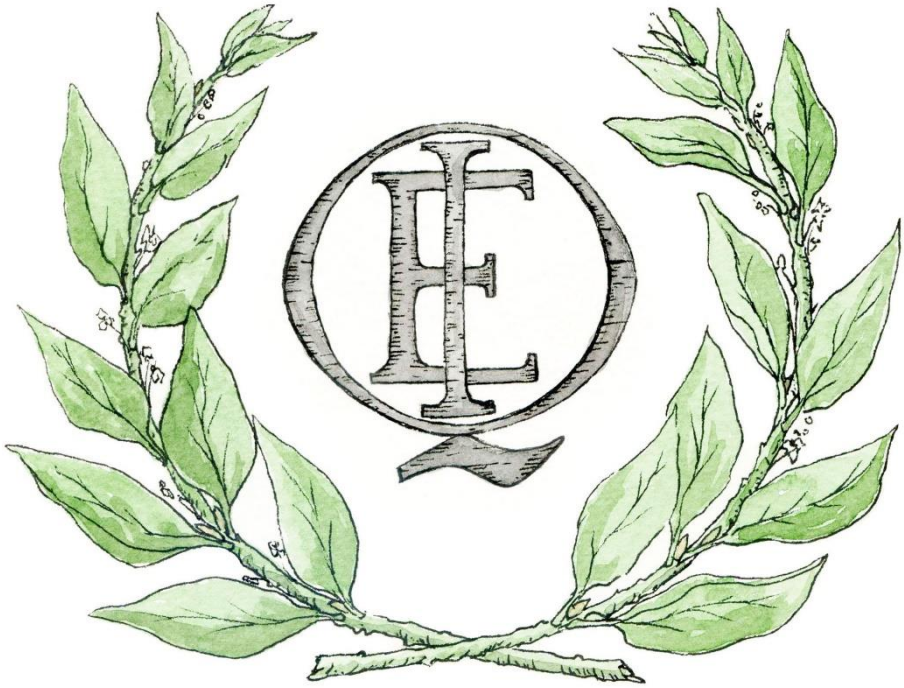
First International Conference

The Quaestura Exercitus in its Regional Context: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives

16th – 19th September 2025, Varna, Bulgaria



PROGRAM and ABSTRACTS

Organizing committee:

Dr. Alexander Harizanov (Asst. Prof., National Archaeological Institute with Museum – BAS)
Dr. Vassil Tenekedjiev (Asst. Prof., Varna Regional Museum of History)
Dr. Pantelis Charalampakis (Researcher, National Archaeological Institute with Museum – BAS)
Dr. Milena Raycheva (Asst. Prof., National Archaeological Institute with Museum – BAS)
Dr. Orlene McIlfatrick (Visiting Researcher, Varna Regional Museum of History)
Dr. Maria Manolova-Voykova (Assoc. Prof., Varna Regional Museum of History)

Scientific committee:

Dr. Ventzislav Dintchev (Prof., National Archaeological Institute with Museum – BAS, Bulgaria)
Dr. Sergey Torbatov (Prof., National Archaeological Institute with Museum – BAS, Bulgaria)
Alexander Minchev (Archaeologist, Varna Regional Museum of History, Bulgaria)
Dr. Charikleia Diamanti (Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, Greece)
Dr. Olga Karagiorgou (Prof., Research Centre for Byzantine and Post–Byzantine Art, Academy of Athens, Greece)
Dr. Demetris Athanasoulis (Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Director of Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, Greece)
Dr. Ioan Carol Opriș (Prof., University of Bucharest, Department of Ancient History, Archaeology and Art History, Romania)
Dr. Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț (National Museum of Transylvanian History, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
Dr. Constantin Băjenaru (Museum of National History and Archaeology Constanța, Romania)

Organizer institutions:

National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria (www.naim.bg)
Varna Regional Museum of History, Varna, Bulgaria (www.museumvarna.com)

PROGRAM

TUESDAY, 16.09.2025

12.00–13.15 REGISTRATION

13.15–13.30 OPENING

13.30–14.00 KEYNOTE LECTURE

Charikleia Diamanti *Quaestura Exercitus and the Mass Amphora Production in the Aegean Archipelagos*

SESSION 1, CHAIR: **Alexander Minchev**

14.00–14.20 **Olga Karagiorgou** *Precursors of the Quaestura Exercitus: the archaeological evidence*

14.20–14.40 **Ionuţ Holubeanu** *The Boundary Between the Roman Provinces of Moesia Secunda and Scythia in the 6th Century AD: the case of Altinum*

14.40–15.00 **Ventzislav Dintchev** *Moesia Secunda and Scythia from the Late 4th to the Early 6th Century*

15.00–15.20 COFFEE BREAK

SESSION 2, CHAIR: **Charikleia Diamanti**

15.20–15.40 **Ioan Carol Opriș** *More than Vingt Ans Après: LR 2 amphorae for the Lower Danube frontier in the 6th century*

15.40–16.00 **Elena Klenina** *The Supplying of the Garrison in Novae (Moesia II): an integrated economic process during the reign of Justinian I*

16.00–16.20 **Dragoș Hălmagi, Adela Bâltâc, Ioana Paraschiv-Grigore** *Networks of Trade and Devotion: new perspectives from Late Roman amphora* dipinti *from Histria*

16.20–16.40 **Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț, Iulia Iliescu** *Basilica Extra Muros Sector in Histria. Evidence from the Last Habitation Layers (6th – 7th Centuries AD)*

16.40–17.00 **Alexander Minchev** *Evidence About Production of Early Byzantine Ceramic Lids with Decoration in Relief from Moesia Secunda and Scythia (5th – 6th c. AD)*

17.00–18.00 POSTER SESSION

18.00–19.30 A WELCOME GLASS OF WINE IN THE CONFERENCE VENUE

WEDNESDAY, 17.09.2025

SESSION 3, CHAIR: **Olga Karagiorgou**

09.00–09.20 **Mariana Bodnaruk** *Inscribing Empire: epigraphic traces of Eastern Roman provincial administration (6th – 7th centuries)*

09.20–09.40 **Eugen Paraschiv-Grigore, Ioana Paraschiv-Grigore** *Between Asia Minor and the Danube: the urban seals*

09.40–10.00 **Pantelis Charalampakis** *Once Again on Chilbudius, Magister Militum in Thrace*

10.00–10.20 **Nilgün Elam** *Late Roman – Early Byzantine Thrace in Light of Seals from the Edirne and Kırklareli Museums (6th – 8th c.)*

10.20–10.40 COFFEE BREAK

SESSION 4, CHAIR: **Ioan Carol Opriș**

10.40–11.00 **Christos Malatras** *Sealing Patterns of Officials in the Seventh Century and the Question of Thematic Administration*

11.00–11.20 **Igor Lazarenko** *Lead Sealing of Areobindus, an Eparch and Commerciarius of the 6th Century*

