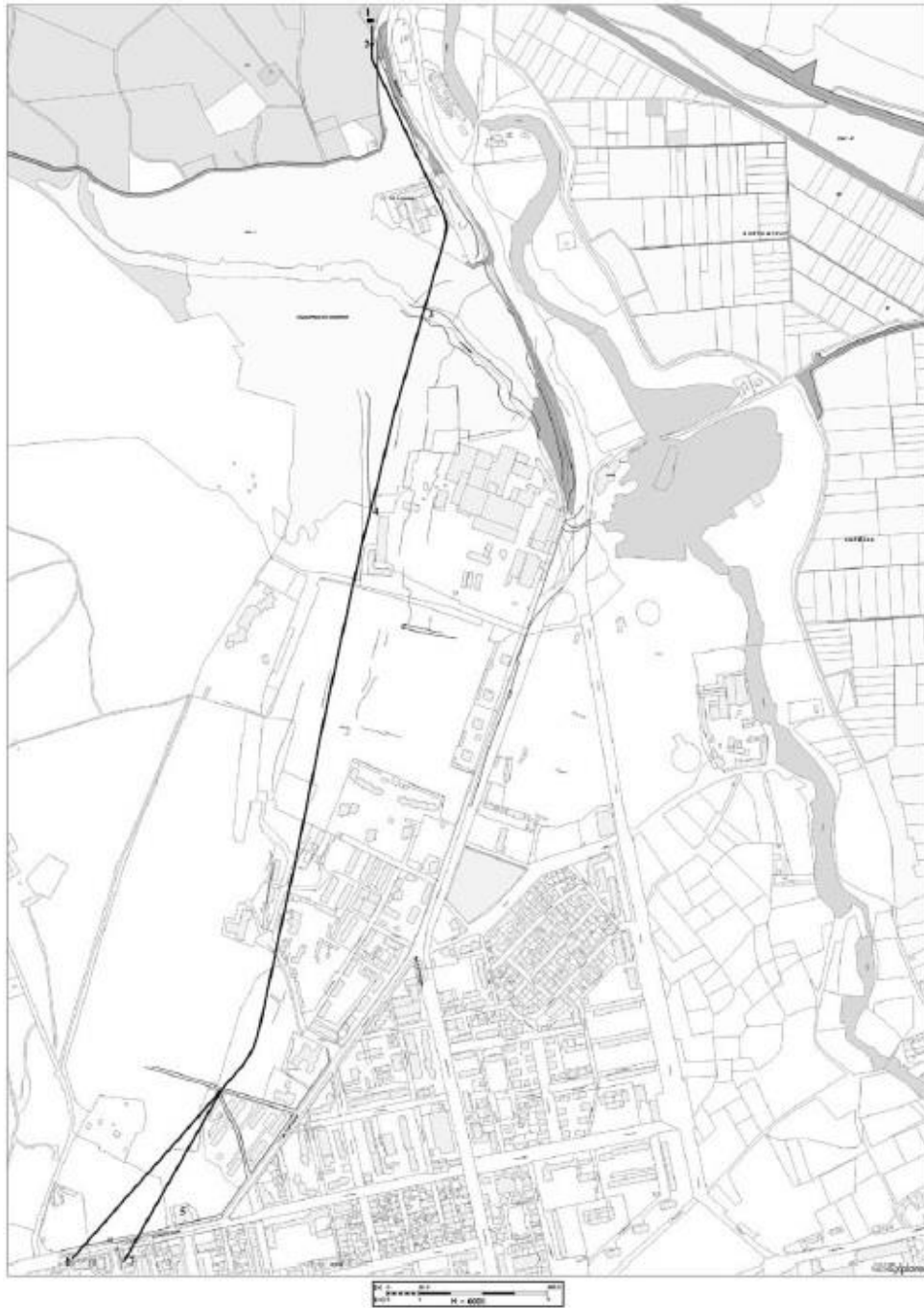


Fig. 35. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Water supply system (Kamisheva 2015)

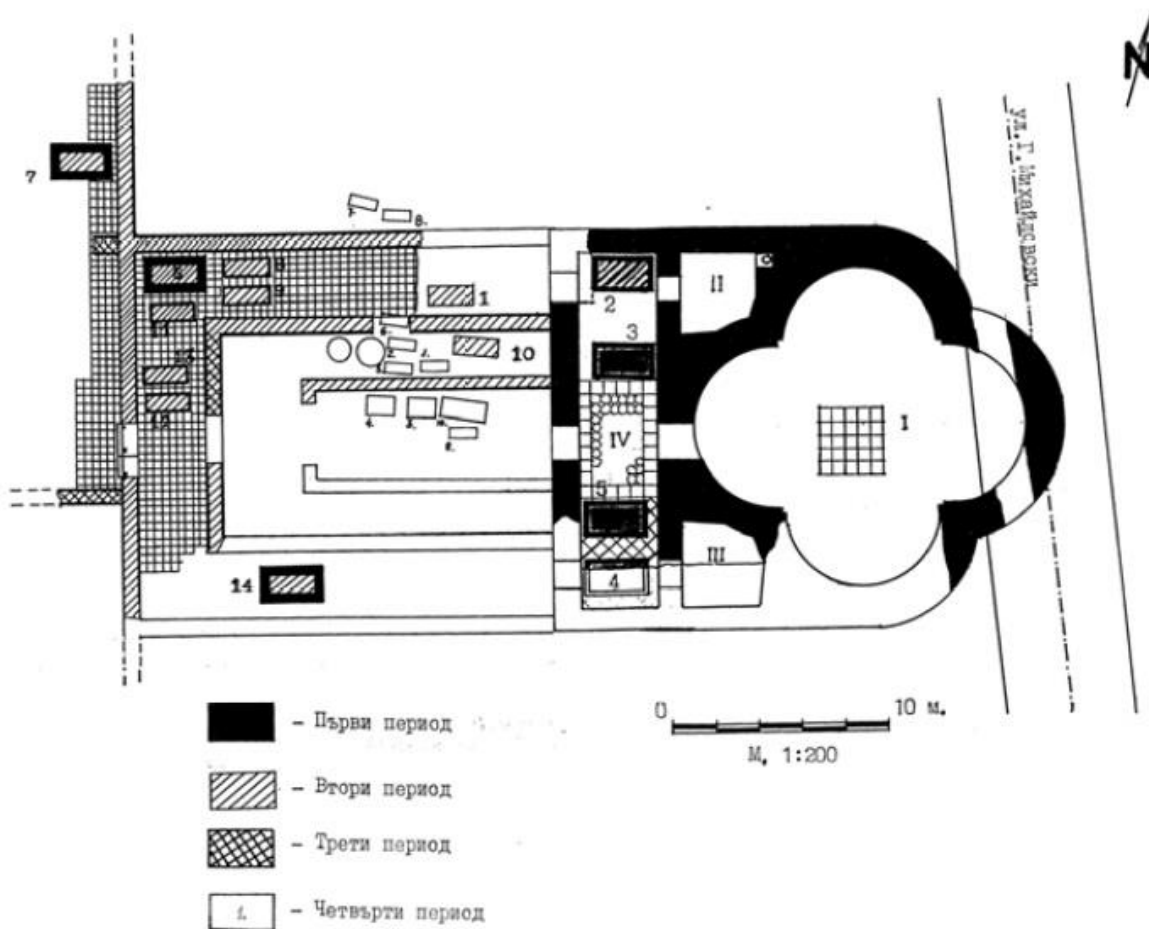


Fig. 36. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Martyrium (Николов & Калчев 1992)

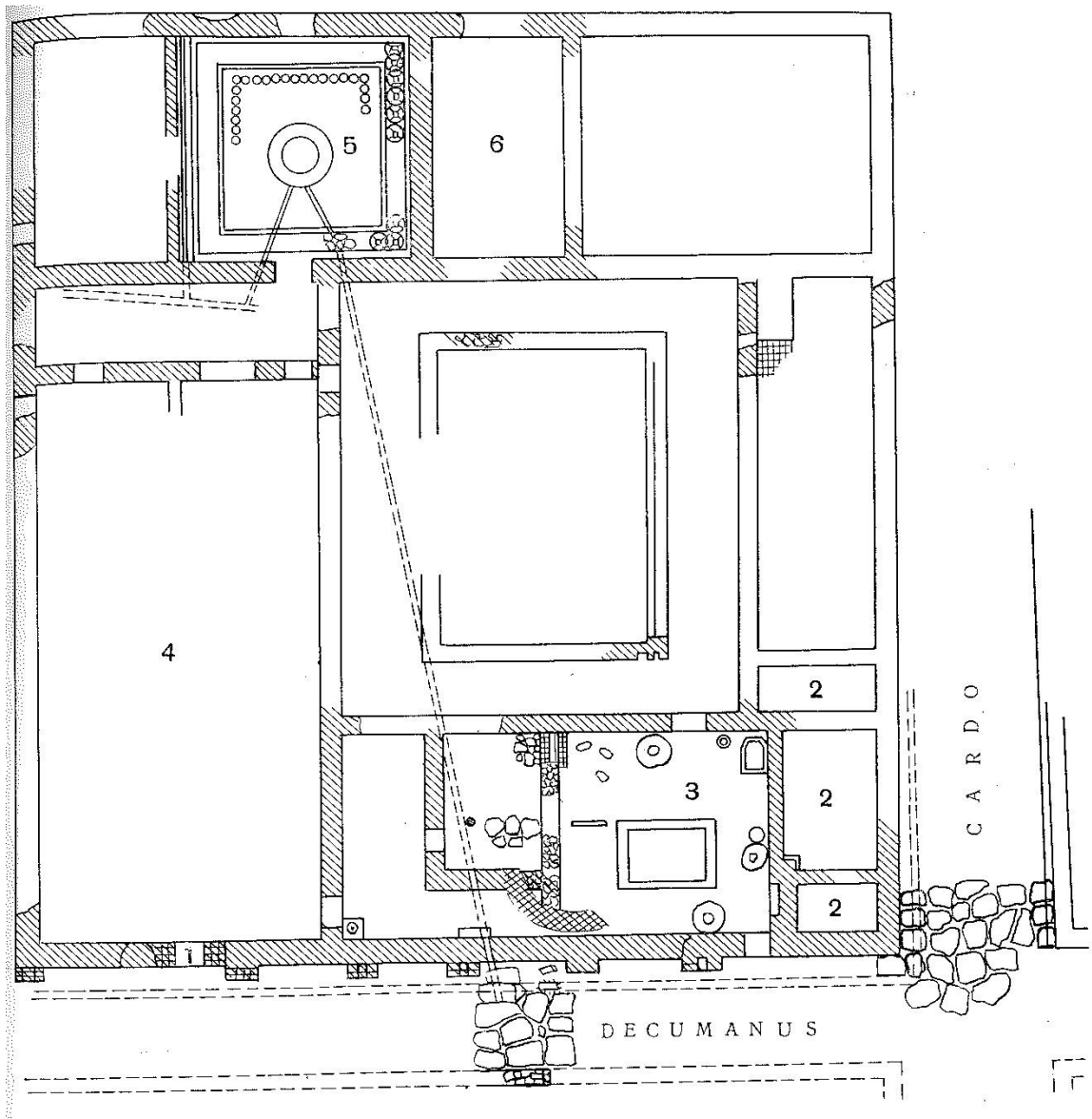


Fig. 37. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Stoletov Building (Николов 1965)

