

Alexandru Madgearu

**The Province of Scythia
and the Avaro-Slavic Invasions (576-626)**

As like as all the European provinces of the Roman Empire, Scythia suffered many Slavic, Kutrigur and Avar invasions. We should note here that Dobroudja was sometimes bypassed by these invasions, because the roads to Serdica, Philippopolis, Adrianopolis, Thessalonica and Constantinople did not cross Scythia. The Slavs used also other ways when they attacked the Empire (the Iron Gates' region, the sector between the mouths of the rivers Vit and Iantra, the region of Durostorum)¹.

The period of barbarian invasions of the VIth Century could be divided in two parts. In the first one, dated in the first three quarters of the century, the invasions were scarce and did not cause major consequences. In the second one, the attacks became more intensive and they had as a result the fall of the *limes* and the losing of the Danubian provinces. The second stage began in 574, when Avars gained the first victory over the Byzantine army. (The events occurred in the western region of the Danubian *limes*)². This moment means the arising of a new well-organized military power, which was able to fight in a long war and to achieve by treaties the military victories. The previous attacks (of the Kutrigurs and Slavs) were only common raids of pillage, not a clash between two military powers. After the beginning of the Avaro-Byzantine wars, the situation changed, because even the Slavs that continued

1. G. Cankova-Petkova, *Etudes historiques* (Sofia), 4, 1968, p. 145-147, 156; D. G. Teodor, *Balcanoslavica*, 1, 1972, p. 40; M. Corovic-Ljubinkovic, *ibidem*, p. 46-47; M. Comşa, *Zeitschrift für Archäologie*, 7, 1973, 2, p. 222-223; Eadem, in *Mélanges Bosko Babic*, Prilep, 1986, p. 273-276. See also the map of V. Popovic, *Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, 1978, 3, p. 609, fig. 6.

2. Menander, frg. 34; Euagrios, V.11; Theophanes a.6066; L. Hauptmann, *Byzantion*, 4, 1927-1928, p. 155; A. Avenarius, *Die Awaren in Europa*, Bratislava, 1974, p. 87; W. Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567-822 n. Chr.*, München, 1988, p. 64.

to sack the Empire were often subjects of the Avar khaganate.

On the territory of the province of Scythia, the second stage of the barbarian invasions of the VIth Century began in 576. After the powerful Kutrigur attack of 558/559³, it succeeded a quite peaceful period, when the ruined fortresses were restored. The supposed settlement of the Avars in Dobroudja in 566/567⁴ did not cause any critical situation and there were no Slavic attacks after 559. It is true that the Bulgars invaded the diocesis of Thracia in 562, but there is no evidence that they crossed also by Scythia. (It is known only that they attacked the city of Novae)⁵.

Only after 576 the written sources (and the archaeological ones) are testifying Slavic and Avar invasions on the territory of Scythia. The first attacks were mentioned by a source that comes from a very distant zone: the Wizigotic kingdom of Spain. The chronicler Johannes Biclaensis said in his work (written out in the form of annals) that, in the tenth year of Justin II's reign (therefore, in 574/575, if the date is right), *Sclavini in Thracia multas urbes Romanorum pervadunt, quas depopulatas vacuas reliquere. Avaros litora maris captiose obsident et navibus litora Thraciae navigantibus satis infesti sunt*⁶. The editor of the chronicle (Th. Mommsen) considered that the real date is 576. This opinion seems to be right, because the victory of Tiberius over the Avars is dated by the chronicler in the fourth year of Justin II's reign (in 568/569)⁷; the real date of this victory is instead 570 or 571. If we take into account the other chronological references of the annals, the situation became more clear. The passage quoted above is dated also in the VIIIth year of

3. Johannes Antiochensis, frg. 218; Agathias, V.11-13, 20-23; Theophanes, a.6051; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, II, Paris, 1949, p. 535-540; I. Barnea, in *Din istoria Dobrogei*, II, București, 1968, p. 429-430; S. Szádeczky-Kardoss, in *RE*, Suppl. XIII, 1970, col. 517; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 34; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

4. See: L. Hauptmann, *op.cit.*, p. 152; J. Peisker, in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, II, Cambridge, 1936, p. 435-436; R. Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne de la Dobroudja*, Bucarest, 1938, p. 358; J. Kovacevic, in *Actes du VIII^e Congrès International des sciences pré- et protohistoriques*, vol. 3, Belgrad, 1973, p. 333.

5. Theophanes, a.6054; E. Stein, *op.cit.*, p. 541; I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 430; V. Popovic, *op.cit.*, p. 611; U. Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau*, Bonn, 1992, p. 8.

6. Johannis abbatis Biclaensis, *Chronica*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi, XI/1 (Chronica Minora saec. IV, V, VI, VII)*, ed. Th. Mommsen, Berolini, 1894, p. 214.

7. *Ibidem*, p. 212.

Leovegildus' reign, therefore in 575/576. (Leovegildus reigned from 568). We consider that there is more reliable the reference to the years of Leovegildus, because Johannes Biclaensis could be in mistake when he numbered the years of the so far Byzantine emperor. About this text, it was observed that the people who invaded Thracia by sea could not be the Avars; in this case there were again involved the Slavs (they knew to use small boats)⁸.