11.20–11.40 **Stoyan Mihaylov** *The Coins from the Excavations of the Early Christian Monastery on Dzhanavara Hill near Varna*

11.40–12.00 **Irina Achim** *Imagining the Center from the Periphery: echoes of the imperial capital across the Western Black Sea coast*

12.00–14.00 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION 5, CHAIR: **Ventzislav Dintchev**

14.00–14.20 **Ivo Topalilov** *Remarks on the Pavement Mosaics of Early Christian Basilicas in the Eastern Part of the Diocese of Thrace During the Sixth Century*

14.20–14.40 **Albena Milanova, Elio Hobdari, Georgi Atanasov** *The Ambos from the Churches in Zaldapa (Province of Scythia)*

14.40–15.00 **Vassil Tenekedjiev** *Construction, Demolition, Rebuilding, and Repairs of the Early Christian Churches in the City of Odessos and its Vicinity (Late 4th – Early 7th Century)*

15.00–15.20 COFFEE BREAK

15.20–17.00 GUIDED TOUR TO THE VARNA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

19.00 OFFICIAL DINNER

THURSDAY, 18.09.2025

SESSION 6, CHAIR: **Sergey Torbatov**

09.00–09.20 **Alexander Harizanov, Alexander Manev, Nikolay Rusev** *Dacia Ripensis in the Sixth Century: a case study from the fortified settlement at Dimovo, North–western Bulgaria*

09.20–09.40 **Vladislav Zhivkov** *Reorganization of the Frontier Defence in Dacia Ripensis During the 6th c. AD. Ratiaria – Cebrus Section*

09.40–10.00 **Deyan Rabovyanov** *The Fortress Near the Village of Hrastovo, Krumovgrad Region: a new fortified site from the Early Byzantine period in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains*

10.00–10.20 **Constantin Băjenaru** *The Fortification of Ulmetum During the 6th Century – from reconstruction to final abandonment*

10.20–10.40 COFFEE BREAK

SESSION 7, CHAIR: **Constantin Băjenaru**

10.40–11.00 **Ioto Valeriev** *The Western Fortress Wall of Odessos (according to K. Škorpil's sketches and other data)*

11.00–11.20 **Valeri Yotov** *The Late Antique South Fortress Wall of Odessos (according to M. Lazarov's sketches and the new data)*

11.20–11.40 **Ştefan Honcu** *The Late Sixth – Early Seventh Centuries in the Province of Scythia Minor: the new archaeological discoveries from Argamum and Ibida*

11.40–12.00 **Gabriel M. Talmaţchi, Constantin Şova** *Aspects of the Evolution of Late Roman Housing Complexes and the Street System in the Southern Quarter of the Tropaeum Traiani: results of archaeological research from the period 2003–2024*

12.00–14.00 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION 8, CHAIR: **Viorica Rusu–Bolindeţ**

14.00–14.20 **Constantin Băjenaru, Ana Hamat, Ştefan Georgescu, Cătălin Nopcea** *Underground Structures in the Hinterland of Tomis in the 6th and 7th Century*

14.20–14.40 **Ksenija Đukić, Veda Mikašinović** *Exploring the Past through Skeletal Remains: bioarchaeological findings from the fortified town of Gradina (6th – 7th century)*

14.40–15.00 **Veda Mikašinović, Ksenija Đukić** *Mortality and Morbidity during the Justinianic Plague: bioarchaeological evidence from South–eastern Europe*

15.00–15.30 CLOSING KEYNOTE LECTURE (ONLINE)

Jacek Wiewiorowski *Quaestor Iustinianus Exercitus in Military Action: a re–evaluation of the hypothesis*

15.30–15.40 CLOSING OF THE LECTURE SESSIONS

15.40–16.00 COFFEE BREAK

16.00–18.00 GUIDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOUR IN THE CITY OF VARNA

FRIDAY, 19.09.2025

07.30–13.30 TRIP TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AT ST. ATANAS CAPE AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN THE TOWN OF BYALA, VARNA REGION

***

POSTERS

Pantelis Charalampakis, Nikolay Dimitrov, Milena Raycheva *The Digital Sigillographic Corpus of Bulgaria (DigiSigiCorpBG): a new research tool for the study of communication networks in Late Antiquity*

Nicolaie Alexandru, Robert Constantin *Callatis – The Evolution of a Greek City in the Christian Era (4th – 7th Century AD)*

Adriana Panaite *Roman Glass Finds from Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, Romania): some observations on glass supply and recycling*

Iulia-Alexandra Iliescu *Istros in the Quaestura Exercitus: a ceramic approach*

Dorel Bondoc, Gabriela Filip *Basilica and Christian Discoveries of Sucidava-Celei*

Vassil Tenekedjiev *The Basilica at Pirinch Tepe, Varna: a fresh look at an old site we all thought we knew well*

Hristo Preshlenov *Sacred Modules: Early Christian architecture along the South-western Pontus*

Alexander Harizanov *A Sixth Century Plumbata from Ratiaria, Dacia Ripensis? Possibilities for the Use of Lead-Weighted Darts in the Age of Justinian*

ABSTRACTS

Charikleia Diamanti

Quaestura Excercitus *and the Mass Production of Amphorae in the Aegean Archipelagos*

This paper investigates the mass production and distribution of ceramic containers in the Aegean from the mid-6th to the early 8th c. AD. Aegean islands, integral to the *quaestura exercitus* established under Justinian I, supplied agricultural goods – particularly via amphorae – to Constantinople and frontier military zones. A key innovation of the later 6th c. was the emergence of LRA 13 amphorae, distinguished by stamped imperial insignia, indicating state-controlled production.

In the frame of the paper new data from recent research is going to be presented as well.

The communication concludes by the presentation of a recent monograph about Late Roman amphorae stamps as well as consideration about the future of their study, underscoring the necessity of international scientific collaboration, with the objective of systematically studying the production centres geographically belonging in the *quaestura exercitus* as well as their distribution into this administration unit.

Olga Karagiorgou

Precursors of the Quaestura Exercitus: *the archaeological evidence*

The transfer of the capital of the *imperium romanum* to the Bosphorus straits at the beginning of the 4th c. increased the military importance of the Danubian provinces and caused a series of important developments that also affected the commercial mechanisms of the Byzantine Empire. Food markets in and near the ever-expanding new capital had to respond quickly to meet the needs of the growing population of the city (*annona civilis*) and the large armed forces (*annona militaris*) along the Danubian provinces (estimated to be at least 75,000 men in the early 5th c.). It is generally considered that the creation, on 18th May 536 AD, of the *quaestura exercitus*, which connected Scythia and Moesia II on the Danube with Cyprus, Caria and the Cyclades in the Aegean, was an innovation initiated by Justinian II to relieve the impoverished provinces of the Danube. However, epigraphic, archaeological and sigillographic evidence clearly demonstrates that Justinian's administrative set-up was not a novelty, as it followed centuries-old established practices.