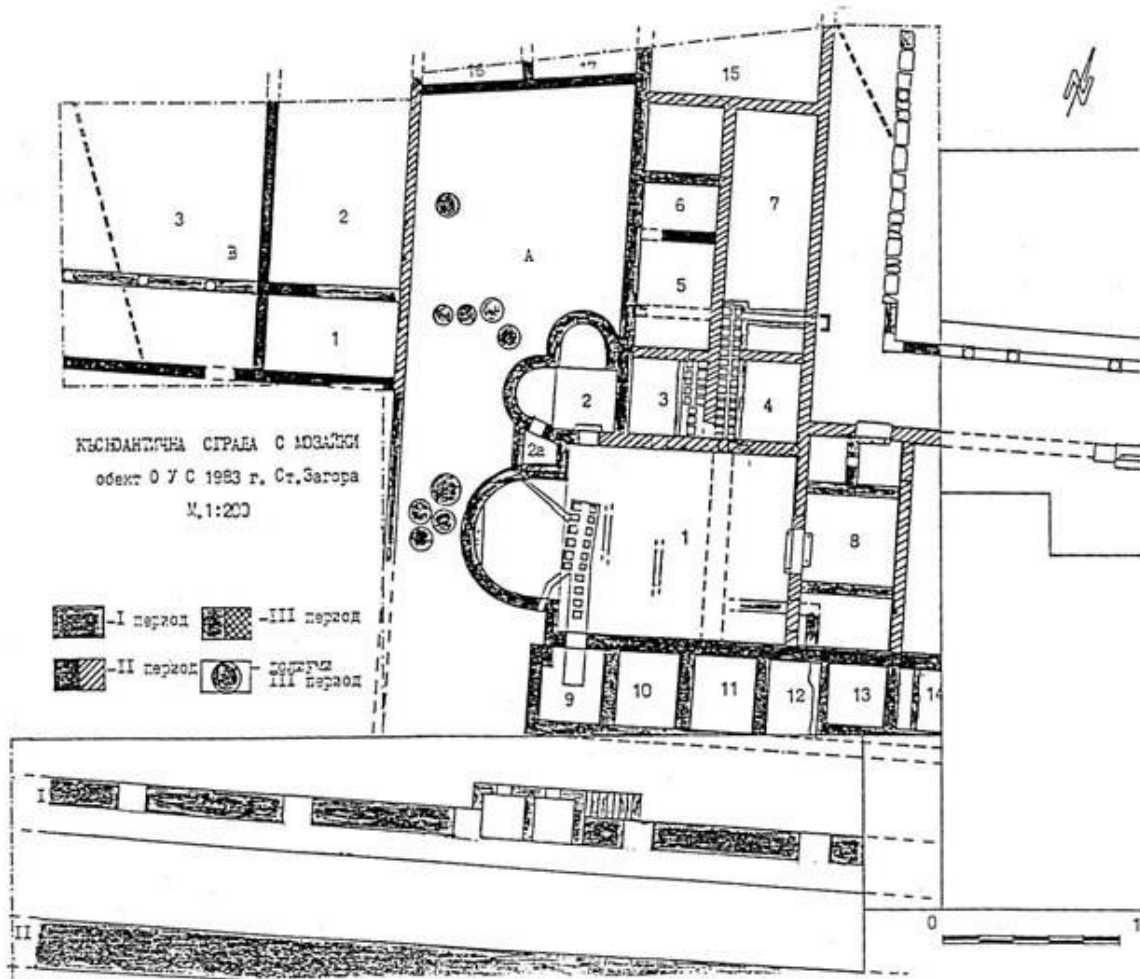


Fig. 38. Augusta Traiana-Beroe: Post Office Building (Калчев 1992)

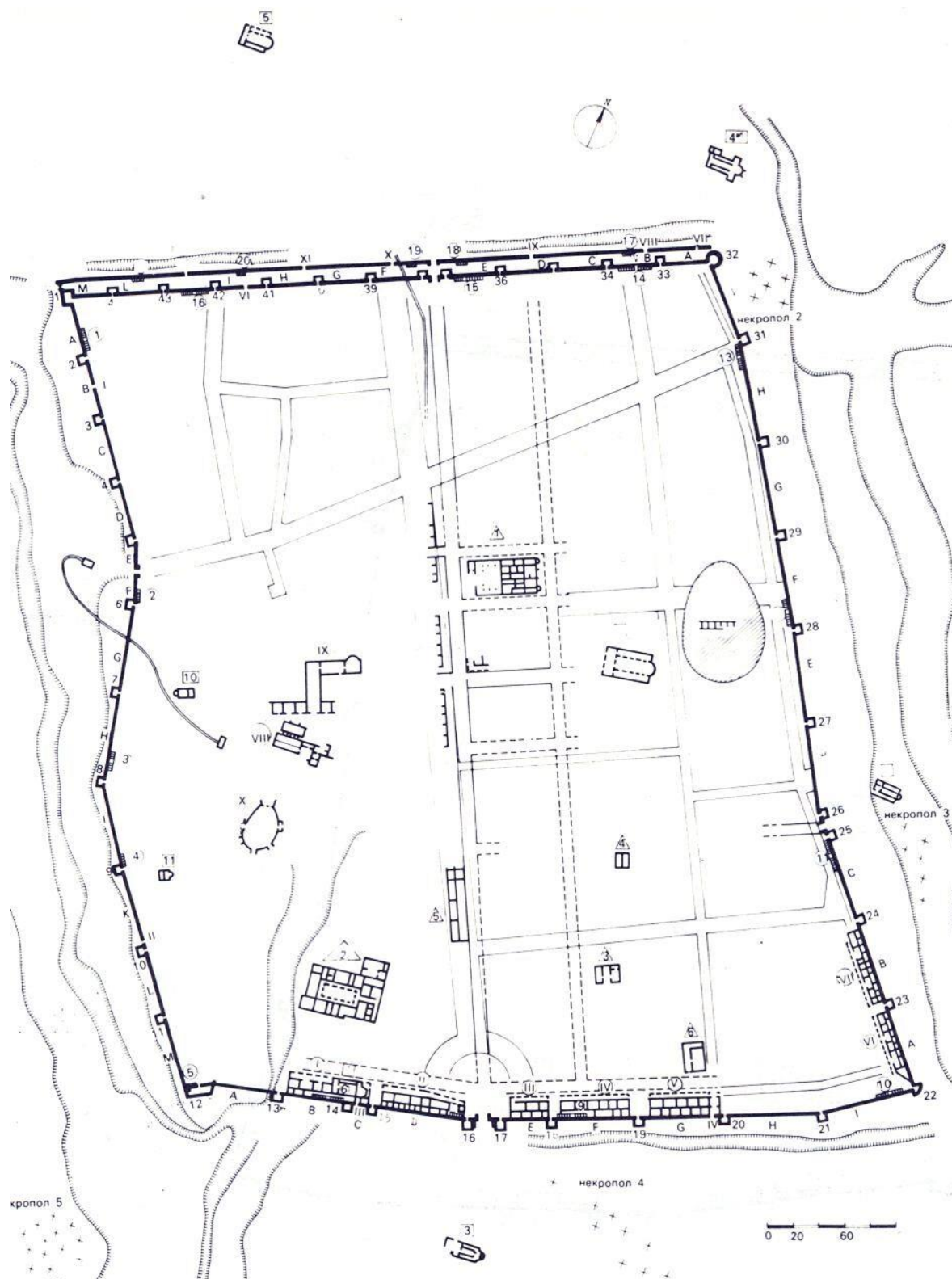


Fig. 39. Diocletianopolis: City plan (Маджаров, К. 1993)

обр. 99. План на казармена сграда III

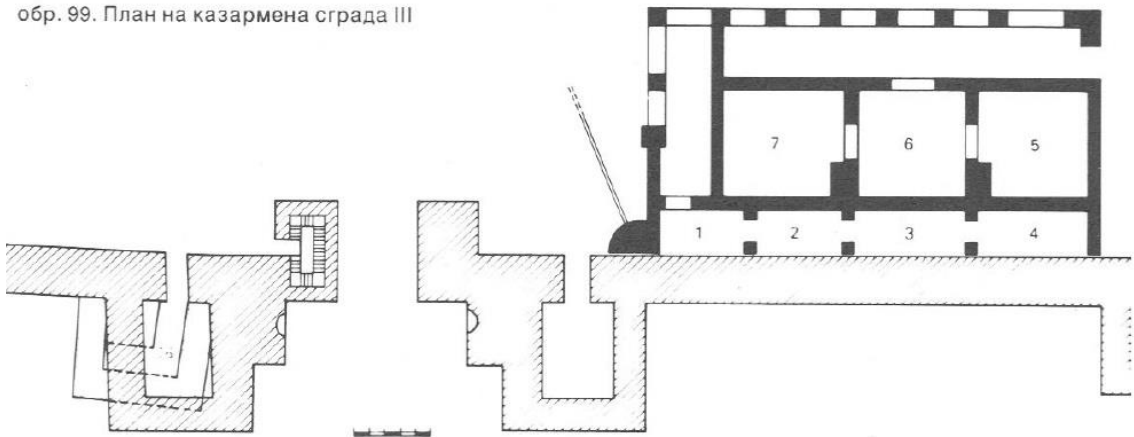


Fig. 40. Diocletianopolis: South Kamilite Gate (Маджаров, К. 1993)

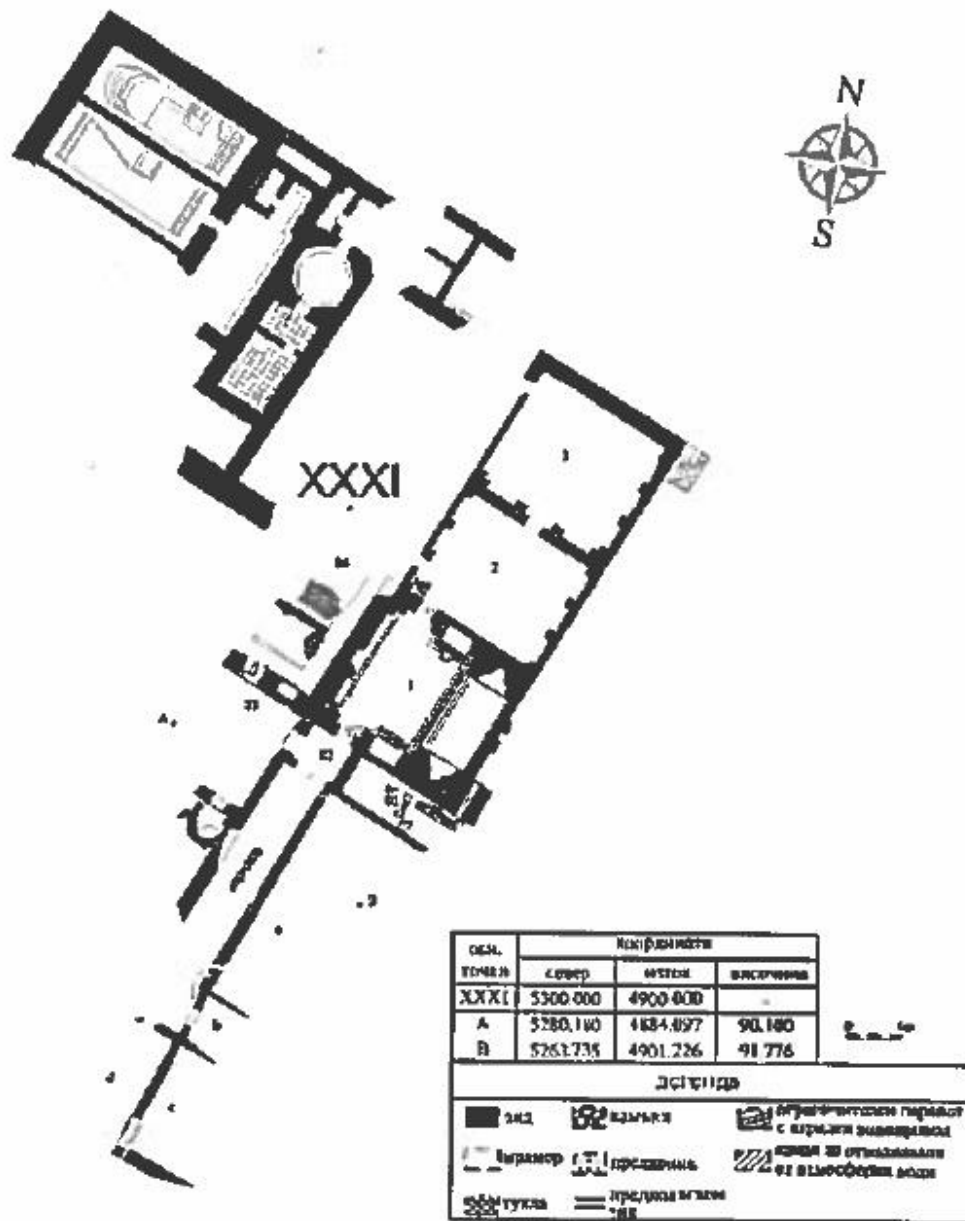


Fig. 41. Diocletianopolis: Severan baths (Madzharov, M. 2012)

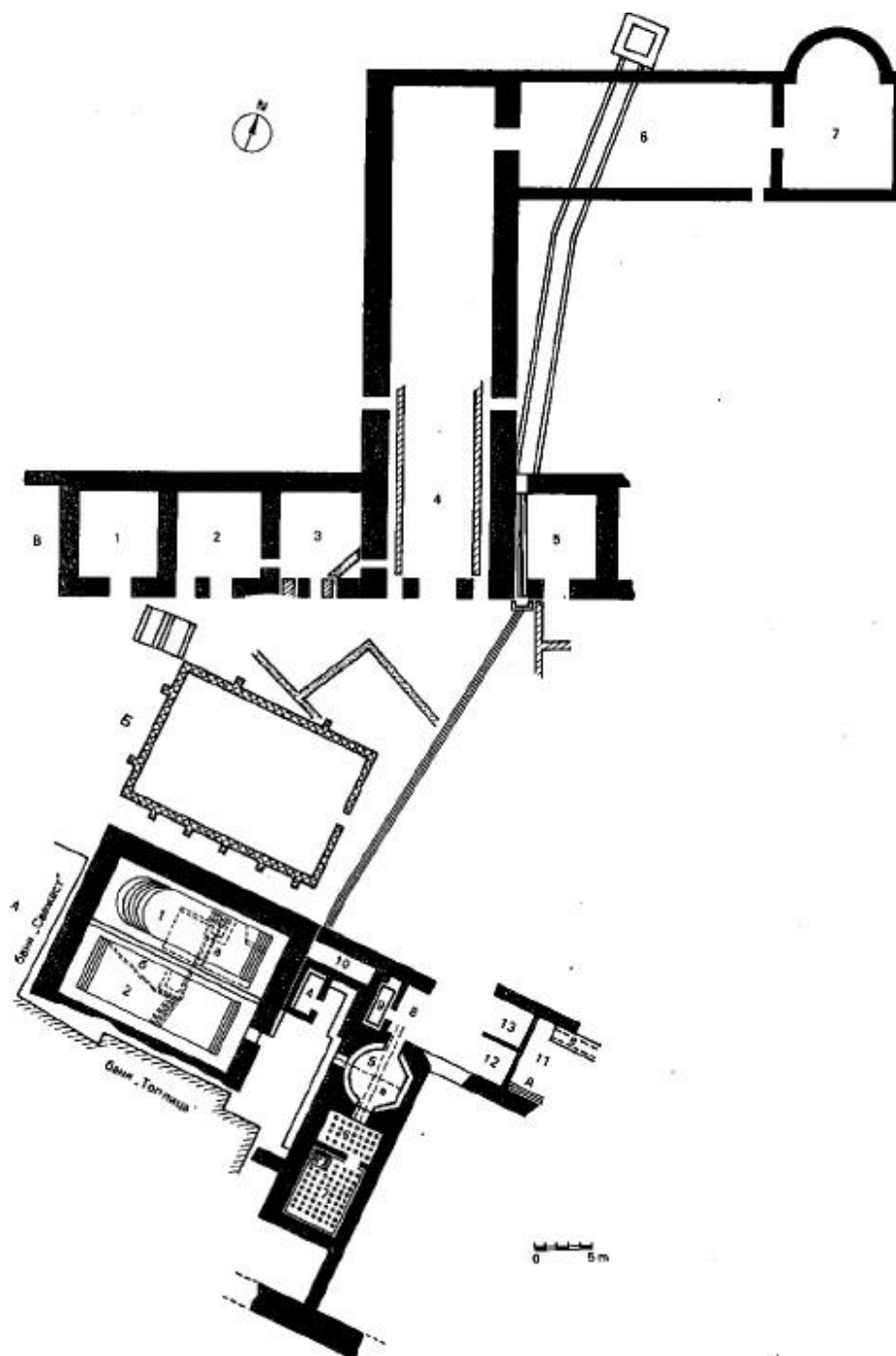


Fig. 42. Diocletianopolis: Late antique baths (Маджаров, К. 1993)

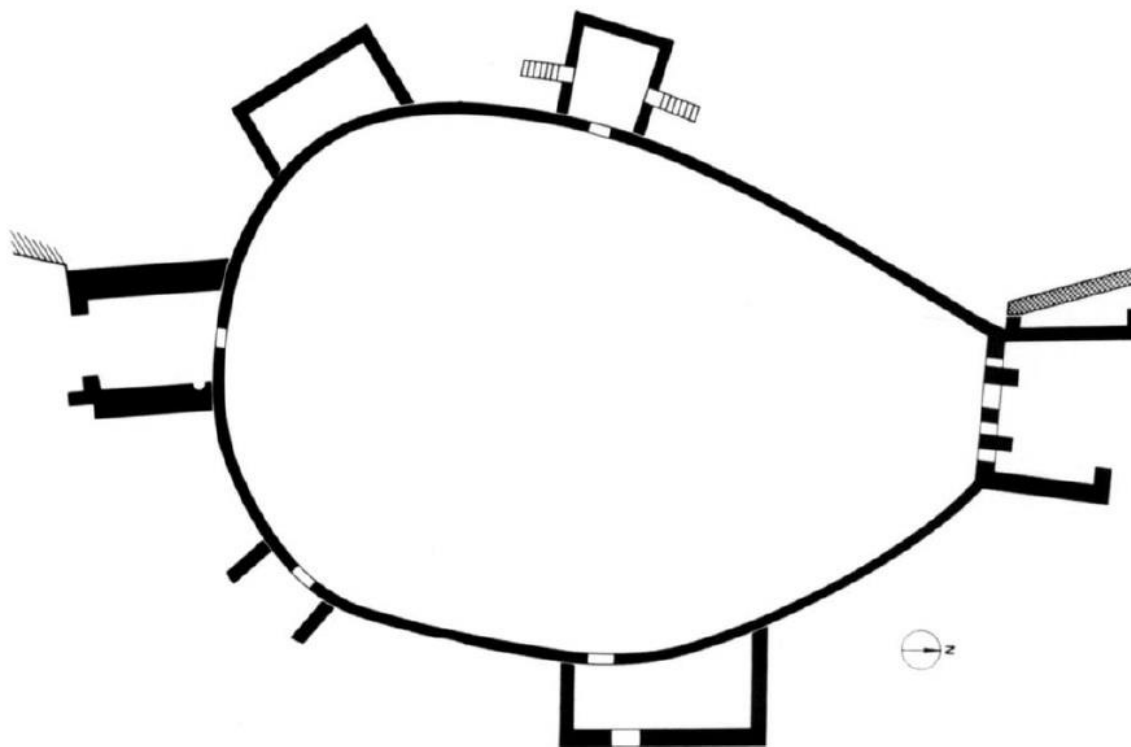


Fig. 43. Diocletianopolis: Amphitheatre (Маджаров, К. 1993)