Ionuţ Holubeanu

The Boundary between the Roman Provinces of Moesia Secunda and Scythia in the 6th Century AD: the case of Altinum

Based on select details provided by Procopius of Caesarea in *De Aedificiis* (IV.11.20), several researchers have suggested that the boundary between Moesia Secunda and Scythia was adjusted during the reign of Justinian I (527–565 AD). This change is thought to have involved the transfer of the Danubian fortress of Altinum from Moesia Secunda to Scythia. This presentation critically examines the arguments supporting this hypothesis. It also considers the question of the precise location of the fortress of Altinum.

Ventzislav Dintchev

Moesia Secunda and Scythia from the Late 4th to Early 6th Century

In modern historiography there is no dispute about the purpose of the creation in 536 AD of the peculiar *quaestura exercitus*, including the Lower Danubian provinces of Moesia Secunda and Scythia of the diocese of Thracia, the Asia Minor province of Caria, the *provincia Insularum* (with most of the Aegean islands) of the diocese of Asiana, and the island of Cyprus of the diocese of Orientis. This paper is an attempt to present the state of the two border provinces of the diocese of Thracia in the period preceding the emergence of the *quaestura*, which in fact also determined the emergence of the latter.

The reduced agrarian potential and the need to support a significant number of militarized populations (successors of the Late Roman *limitanei* and *foederati*), concentrated in the border provinces, were constant characteristics of the diocese of Thracia in the second half of the 5th and the early 6th c. These are the prerequisites for the idea of creating the *quaestura exercitus* and for its implementation with the act of May 18th, 536 AD.

Ioan Carol Opriș

More than Vingt Ans Après: LR 2 amphorae for the Lower Danube frontier in the 6th century

My paper proposes an overview of the topic with inherent updated mapping regarding the 6th – early 7th c. Carthage LR 2 amphorae found along the Western coast of the Black Sea, in the Balkans, and especially on the Lower Danube. The petrographic analyses indicate the Aegean, Peloponnese, and Western Asia Minor as production areas. Among the largest ceramic *annona* containers in the 6th c., those globular vessels decorated with parallel ridges and wavy grooves on the shoulder were primarily designed for the transportation of the essential olive oil to the northern frontier. Along with the Cilician LR 1 wine amphorae, they actually represent the very backbone of the *quaestura Iustiniana exercitus* until the end of the limes, in the early decades of the 7th c., and therefore hold together the largest share of all imported transport containers. Specimens of LRA 2 found in Scythia indicate a volume exceeding 50l. Especially the latest examples identified during the archaeological excavations turn out to be crucial to chronological clarifications, in the absence of any written sources.

This contribution is a response and an update to the seminal study published in 2001 by Olga Karagiorgou (*LR2: a container for the Military* annona *on the Danubian border?*) in a conference volume edited by S. Kingsley and M. Decker, *Economy and Exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity*. *Proceedings of a Conference at Somerville College, Oxford – 29th May, 1999.* The discussion goes evidently wider and deeper, evoking scholars such as Florin Curta, Andrei Gândilă or Andrei Opaiț, who formulated during the last decade(s) several sensible observations and hypotheses for postponing the end of the Lower Danube Limes, based upon the archaeological material.

Elena Klenina

The Supplying of the Garrison in Novae (Moesia II): an integrated economic process during the reign of Justinian I

The Early Byzantine city of Novae (Moesia Secunda) on the southern bank of the Danube River was the most significant centre on the border of the Byzantine Empire and has been among the most thoroughly studied sites of this type in the area of the Lower Danube. The historical role of this city in defending the northern border of the Empire against incursions by various barbarians is of paramount importance. Excavations at Novae were initiated as part of a long-standing Polish-Bulgarian scientific research collaboration, with a history spanning over six decades. A central focus of these excavations has been the examination of the remnants of a Roman military camp, which subsequently gave rise to a civilian town. However, research has revealed several Early Christian basilicas, an episcopal complex, an Early Byzantine residential area, and *horrea* for storing grain and other goods that arrived in Novae as *annona militaris*. The largest *horreum* was constructed in the area of the former arsenal in Section Xz–PL. The design of the building, uncovered by the Adam Mickiewicz University team, differs markedly from the granaries in Novae. This rectangular structure occupied an area of more than 1840 sq. m (23 x 80 m). Its interior, subdivided by two rows of square pillars that supported a vaulted roof, functioned as a storage space for various types of commodities. Comparable storage buildings have been unearthed in Capidava, Histria (Scythia), Serdica (Dacia Mediterranea), and Mediana (Dardania). The advent of such structures within the confines of former Roman legionary fortresses can be attributed to the evolution of their functional roles, which encompassed commercial activities in the reign of Justinian I.

Dragoș Hălmagi, Adela Bâltâc, Ioana Paraschiv-Grigore

Networks of Trade and Devotion: new perspectives from Late Roman amphora* dipinti *from Histria

This paper examines a selection of Late Roman amphorae with *dipinti* from Histria, featuring commercial notations accompanied by Christian invocations. The vessels were discovered in 2021 in a domestic context dated to the 6th c., in the Main Gate – Main Tower sector. Our investigation compares these finds with similar discoveries from Histria and other sites along the Lower Danube. Groups of inscriptions with a homogeneous formula hint at a highly centralised system of organisation, enabling a few hypotheses regarding distribution networks and patterns of consumption.

Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț, Iulia Iliescu

Basilica Extra Muros *Sector in Histria. Evidence from the Last Habitation Layers (6th – 7th centuries AD)*

This paper examines recent research in the *Basilica extra muros* Sector of Histria (Constanța County, Romania), situated about 200 m southwest of the city's Main Gate. This area encompasses the Christian monument discovered as early as 1914, along with two funerary spaces and part of a residential building. Between 2001 and 2013, archaeological investigations examined not only the basilica but also the dwellings located north and south of it, as well as the funerary spaces used before and during the monument's functioning period. These structures are generally dated to the Late Roman period, specifically from the 4th to the early 7th c. AD inclusive, though, in some cases, the stratigraphy is much more complex, extending back to the Late Hellenistic period.

The current study aims to analyse the last functioning phase in this sector, spanning from the 6th to the early 7th c., and to incorporate the data into the broader context of the city and region. The analysis primarily focuses on ceramic finds, which are the most numerous and varied, but also includes other categories of artefacts, such as coins, metal, and glass finds. The ultimate goal of this research is to deepen our understanding of the relationship between the Christian monument and the nearby dwellings, as well as the development of the *extra muros* area at Histria during the 6th – early 7th c. AD.

Alexander Minchev

Evidence about the Production of Early Byzantine Ceramic Lids with Decoration in Relief from Moesia Secunda and Scythia (5th – 6th c. AD)

Over the past 120 years, at various sites within the Late Antique province of Moesia Secunda, a number of earthenware lids of a specific type have been found. They are circular, flat and thick, with a small, vertical handle and decoration in relief on their upper surface. Decoration comprises various motifs but also Christian symbols and inscriptions in Greek. The diameter of the lids varies but they fit to both medium-sized cooking and table vessels, and only rarely to the smaller vessels. The lids date to the 5th – 6th c. AD, with most from Justinian's reign and later. To date, production centers for these lids in the province have not been traced. The aim of this paper is to present and discuss the available data concerning their production, namely using ceramic moulds. Several entire, and several fragmented moulds have been discovered in Moesia Secunda: one from Devnya (ancient Marcianopolis); one from Kranevo (Cranea) – connected to a ceramic workshop; one from Nova Cherna (Mediolana); one from Varna (Odessos); one from Byala; and one from Obzor (Naulochos, former Templum Iovis). There is also one from unidentified site in the province, now in the collection of Varna RMH. Some moulds are carefully made, others somewhat crudely. Similar artifacts have been discovered in the province of Scythia in larger numbers. They were found at: Histria/Istros; Constanţa (Tomis); Mangalia (Callatis) – where the only stone mould of that type was found; at Ulmetum (Pantelimonul de Sus); Cherna Voda (Axiopolis); Capidava and Garvan (Dinogetia) – all in the Regions of Constanţa and Tulcea, Romania. In short, thirty-three extant examples. It must be noted that no similar lids or moulds have been found in Constantinople and in Thessaloniki.

Mariana Bodnaruk

Inscribing Empire: epigraphic traces of Eastern Roman provincial administration (6th – 7th c.)

Under Justinian, administrative reforms that enabled the movement of supplies – particularly the *annona militaris* – and troops transformed the governance structure of the Eastern Roman Empire. They reshaped the provincial administration and impacted the political and social life of the Eastern Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean in the 6th and 7th c. When the empire lost two-thirds of its territory by the mid-7th c., its survival was likely due not only to the strength of the fiscal bureaucracy based in Constantinople, which ensured continued tax collection and military provisioning even under extreme pressure, but also, I argue, the resilience of its supra-regional networks. This paper examines scattered epigraphic evidence related to provincial administrators of the Eastern Roman Empire to investigate their roles, titles, and modes of self-representation. It will first explore scant imperial laws preserved epigraphically that reference civilian and military office-holders in the regional administration in the eastern part of the state. Second, it will discuss rare honorific statues dedicated to or commissioned by local notables and benefactors (highlighting their involvement in food supply), local magistrates, and, most importantly, imperial civilian and military officials in the regional administration under praetorian prefects and *magistri militum* / *quaestores exercitus* respectively. These offer insight into the dynamics of social life in the Eastern Roman provinces. Third, we will see how civic and Christian archaeology provides evidence of their provincial activities through a dossier of building and dedicatory inscriptions, which document local patronage networks. Lastly, it will address how funerary epigraphy furnishes a record of civilian and especially military functionaries, ranging from high-ranking commanders to mid-level imperial officers (*comites*, *duces*, and *tribunes*), as well as rank-and-file soldiers.

Eugen Paraschiv-Grigore, Ioana Paraschiv-Grigore

Between Asia Minor and the Danube: the urban seals

Focusing on the finds from the Lower Danube, this paper examines the city seals of Western Asia Minor alongside associated archaeological material and proposes two possible chronological frameworks. The study also considers their distribution, means of transportation, and the nature of sealed goods. Rather than isolated finds, the seals reflect sustained contact between two key regions of the Late Roman world, shaped by both administrative design and economic necessity.

Pantelis Charalampakis

Once Again on Chilbudius,* Magister Militum *of Thrace

The paper analyses various types of evidence and explores the possible connection between Chilbudius, *magister militum per Thraciam*, active in the Danube border area in the early 530s and well-known through Procopius' *Wars*, with the tombstone of a Chilibudes allegedly found in Constantinople, as well as with the lead seal of *stratelates* Silibudes.

Nilgün Elam

Late Roman – Early Byzantine Thrace in Light of Seals from the Edirne and Kırklareli Museums (6th – 8th c.)

The Byzantine lead seals (*molybdobullae*) are a significant source on Byzantine institutions and prosopography which completes the gaps left by literary sources. Six (five unpublished and one already published) lead seals from the Edirne (Adrianopolis) and Kırklareli (Saranta Ekklisies) Museums, dated from the 6th to the 8th c. are presented in this paper. They belonged to Bonos *hyparchos* (550–650); Isaakios *apo eparchon* (7th c.), Petros *hypatos* (6th/7th c.); Klemes or Komentiolos (7th c.); Akyllas *hypatos* (740–760) and to Michael *chartoularios* (8th c.). They are of special importance in terms of providing data on the existence of provincial officials and senatorial class in Byzantine Thrace in this period.

Christos Malatras

Sealing Patterns of Officials in the Seventh Century and the Question of Thematic Administration

This paper investigates the sealing practices of Byzantine officials in the 7th c. In the absence of documentary sources, which will directly explain the reason of the presence of a seal and the recipient, the study will focus on the owners of the seals and their place within the state and social hierarchies, seeking to answer fundamental questions: who used seals, and under what kind of authority? Particular attention will be given to the representation of different administrative spheres within the sigillographic record: military, civil, palatine officials, and simple dignitaries.

A central objective is to investigate whether the sigillographic record can help trace the emergence of the thematic system. By identifying potential early thematic officials and analysing their role and frequency within the sealing corpus, the paper aims to assess their administrative reach and institutional significance. Particular focus will be placed on seals found in the territory of modern Bulgaria, allowing for a comparative perspective between this region and the broader empire.

Igor Lazarenko

Lead Sealing of Areobindus, an Eparch and* Commerciarius *of the 6th Century

The numismatic fund of the Varna Archaeological Museum preserves an Early Byzantine sealing of the eparch and *commerciarius* Areobindus, found in the area of Dzhanavara near Varna. The owner of the sealing has the same position as Areobindus who, according to the inscription on other seals, was *commerciarius* of Tyre before 565 AD, and to Areobindus who, according to three or four *novellae* of Justinian I, was eparch of Constantinople, and then once or twice eparch of the *praetorium* (Jus. *Nov.* 145 of 8th February 553 AD; 146 without date; 147 of 15th April 553 AD; 143 of 21st May 563 AD). Therefore, it is possible that we are talking about the same person who, around the middle of the 6th c., held high state positions successively or simultaneously.

Stoyan Mihaylov

The Coins from the Excavations of the Early Christian Monastery on Dzhanavara Hill near Varna

The remains of the Early Christian monastery on Dzhanavara Hill were discovered in the beginning of the 20th c. and were explored in several archaeological campaigns. In 2008 the archaeological research was renewed. The results so far date the monastery's occupation from the middle of the 5th c. to the beginning of the 7th c.