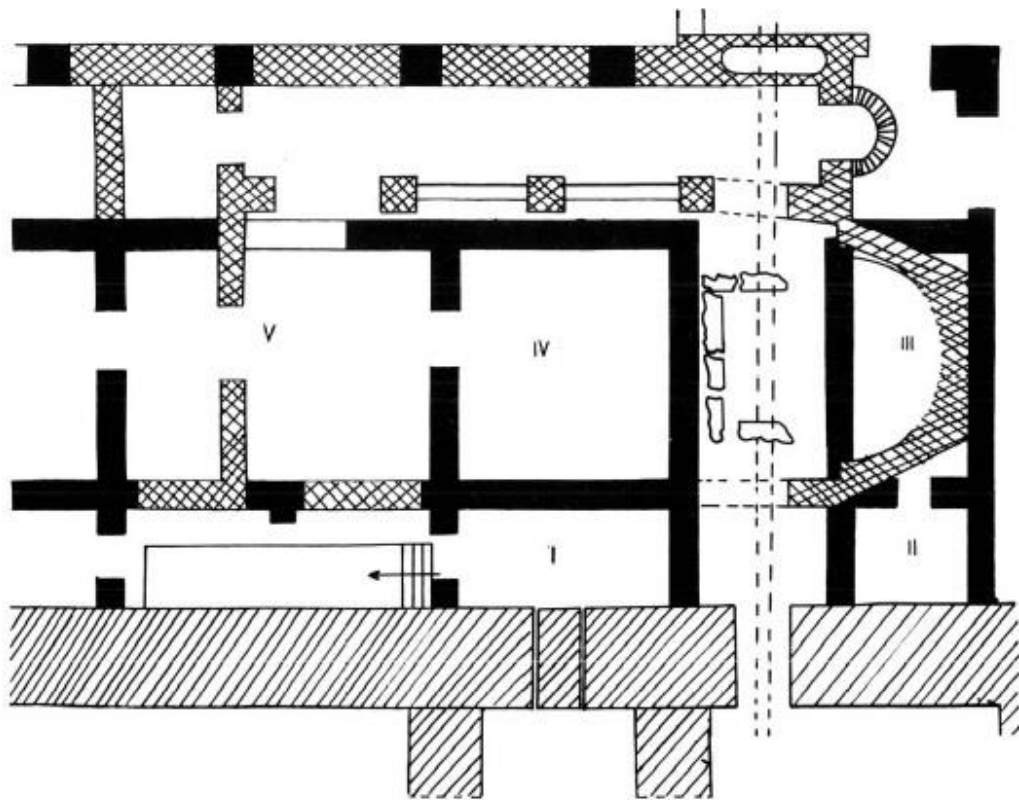


Fig. 44. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 1, built over the remains of a barracks (Madzharov, M. 1989)

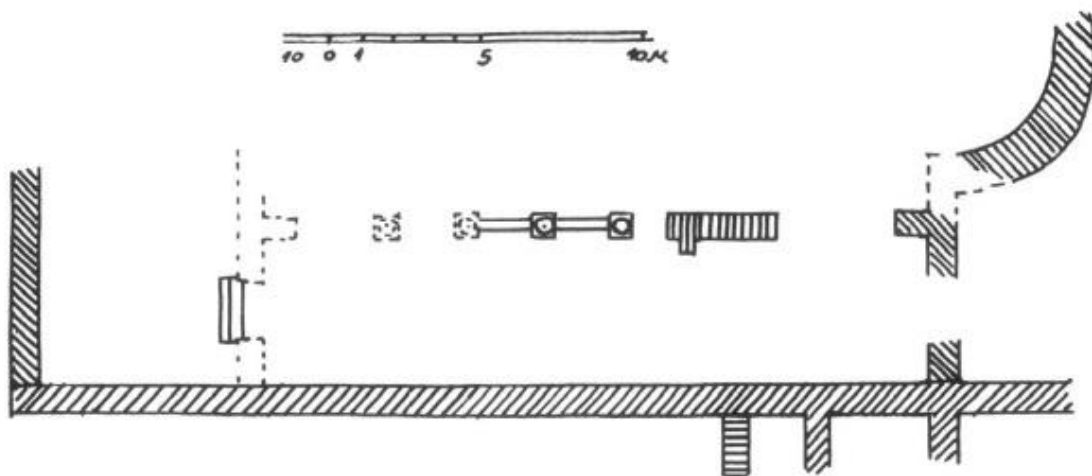


Fig. 5 – Plan de la basilique 2.

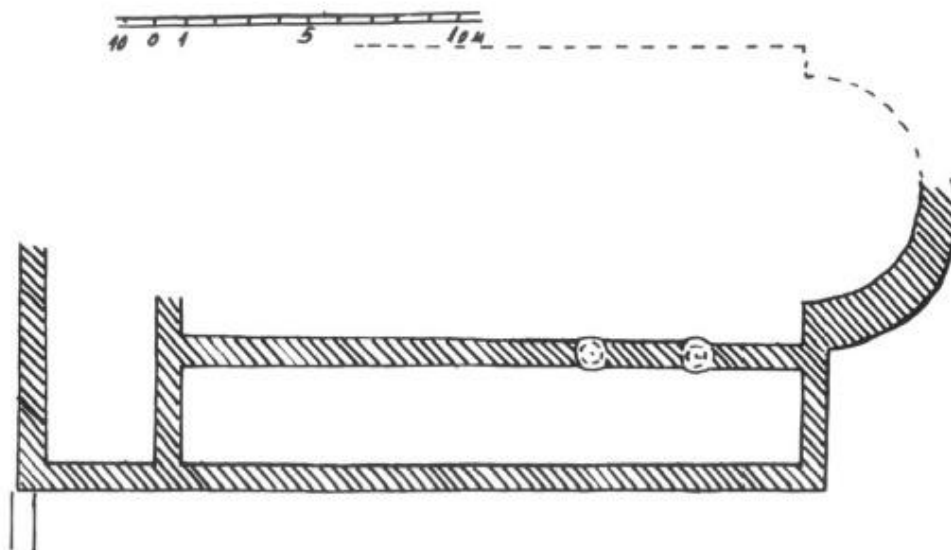


Fig. 6 – Plan de la basilique 5.

Fig. 45. Diocletianopolis: Basilicas 2 and 5 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

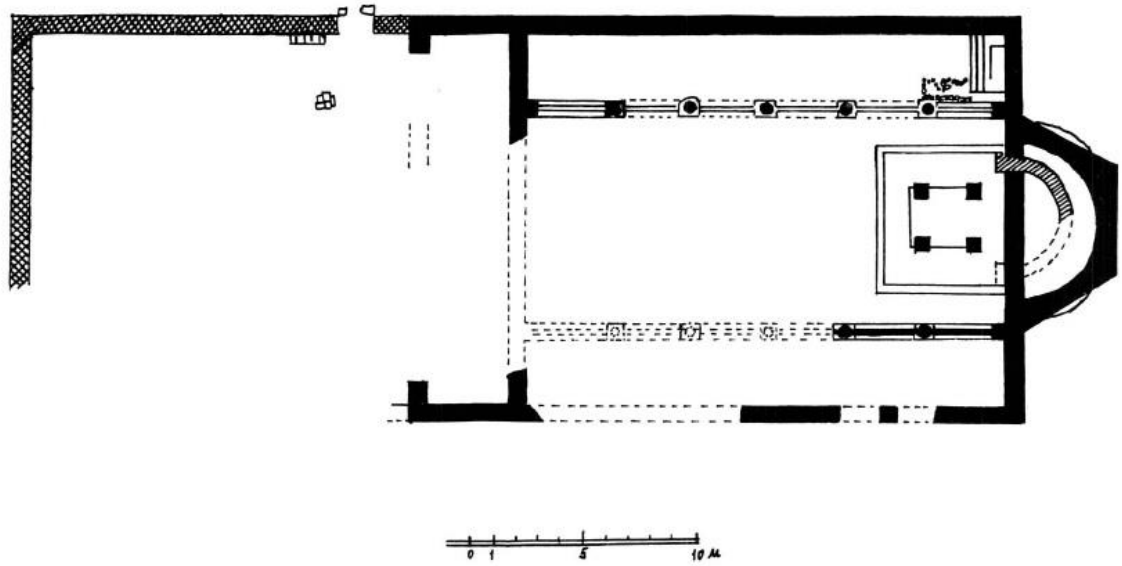


Fig. 46. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 3 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