In the excavated parts of the archaeological site, in the period 2008–2022, 435 coins were found. One coin from the Hellenistic period was identified. The Roman coins until the first quarter of the 4th c. are 1.5% of all specimens. The minted specimens in the period 330–425 AD are 9%. The most numerous is the group of coins minted in the period 425–518 AD of the AE4 or *nummus* denomination – 46%. After the monetary reform from 498 to 610 AD, 14% of coins were minted. The latest group and chronologically separated are the coins from the 14th c. – 1%.

The coins from the archaeological research of the monastery on Dzhanavara Hill, in addition to chronological data for the site itself, provide additional information about the coin circulation in the Odessos region in the period encompassing the 5th–7th c.

Irina Achim

Imagining the Centre from the Periphery: echoes of the imperial capital across the Western Black Sea coast

When Justinian established the *quaestura exercitus* in 536 AD, the Greek cities of Scythia, situated along the western coast of the Black Sea, were undoubtedly experiencing one of the most vibrant periods in their history. This vitality – economic, cultural, religious, social, and demographic – is reflected in a remarkable wave of construction, the proliferation of Christian religious buildings, the circulation of goods across both long and very long distances, and a pronounced taste for prestigious products.

In nearly all aspects of (daily) life, the overwhelming influence of Constantinople left an enduring imprint, reaffirming its role as the preeminent cultural, religious, and political centre of the ancient world.

This presentation aims to explore elements of Christian architectural planning, decorative programs, and the presence of artefacts with strong symbolic significance as evidence supporting the idea of a "Constantinopolisation" of the Northern Balkan region – particularly the area encompassing the Greek cities along the Black Sea coast – during this final phase of Late Antiquity, or more broadly, the period of the Long Late Antiquity.

Ivo Topalilov

Remarks on the Pavement Mosaics of Early Christian Basilicas in the Eastern Part of the Diocese of Thrace During the Sixth Century

In scholarly literature, it is generally accepted that certain sectors in Early Christian basilicas located within the Diocese of Thrace received additional decoration in the form of floor mosaics during the 6th c. In fact, it is possible that some of these sectors were also adorned with wall decoration, although the evidence for this remains scarce. These sectors are highly specific, such as the altar and pre-altar areas, as well as certain rooms within the church complexes themselves. It is quite likely that this development is connected to the changing significance of these areas, possibly as a consequence of evolving liturgical requirements, but also as a result of the growing symbiosis between liturgy, architecture, and decoration.

The aim of this presentation is to explore precisely this relationship and the reasons behind these changes, insofar as the available evidence allows. Particular focus will be placed on the Old Metropolitan Church in Nessebar, as well as on the basilica believed to be episcopal, located on the Tsarevets Hill, among others. The various connections and specific characteristics of the individual regions – such as economic, political, and, why not, even ethnic – undoubtedly influenced the iconography of the floor mosaics. Some regions are more closely connected with Constantinople, others with Syria, and still others with Thrace. These connections will also be taken into consideration in the course of the research.

Albena Milanova, Elio Hobdari, Georgi Atanasov

The Ambos from the Churches in Zaldapa (Province of Scythia)

The present study is concerned by one specific element of the liturgical furniture of Early Christian basilicas, namely the ambo. Of the roughly sixty basilicas from the province of Scythia known to date, only nine of them have proven or suspected traces of pulpits, and a third of the examples come from the large Roman and Byzantine city of Zaldapa. Such are documented by K. Škorpil in Basilica no. 1, by G. Atanasov, V. Yotov and I. Yotov in Basilica no. 3 and by the authors of this paper in the tetraconchal church (no. 6), which is still under excavation. All of them belong to the so-called Constantinopolitan type with two opposite staircases and a φ-shape, and are situated in the middle of the central nave, but show some differences in terms of construction and dimensions, as well as the proportion of the area they occupy of the whole interior space.

In Basilicas no. 1 and no. 3, which are similar in architecture and sculptural decoration, only the bases of the pulpits are preserved, and no elements of parapet slabs have been found despite the significant amount of sculptural details coming from them. On the other hand, in the tetraconchal church, we deal with fragments or whole pieces of all the structural elements that allow a complete reconstruction of the ambo. It turns out that it uses two series of curved parapets as slabs for the balcony that have been reused (probably from the earlier Basilicas no. 1 and no. 3). Its construction had to overcome constructive difficulties. Attempts to overcome them were carried out and they will also be the subject of our analysis. That, together with other indicators from the sculpture, give also chronological data for the churches of Zaldapa.

Vassil Tenekedjiev

Construction, Demolition, Rebuilding, and Repairs of the Early Christian Churches in the City of Odessos and its Vicinity (Late 4th – Early 7th Century)

This presentation examines the Early Christian churches in the city of Odessos and its vicinity (from the late 4th – early 7th c.) from a specific point of view. The first task is to collect and systematise the available data about the major building phases of the churches and about minor architectural interventions, repairs, refurbishing and redecoration. The second task is more experimental: to try to find a pattern in the chronology of these events. The third task remains in the field of hypotheses due to the amount and the quality of the available evidence. This task would be to try to connect, as far as possible, the activities which formed the history of construction of the churches with events or periods from the history of Odessos: wars and invasions, political and administrative changes, natural disasters (such as earthquakes and tsunamis) etc. A commentary, and in some cases new archaeological data, is provided for important sites like the potential monastic complex on Dzhanavara Hill, the Episcopal Basilica of Odessos, and the basilicas near Zvezditsa, near Galata, in the Borovets locality, etc.

Alexander Harizanov, Alexander Manev, Nikolay Rusev

Dacia Ripensis in the Sixth Century: a case study from the fortified settlement at Dimovo, North-western Bulgaria

Between 2021 and 2023, a rescue archaeological excavation was implemented near the modern-day town of Dimovo, Vidin region, in relation to the construction work for the new I-1 highway (E79 European route). A previously unknown fortified settlement was discovered, located on top of a hill on the right bank of the Archar River.

In the last decades of the 4th and the first half of the 5th c. AD the site was used as a provisions depot, which stored and safeguarded foodstuffs and fodder in multiple deep pits carved into the bedrock. The settlement was located along the Ratiaria – Naissus – Lissus, some twelve Roman miles to the South of Ratiaria. Shortly before the middle of the 5th c. AD the site was abandoned, probably as a result of an enemy attack.

In the 6th c. AD life in the settlement was restored and the fortification wall was rebuilt. Habitation during this period was of a more civic type, with the site possibly being used as a refuge for local civilians in times of crisis. A small church was erected during the same time over the ruins of one of the abandoned buildings, adjacent to the northern curtain wall. Finally, occupation of the site ceased before the end of the same century.

This presentation examines the archaeological structures and material culture (including coins, amphorae, household pottery, and metal artefacts) from the settlement's second occupation phase, when Dacia Ripensis bordered the newly established *quaestura exercitus* to the East. The research contextualizes the site within the broader provincial framework and historical developments of the region.

Vladislav Zhivkov

Reorganization of the Frontier Defence in Dacia Ripensis During the 6th c. AD. Ratiaria – Cebrus Section

This report examines the changes in the defence of the Lower Danube frontier during the Early Byzantine period. It focuses on the transformations in fortifications that occurred in the late 4th and 5th c., when new fortifications began to be constructed not only along the border itself but also deeper within the province. Written sources provide evidence of significant reorganizations in the 6th c. In the area under consideration, this involved the conversion of old Late Roman towers (*burgi*) into fortresses. The report specifically analyses this type of transformation in the section between Ratiaria and the Tsibritsa River.

Deyan Rabovyanov

The Fortress near the Village of Hrastovo, Krumovgrad region: new fortified site from the Early Byzantine period in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains

The fortress near the village of Hrastovo comprises an area of 0.83 ha. It is one of the largest in the territory of Krumovgrad municipality. Until recently this site was known only from field surveys and small mentions in scientific papers. Three seasons of archaeological excavations between 2022 and 2024 revealed the fortress functioned like a local centre and fortified settlement during the Late Antique and medieval periods. It was built in the second third of the 5th c. AD with mortar and clay bonded wall construction. There is no data for the existence of towers. Even in the beginning the fortress was used as refuge, during the 6th c. AD it developed into a fortified settlement with a large, single-aisle church. Preliminary data shows that the fortress was burnt down towards the end of the rule of Justinian I, probably before the 560s. Its resurrection during the Middle Ages is already another story.

Constantin Băjenaru

The Fortification of Ulmetum during the 6th Century – from reconstruction to final abandonment

The Late Roman and Early Byzantine fort at Ulmetum has been the subject of extensive research over the last two decades, which has led to the establishment of a well-defined chronology for the stages of habitation established by stratigraphic observations. There are currently important archaeological and numismatic sources regarding the dating of the reconstruction phase in the time of Justinian (also mentioned by Procopius), concrete data regarding the intensity and character of habitation within the fortress in the middle and second half of the 6th c., as well as some evidence regarding the progressive abandonment towards the end of the 6th c. and possibly the beginning of the 7th c.

Ioto Valeriev

The Western Fortress Wall of Odessos (according to K. Škorpil's sketches and other data)

In the archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, under AE No. 410 – Varna (sheets 4–7; 11–12; 14; 33) important short notes by Karel Škorpil on the fortification system of Odessos from the ancient period, drawn on working sketches, have been preserved. From the review of most scientific works – books and articles on ancient Odessos, medieval Varna, and Varna during the Ottoman period, it is evident that these sketches and notes have remained unknown. Only some of the mentioned data for individual sectors have been established during excavations over the decades and are drawn on the plan of the archaeological reserve "Odessos – Varna", which has been included in a number of publications.

The analysis of the sketches and notes of Karel Škorpil and some new data allow for the certainty of situating and explaining 5 (five) new triangular towers, as well as a gate along the route of the western Late Antique fortress wall.

Valeri Yotov

The Late Antique South Fortress Wall of Odessos (according to M. Lazarov's sketches and the new data)

In 1982, Mikhail Lazarov examined part of the southern fortress wall of Odessos during rescue archaeological excavations. His report (from the archive of the Varna RMH) defines the latter as Hellenistic (?) and Roman.

Forty years later (in 2019–2021) an opportunity arose to study this and several other nearby important sectors of the south-western part of Odessos and to substantiate more specific characteristics and dates, namely their use during the Roman period (2nd – 3rd c. AD) and renovation, as well as the construction of new sectors during the Late Antique period (4th – end of 6th c. AD).

The structures which were discovered in 1982, and the latest ones, reveal probably the longest route (about 100 m) of the fortress wall in Odessos and add important data on the ancient fortification system and architecture of the city.

Ştefan Honcu

The Late Sixth – Early Seventh Centuries in the Province of Scythia Minor: the new archaeological discoveries from Argamum and Ibida

Located on the border of the Empire, Scythia Minor province was in close correlation with its economic and historical, as well as social relations with migratory peoples. The aim of our paper is to present the results of our archaeological research carried out in the fortifications of Argamum and Ibida. The new information will put in to a new light the evolution of the two cities and will contribute to a better knowledge of the end of Late Roman rule in the province. As we known until now, the end of Late Roman rule in the province occurred sometime towards the end of the 6th c. and in the first two decades of the following one. However, in the light of new archaeological discoveries it can be said that the time of the abandonment of the province should be reconsidered, sometime after the first quarter of the 7th c.

Gabriel M. Talmațchi, Constantin Șova

Aspects of the Evolution of Late Roman Housing Complexes and the Street System in the Southern Quarter of the Tropaeum Traiani: results of archaeological research from the period 2003–2024

Systematic archaeological research in the southern quarter sector of the Tropaeum Traiani fortress (today named sector C) has provided, over time, numerous data of archaeological, historical and architectural interest. The aim of the research was to obtain new information regarding the overall urban image of the southern quarter, the Late Roman housing complexes, and the existing street system in the area – mainly the *cardo*. Up to this point, four possible Roman period buildings have been identified, of a civil (private) character. The most imposing is no. 2, located on a large area at south of the *basilica forensis*. It is a Roman house of the *domus* type, a building – oriented north / south (slightly north-west and south-east), with a width of 25 m and a length of 45 m. Several compartments of the building were discovered, the clearest being an atrium (7 x 5 m) and a vestibule (11 x 4 m). The edifice went through at least two distinct main stages of construction – reconstruction. Its initial construction belongs to the Constantinian period. The second stage would be the partial reconstruction (certain areas of the building) and then the re-compartmentation (in the first two or three decades of the 6th c. AD, by walls bonded with clay). We also mention the discovery of a possible annex building of the *basilica forensis* (south of it), which had two monumental entrances. The second important street in the city, the *cardo*, was discovered over a length of approximately 20 meters, with at least two repairs specific to the Late Roman and Early Byzantine eras being identified.

Constantin Băjenaru, Ana Hamat, Ştefan Georgescu, Cătălin Nopcea

Underground Structures in the Hinterland of Tomis in the 6th and 7th Century

Infrastructure-led archaeological research carried out in the last 15 years in the hinterland of the city of Tomis has led to the identification of several small sites, where structures consisting of underground galleries predominate. Many of these sites are located near ancient roads. The study of the archaeological material suggests the dating of most of these structures in the second half of the 6th c. and the first quarter of the 7th c.

Jacek Wiewiorowski

Quaestor Iustinianus Exercitus *in Military Action: a re-evaluation of the hypothesis*

In 2006, the author published a paper concerning the possible military duties of *quaestor Iustinianus exercitus* (J. Wiewiorowski, *Quaestor Iustinianus Exercitus – a Late Roman Army Commander?*, Eos 93.2, 2006, pp. 317–340). In the conclusion, he stated then that it still cannot be ruled out that *quaestor Iustinianus exercitus* was in fact not only the civil officer but also the military commander on the Lower Danube. Herein, the author tries to rethink the hypothesis, taking into consideration new sources and studies in respect of the *quaestura*, as well as Justinian's reforms of provincial administration and their later development, and also opinions regarding the nature of Late Roman imperial governance.