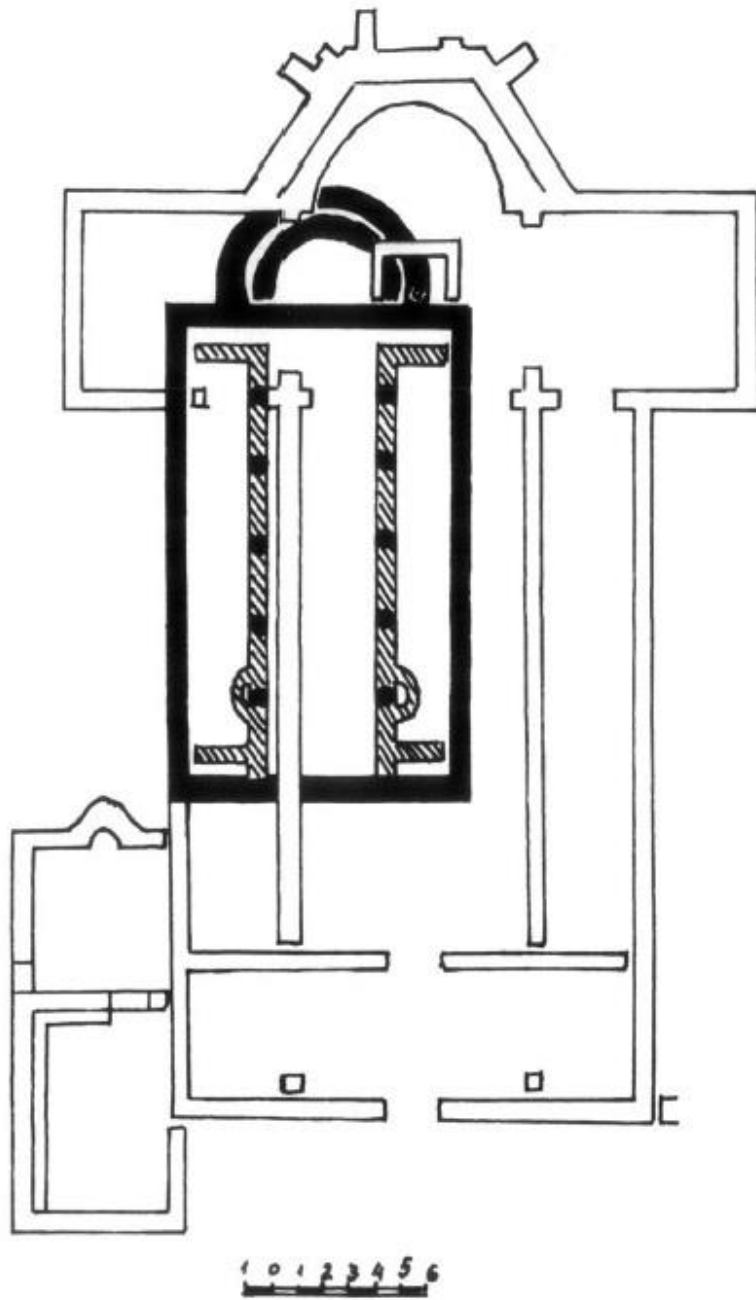


Fig. 47. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 4 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

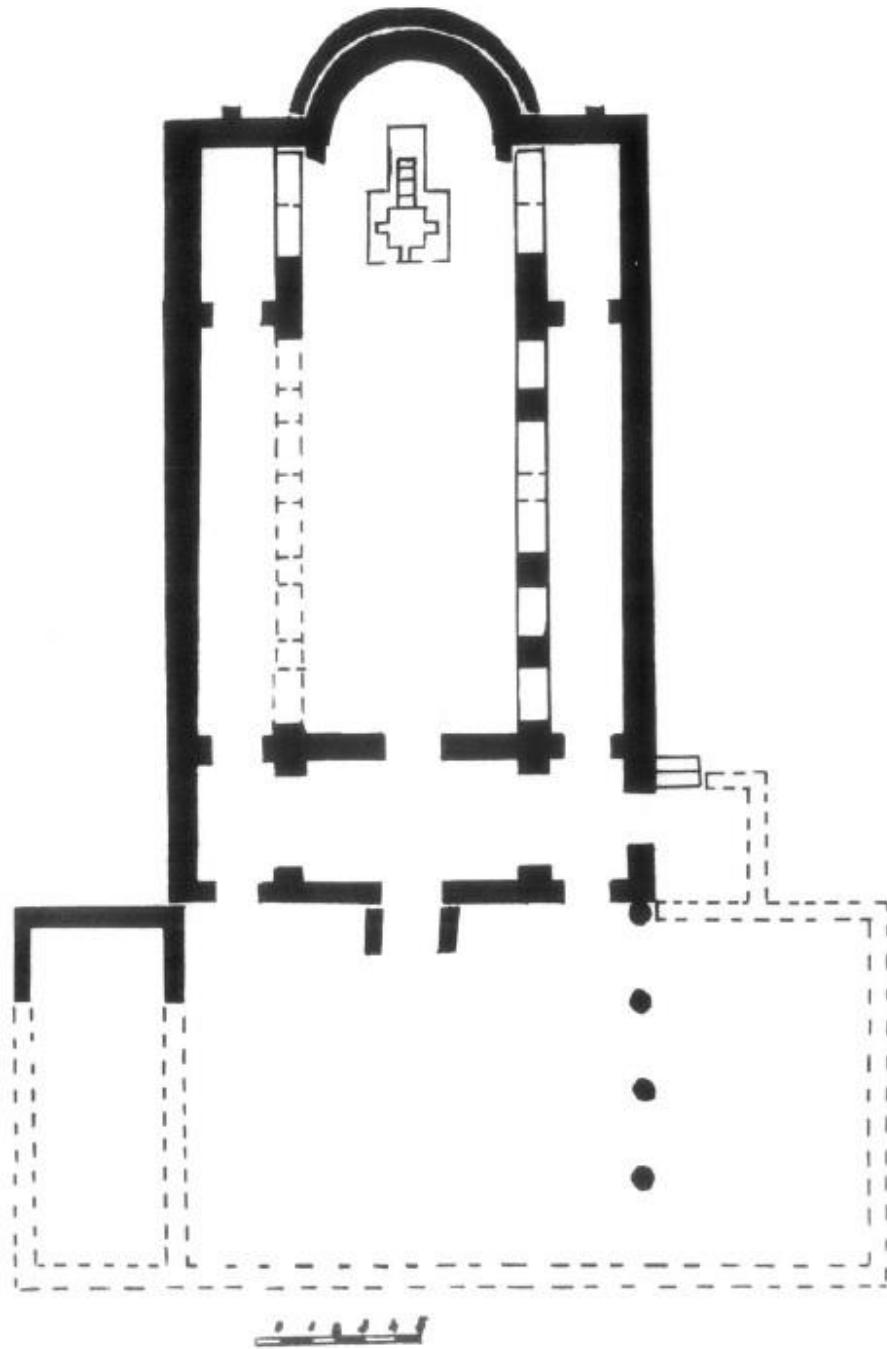


Fig. 48. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 6 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

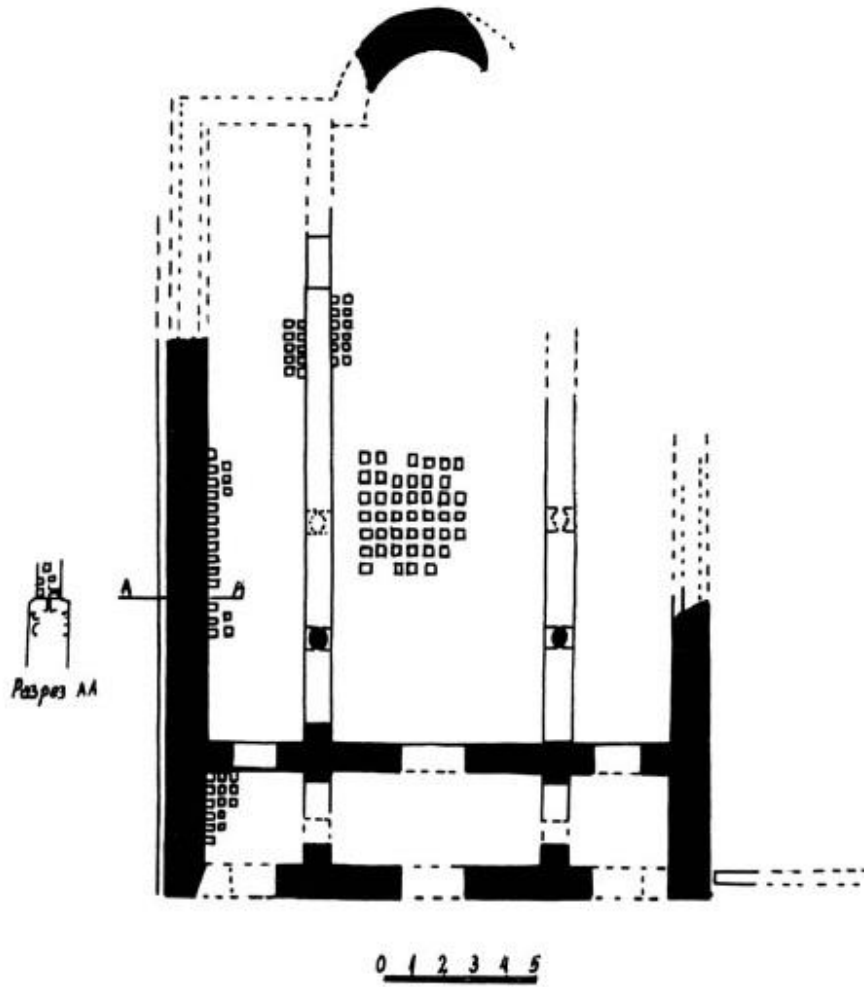


Fig. 49. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 7 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

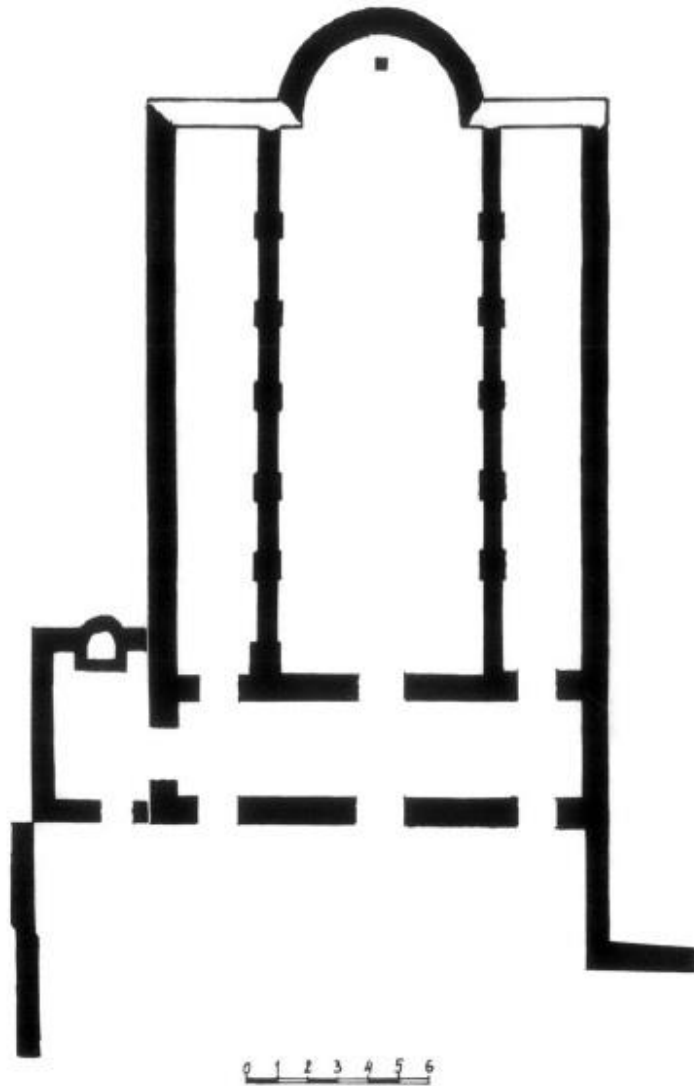


Fig. 50. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 8 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

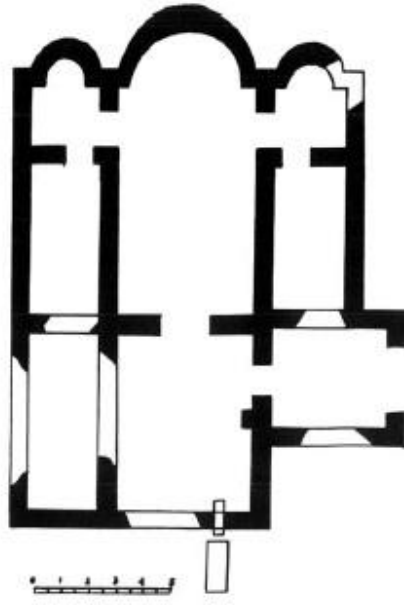


Fig. 51. Diocletianopolis: Basilica 9 (Madzharov, M. 1989)

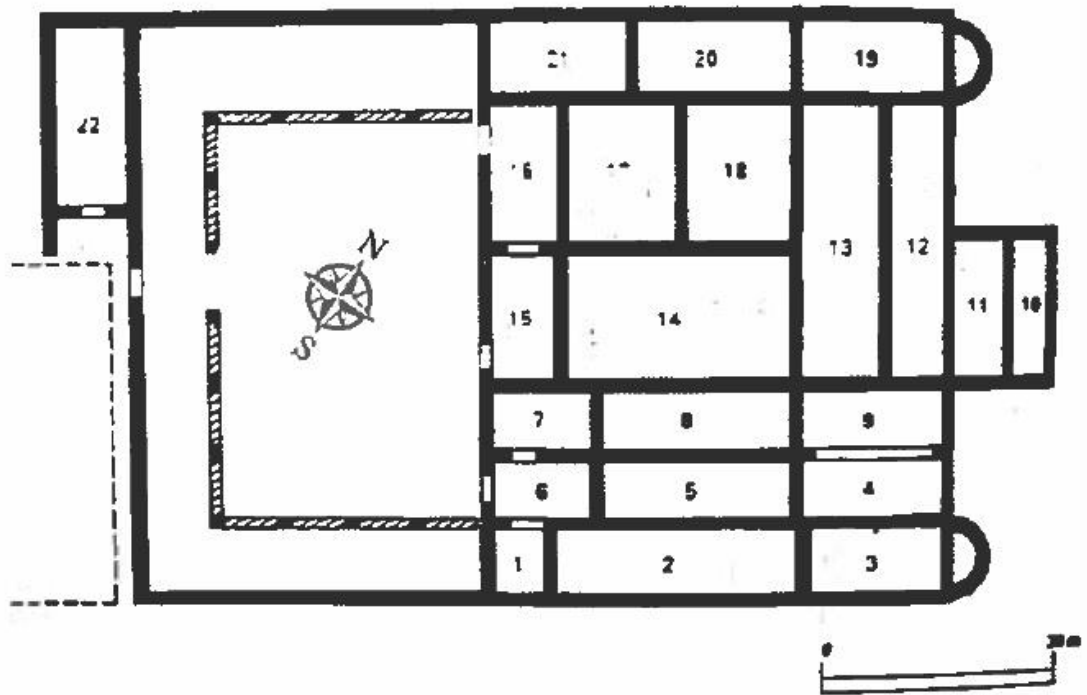


Fig. 52. Diocletianopolis: Residential Building 1

обр. 158. Портикът на източната страна на жилищна сграда 2

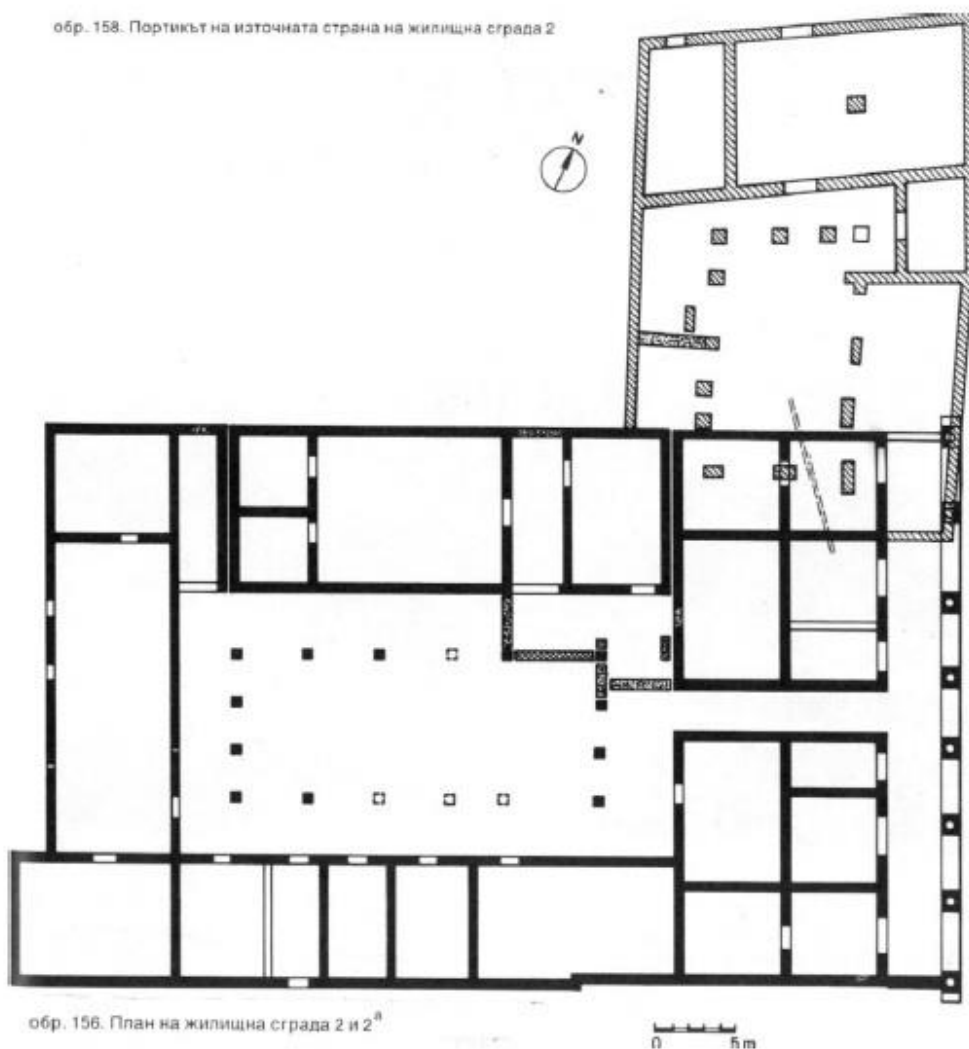


Fig. 53. Diocletianopolis: Residential Building 2

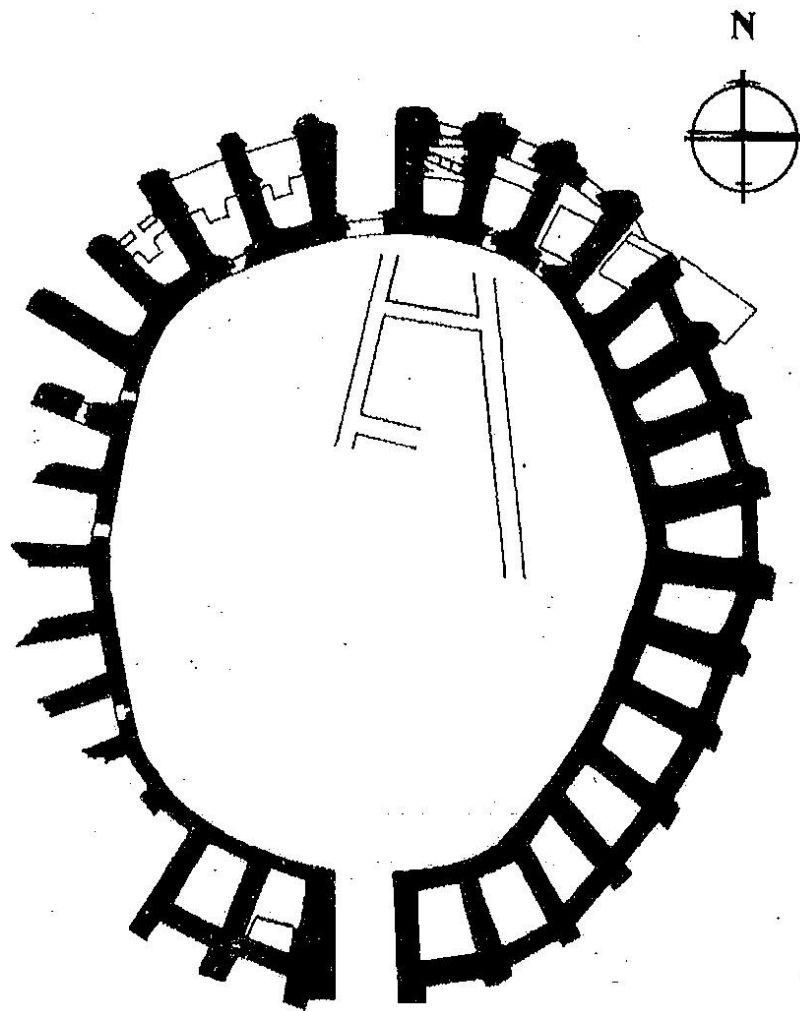


Fig. 54. Marcianopolis: Amphitheatre (Rizos 2013)