Ksenija Đukić, Veda Mikašinović

Exploring the Past through Skeletal Remains: bioarchaeological findings from the fortified town of Gradina (6th – 7th century)

This paper presents the preliminary results of a bioanthropological analysis of human skeletal remains from the Gradina site on Mount Jelica, Central Serbia. Occupied continuously from the Copper Age to the Early Middle Ages, the site's most significant remains date to the Early Byzantine period, particularly during the reign of Emperor Justinian I. Over the course of a century, a fortified town developed, featuring five churches, secular buildings, and stone ramparts. The site reveals a diverse population, including individuals of Germanic origin, with a dominant Christian presence, as indicated by churches and liturgical artefacts.

Excavations at Gradina have uncovered numerous material culture finds, including imported goods and locally produced tools. Evidence of widespread fire damage suggests a violent destruction of the town in the late 6th or early 7th c. Bioanthropological analysis of 64 burial units, containing 94 individuals (17 women, 22 men, and 23 children), revealed valuable insights. Due to poor preservation, biological sex and age could not be determined for all remains. Of the 94 individuals, 55 were in poor condition, particularly those from multi-burial graves. Age distribution included 7 young adults, 52 full adults, and 6 old adults. Pathological conditions were observed in 27 individuals, with many children showing signs of early life stress.

This study is significant as researches on skeletal remains from fortified settlements of the Justinianic period are rare in the Balkans. It provides valuable insights into the daily lives and living conditions of the region's past inhabitants.

Veda Mikašinović, Ksenija Đukić

Mortality and Morbidity during the Justinianic Plague: bioarchaeological evidence from South-eastern Europe

The First Pandemic, beginning with the Justinianic Plague (541 – 544 AD), is the earliest historically documented outbreak attributed to *Yersinia pestis*. Lasting nearly two centuries, it caused major disruptions across the Byzantine Empire. Although traditionally considered a key factor in the collapse of Antiquity, recent scholarship has emphasized the need for localised, multidisciplinary studies to reassess its true scope and impact.

This paper presents a regional study based on the bioanthropological, paleopathological, and dental analysis of approximately 420 human skeletons dated to the 6th – 9th c. from four necropolises in present-day Serbia. These sites functioned as regular burial grounds with no evidence of mass graves or sudden demographic collapse.

The results show a balanced biological sex distribution and a high proportion of non-adults, especially in cemeteries from the 7th and 9th c. Markers of early life stress were frequent among children, increasing in later phases (7th and 9th c. population). Among adults, degenerative changes in the joints and spine were the most common pathologies, particularly affecting 6th c. females, which possibly indicated heavy physical labour. Trauma patterns suggest mostly accidental injuries, except in the 6th c. group, where evidence points to interpersonal violence. Macroscopic signs of infectious disease were rare.

This research contributes new data from an underexplored region of southeast Europe, offering insights into health, daily life, and resilience during and after the Justinianic Plague. The findings contribute to the broader scholarly debate on the First Pandemic, supporting more regionally nuanced interpretations of its consequences.

Pantelis Charalampakis, Nikolay Dimitrov, Milena Raycheva

The Digital Sigillographic Corpus of Bulgaria (DigiSigiCorpBG): a new research tool for the study of communication networks in Late Antiquity

Sigillographic artefacts (seals and matrices for sealing and stamping) are of great importance to the study of history and archaeology alike, especially when discovered during systematic and rescue excavations, i.e. with known find-spots. Today, museums and private collections in Bulgaria keep approximately 4,500 specimens (Roman, Late Roman, Byzantine and medieval Bulgarian). These large quantities are, naturally, difficult to work with, especially through printed publications.

Modern technologies can take this material a step forward, so that scholars within Bulgaria and abroad can take full advantage of its potential for systematic scientific research on communication networks. The Digital Sigillographic Corpus of Bulgaria Project (DigiSigiCorpBG), funded by the National Scientific Program "Development and Promotion of Bulgarian Studies Abroad" and developed by the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in partnership with museums throughout the country, has created an innovative, bilingual (English – Bulgarian), open access, electronic database. It is designed with the current methods applied according to the SigiDoc standard, including seals and matrices for sealing and stamping discovered in Bulgaria. The specimens are presented through high quality images and are included in an interactive georeferenced map with find-spots. This poster presentation will put a special emphasis on the preparation of the map and its accuracy, through the examples of particular archaeological sites and seals dated in Late Antiquity.

Nicolaie Alexandru, Robert Constantin

Callatis – The Evolution of a Greek City in the Christian Period (4th–7th Century AD)

Based on the topographical details of the Callatis site, which were much better perceived in the interwar period (Professor Th. Sauciuc–Săveanu had already delimited these in 1926 based on spatial functionality), the acropolis, the ancient port and the commercial district were identified. Subsequent modifications of the defensive system in the Late Roman period led to the restriction of the fortified area along a higher alignment, which spatially corresponds to the highest part of the ancient city – the pagan-era acropolis of Callatis. The rescue archaeological excavations carried out in the modern city of Mangalia have revealed, in the ancient sites (urban areas and necropolises), planimetric and stratigraphic sequences that reveal dramatic changes that occurred between the 4th and 6th c. AD. These discoveries allow us to conclude with confidence that within Callatis entire areas underwent a functional transformation during Late Antiquity.

At Callatis, Late Antique tombs were identified in an area that belonged to the defensive system, the eastern limit being determined based on the discoveries in the city's defensive ditch. Based on the frequency of archaeological discoveries and, most importantly, the dating of the archaeological material, we believe that the core of the necropolis should be sought somewhere near the area investigated in 2015, where it is suspected that the remains of a cemetery basilica could lie – the ruins of this structure being located on the edge of a pagan necropolis. In the western sector of the Late Antique necropolis, in a relatively small area, architectural fragments of a building from the Hellenistic period were identified, being reused in the construction of several subsequent tombs.

Adriana Panaite

Roman Glass Finds from Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, Romania): some observations on glass supply and recycling

The poster will present a large selection of glass fragments discovered during archaeological research carried out in recent years in the Roman city of Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, Constanța country, Romania), on Sector A, to the north of Basilica A (2005–2016).

The variety of the vitreous finds reported in this paper (originate from various vessels used in the Roman and Late Roman period, such as free-blown and mould-blown bottles and beakers, lamps, but also from building elements, e.g. window panes, mosaic *tesserae*), demonstrated by the identification of different glass types previously encountered in contemporary objects from many archaeological sites from the Mediterranean Sea and Balkan Mountains regions during the Late Roman period. This reflects the trade connections of the settlement from the Lower Danube and the Black Sea region with the rest of the Roman world. It also offers some insights for understanding the glass consumption and circulation in the Lower Danube region during the Late Antique period.