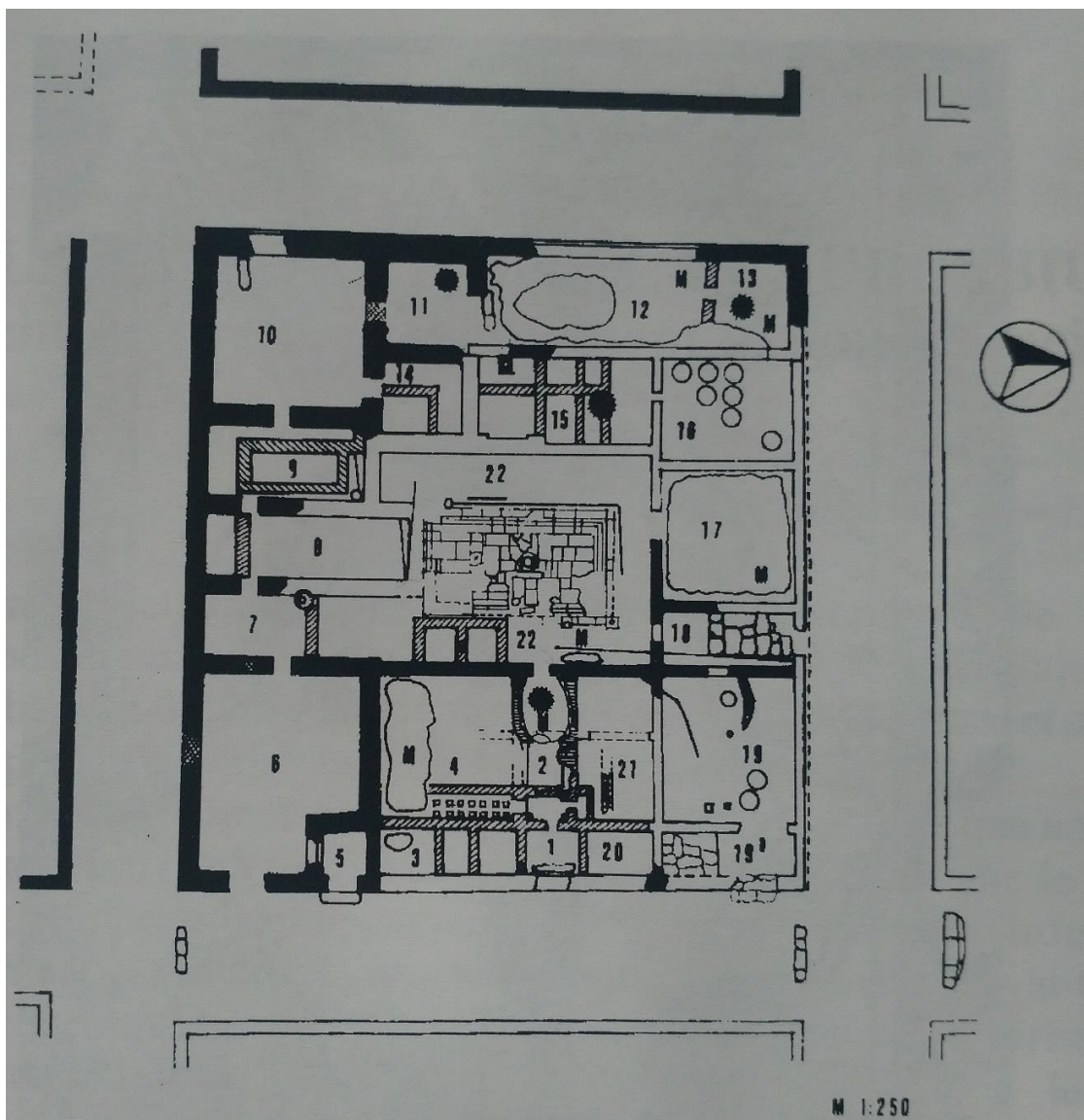


Fig. 55. Marcianopolis: House of Antiope (Minchev 2002)

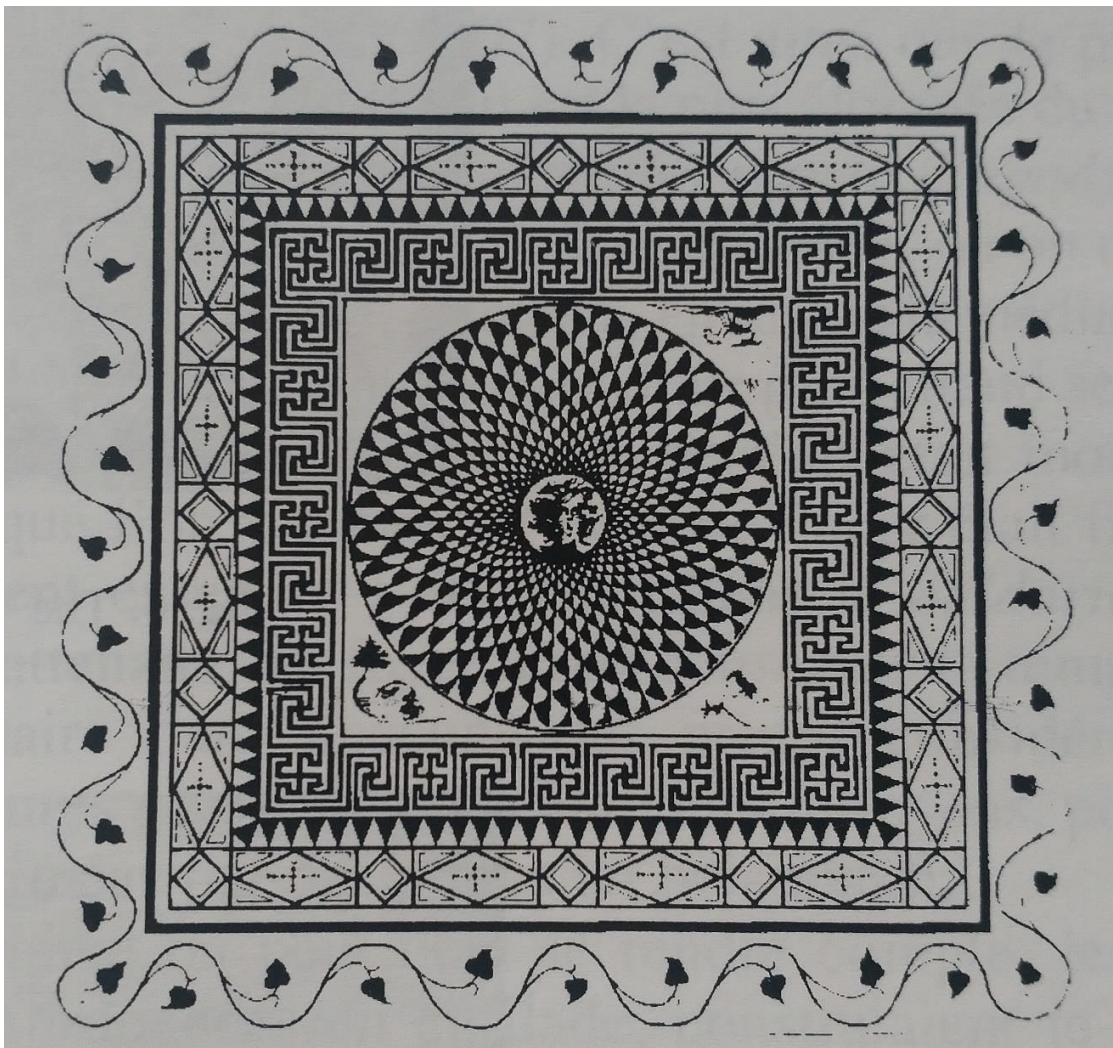


Fig. 56. Marcianopolis: House of Antiope – mosaic detail (Minchev 2002)

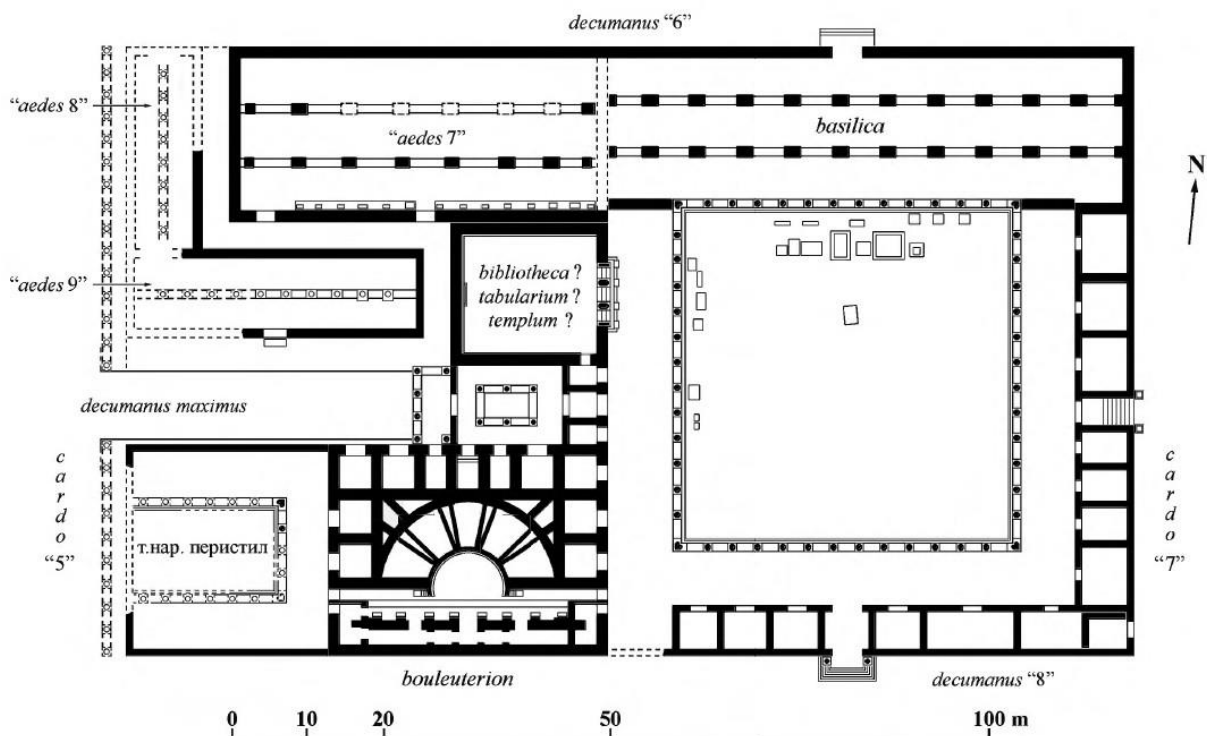


Fig. 57. Nicopolis ad Istrum: Agora (Динчев 2009b)