Most of the glass fragments from Tropaeum Traiani were dated to the Late Roman period (from the beginning of the 4th c. until the 6th c.). However, taking into account their typology and the archaeological context of discovery, several finds were dated to an earlier period (2nd – 3rd c.).

Iulia-Alexandra Iliescu

Istros in the* Quaestura Exercitus*: a ceramic approach

Amid the turmoil affecting the Roman Empire during Late Antiquity, officials implemented several strategies to address the crisis. One of the most notable reforms was created by Justinian I in 536 AD – the so-called *quaestura exercitus* – which established a new system that encompassed the eastern half of the Roman world. In this context, border provinces, and particularly Scythia and Moesia Secunda, garnered significant attention due to their strategic position near the Danubian frontier and the Empire's capital.

The present paper explores the effects of this reform on Istros (Istria, Constanța County), a maritime city on the western coast of the Black Sea and part of the province of Scythia. To illustrate how this settlement integrates into the broader socio-economic landscape of the 6th c. while preserving its unique characteristics, various sources will be considered, including the city's topography, epigraphy, coins, and ceramic finds. A particular focus on the latter source will shed light on the development of connections between various parts of the Empire, the nature of economic relationships (whether state-controlled or based on free / private trade), the types of products traded during this era, and their influence on local communities. Furthermore, the research examines the role of Istros within this system, questioning whether it functioned solely as a supply centre but also as an active agent in the distribution of goods across the territory.

Dorel Bondoc, Gabriela Filip

Basilica and Christian Discoveries of Sucidava-Celei

The 6th c. AD Christian basilica from Sucidava-Celei is probably the most significant monument of its kind from Late Antiquity in the area north of the Lower Danube. The edifice was built inside the fortress, so we can suppose that it was an official initiative, belonging to the military and ecclesiastical authorities in the area; regarding the latter aspect, the Christian basilica from Sucidava was certainly subordinate to the Christian bishopric of Oescus, south of the Danube, in present-day Bulgaria.

Under the floor of the church six burial tombs were arranged, oriented in the same way as the basilica, in a west – east direction. Then, six other burial tombs were discovered outside the basilica, near its southern and western walls. The identity of those buried here is unknown, but it is believed that they are prelates or founders, with their families or, in any case, prominent church officials.

Several objects from the Late Roman period (4th c.) and Early Byzantine era (6th c.) come from Sucidava-Celei. It is about tiles and bricks decorated with crosses or Chrismon-type symbols, as well as inscriptions, vessels and lamps displaying Christian sigils.

Vassil Tenekedjiev

The Basilica at Pirinch Tepe, Varna: a fresh look at a site we all thought we knew well

The late 5th to 6th c. basilica at the Pirinch Tepe locality in Varna was one of the first sites to be explored by Karel Škorpil and the Varna Archaeological Society in the early 20th c. It is situated in the low-lying, previously marshy area between Lake Varna and the Bay of Varna. Today, it lies on an island bordered by two artificial navigation canals. Furthermore, from the socialist period to the present day, the basilica's ruins are located within the premises of the Ship Repair Yard (now Odessos Ship Repair Yard S. A. – Varna, Bulgaria), and access to them is severely restricted – almost impossible.

Karel Škorpil published a detailed account of the basilica in the Journal of the Varna Archaeological Society. With scholars having limited access to the site, Škorpil's plan and description became the primary source of information which was relied upon despite obvious inaccuracies in his published data.

In 2025, with the consent and support of the shipyard's management, a team from the Varna Regional Museum of History was granted access to inspect and geodetically survey the site. Photogrammetry using a drone was also conducted. This allowed for the correction of numerous unclear points in the building's description and measurements. Unfortunately, the site is partially buried today, which prevented us from answering all outstanding questions.

Again, with the shipyard's support, a virtual reconstruction of the building was created, with the poster's author serving as a scientific consultant. The work on the architectural reconstruction of the building led to some very interesting new observations about the basilica, a site which we all thought we knew well.

Hristo Preshlenov

Sacred Modules: Early Christian architecture along the South-western Pontus

The study is focused on the building scheme and architecture module used in the Early Christian churches in the Bulgarian Black Sea area. After the apostolic age, the church, apart from the community of believers, is also a building where laymen and clergy communed with God. The stone-built church is an image of the world – its *naos* symbolizes the visible material world, and its altar – the invisible spiritual world. The liturgical architectural environment, following mainly the differentiating ritual in Constantinople, is clearly expressed in the plan schemes and the volume-spatial construction of the *naos* and the altar space in 24 out of the 46 basilicas, that have become known in the years 1878–2024, toponymically, topographically and / or as a plan, constructive and / or decorative architectural plastique and liturgical equipment, along the Bulgarian Black sea coast, in the church communities in the provinces Scythia, Moesia Secunda and Haemimontus. The Early Christian basilicas are one / three-nave, with a wooden roof, with a predominantly elongated nave, in the coastal zone of Scythia and Moesia Secunda, and with a shortened nave in the south, in Haemimontus. The planning of the space is in accordance with the "golden section" in a building module, corresponding in practice to the standard Byzantine foot. The spatial organization of the side and central nave is based on symmetry as a forming compositional principle.

Alexander Harizanov

A Sixth Century* Plumbata *from Ratiaria, Dacia Ripensis? Possibilities for the Use of Lead-Weighted Darts in the Age of Justinian

Described in Late Roman and Early Byzantine military treatises such as *Epitoma Rei Militaris, De Rebus Bellicis,* and *Strategikon* using the terms *plumbatae* and *mattiobarbuli* (*martiobarbuli*), the lead-weighted darts are becoming a more common find in the archaeological record. Initially recognised mostly within the finds assemblages from sites in the western part of the former Roman Empire, these hand-thrown projectiles are currently being given more attention by researchers who study the eastern Roman provinces. Through their proper identification we can correct and augment our existing knowledge regarding the scale of their use in the Balkans, and particularly along the north-eastern frontier zone.

This contribution is dedicated to a *plumbata* head of unusual weight and dimensions discovered in the vicinity of the Late Roman site of Ratiaria, and is currently part of the permanent exhibition of the Regional Historical Museum – Vidin. In a recent study on the lead-weighted darts from Dacia Ripensis, this find has been singled out among around forty such artefacts precisely in relation to its larger size. Given the lack of data for its precise context of discovery, the dating of the Ratiaria *plumbata* could be correlated to its dimensions. According to T. Völling, there was an enlargement of the size and weight of these darts during the Early Byzantine period that might be related to the change of the carrying manner of *plumbatae* at that time. This presentation is going to offer a revaluation of this hypothesis in light of the archaeological evidence available both from the territory of Dacia Ripensis and the wider zone of the dioceses of Thracia and Dacia.