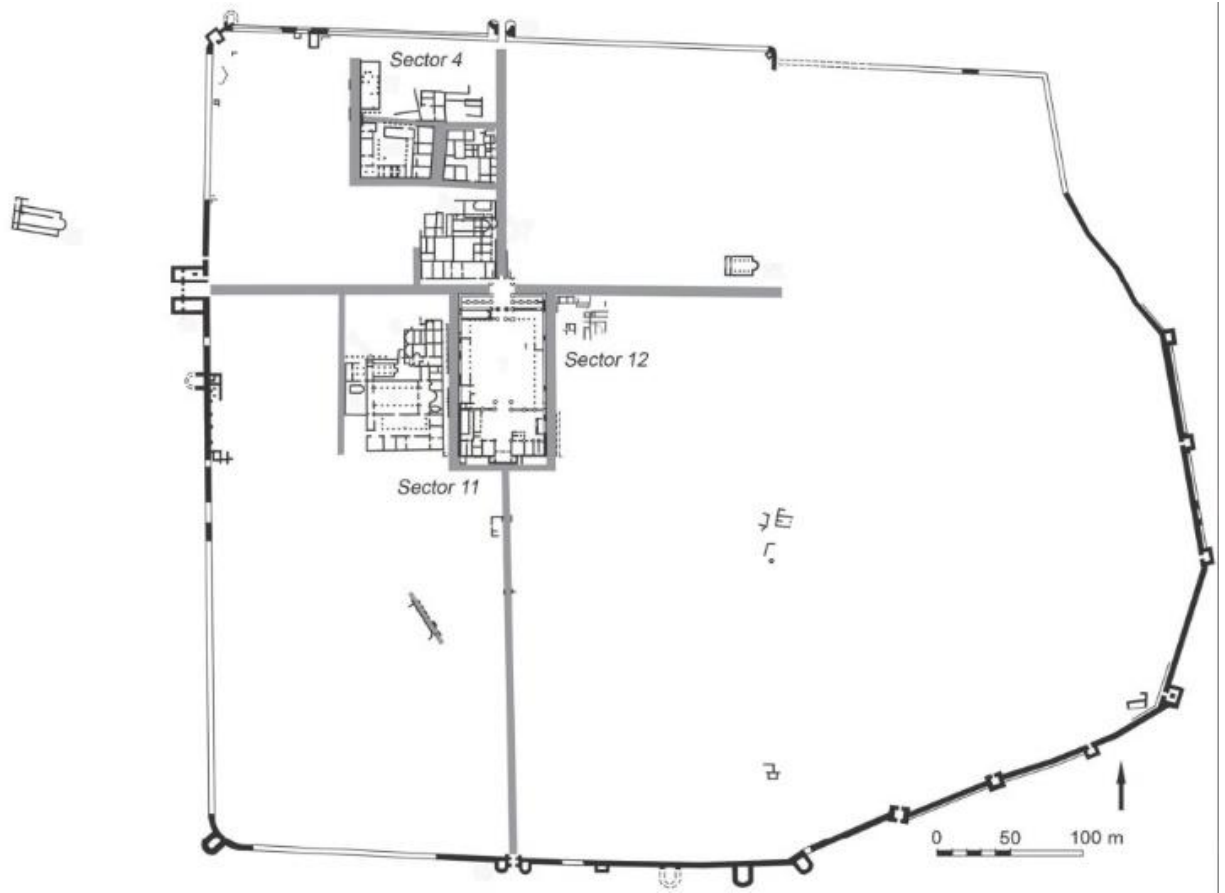


Fig. 58. Novae: City plan (Lemke 2015)

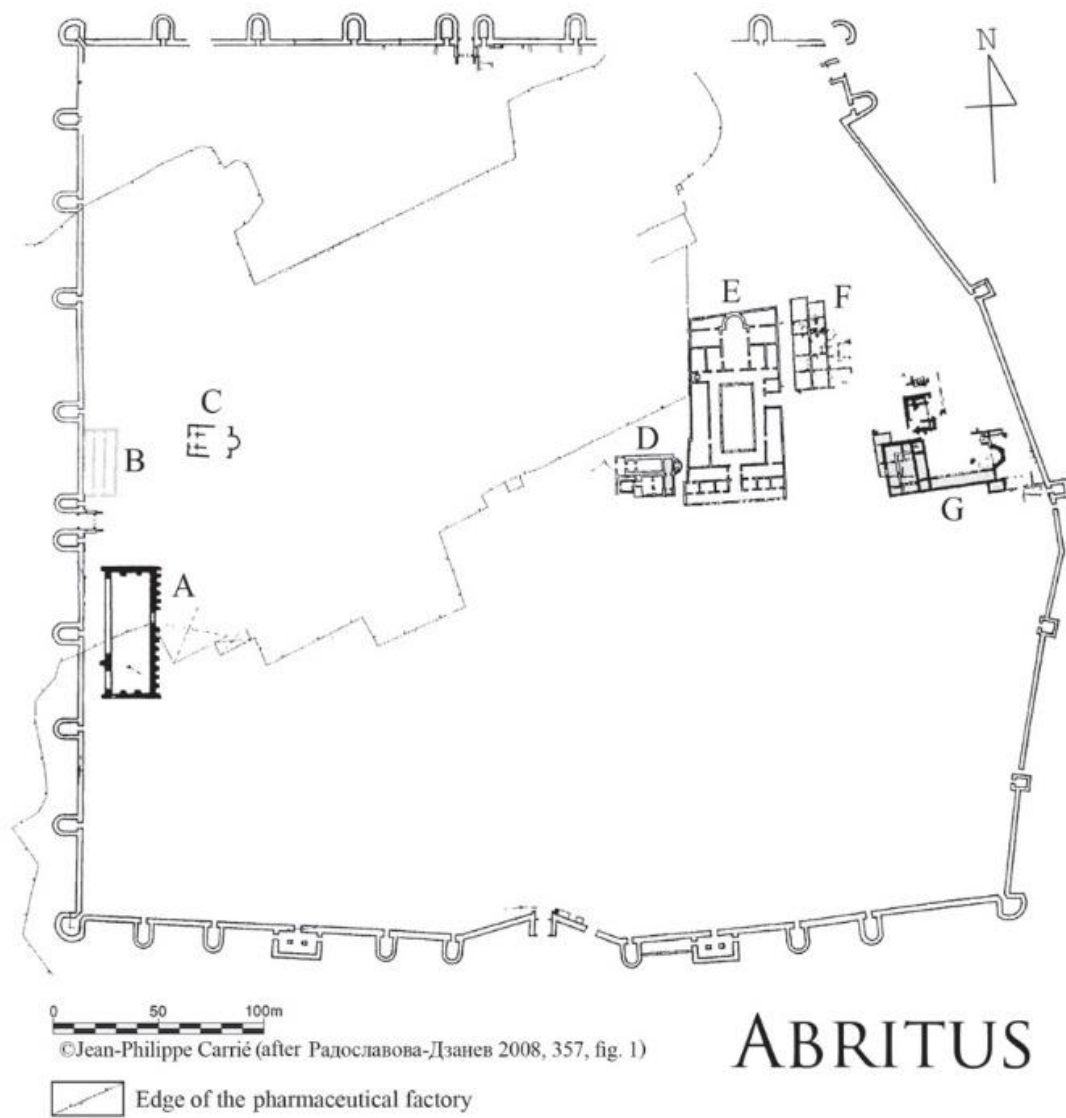


Fig. 61. Abritus: City plan (Carrié & Moreau)

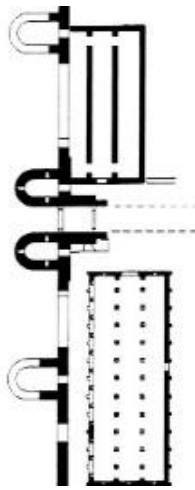


Fig. 62. Abritus: Horreum (Rizos 2013)

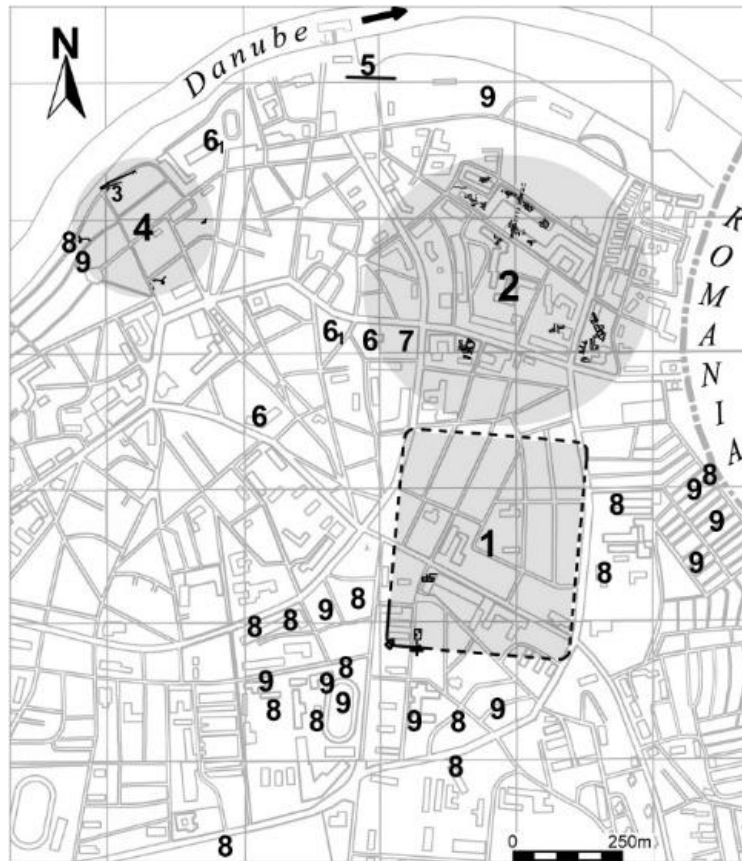


Fig. 63. Durostorum: City plan (Angelova & Buchvarov 2007)