It is possible that the following passage refers also to the Slavs: *Avares Thracias vastant et regiam urbem a muro longo obsident*. This information is dated in the first year of the reign of Tiberius II Constantinus and in the ninth year of Leovegildus. The right dating could be 576/577⁹.

In the third year of the reign of Tiberius II is dated another invasion: *Avares a finibus Thraciae pelluntur et partes Graeciae atque Pannoniae occupant*¹⁰. The events are placed in the eleventh year of Leovegildus, therefore in 578/579. If we follow the chronology based on the years of Tiberius II (as single emperor), then the dating would be 580/581. But, Johannes Biclaensis took into account also the period when Tiberius was *Caesar* together with Justin II (beginning from 574). By this reason, the third year of Tiberius II would be 576/577. From these three possibilities, we choose the chronology based on the years of Leovegildus. The dating in 578/579 agrees also with that one deduced from the fragments remained from the work of Menander Protector. In 578 a mass of "100.000 Sclavins" ravaged the diocesis of Thracia¹¹. Menander, which is more reliable than the Hispanic abbey, did not mention any Avar attack in this time. As a matter of fact, such an attack was not possible, because then it was peace between Avars and the Empire. On the contrary, the Avars accepted with pleasure the proposal made by Tiberius II and they attacked the Sclavins from Wallachia and southern

8. U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

9. Joh. Bicl., p. 215.

10. *Ibidem*, p. 215.

11. Menander, frg. 47; E. Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches vornehmlich unter der Kaisern Justinus II und Tiberius Constantinus*, Stuttgart, 1919, p. 105; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 88; V. Popovic, *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome*, 87, 1975, 1, p. 449-450; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 67; C. Chiriac, *Arheologia Moldovei*, 16, 1993, p. 192-193.

Moldavia. (These Slavs, led by Dauritas, rejected the Avar hegemony)¹². We can conclude that the passage from the chronicle of Johannes Biclaensis dated in the first year of Tiberius II could be considered as a testimony concerning the Slavic invasion of 578.

The sources are saying nothing about the ways followed by the invaders. We could deduce that the Slavs crossed by the eastern part of the diocesis of Thracia (including the sea shore). Therefore, it is very probable that they crossed also by Scythia. We shall see below that the archaeological discoveries confirm the ravage of this province in 576-578.

The Slavic invasions restarted short time after the Avar raid in Wallachia. The main source, the chronicle of Ioannes Ephesensis (resumed by the XIIth Century's chronicle of Michael Syrus) says that among 581 and 584 all the Balkanic Peninsula was devastated by the Slavs¹³. Johannes Biclaensis wrote down too that *Sclavinorum gens Illyricum et Thracias vastat*¹⁴. We do not want to discuss here if this was the age when began the Slavic settlement in the Balkans —an opinion supported by some historians¹⁵. Our purpose is the clearing up of the chronology of the events that led to the end of the province of Scythia. The Slavic invasions of 576-584 had very grave consequences in all the south-eastern Europe. The most meaningful testimonies are brought by the numerous coin hoards discovered on the *limes* and in the countryside, even in Greece¹⁶.

In the province of Scythia, the effects of the Slavic attacks of 576-584 could be observed in many places. At *Axiopolis*, in a chamber located backside of the northern gate, in a burned level, was discovered a

12. Menander, frg. 48; E. Stein, 1919, p. 105, 109; L. Hauptmann, *op.cit.*, p. 155-156; I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 432; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 87-89; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 67-69; C. Chiriac, *op.cit.*, p. 195-202.

13. Ioannes Ephesensis, VI. 25. See: L. Hauptmann, *op.cit.*, p. 156-157; I. Nestor, *RESEE*, I, 1963, 1-2, p. 50-53; I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 432; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 91; V. Popovic, 1975, p. 450-451; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 75, 82-83.

14. Joh. Bicl., p. 216 (dated in the last year of Tiberius II).

15. See, for instance: G. Ostrogorsky, *Histoire de l'Etat byzantin*, Paris, 1969, p. 111; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 91; D. Angelov, *Die Entstehung des bulgarischen Volkes*, Berlin, 1980, p. 56; V. Velkov, in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jh.*, München, 1987, p. 161.

16. D. M. Metcalf, *Hesperia*, 31, 1962, p. 134-157; J. Juroukova, *Byzantinobulgarica*, 3, 1969, p. 255-263; V. Popovic, 1975, p. 458-460; Idem, 1978, p. 619-620.

hoard of 6 gold coins issued by Justinian, Justin II and Tiberius II. The authors that published the hoard are thinking that its hiding was caused by the Avaro-Slavic attacks of about 580¹⁷. We should note that is missing any detailed knowledge about the stratigraphy and the chronology of the important fortress of Axiopolis. By this reason, it is not excluded that the hoard was hidden later, after the invasion of 585/586. However, we shall see below that such a dating is less probable.

At *Capidava*, the third destruction of the IIIrd level is dated after 572/573, on the basis of the coins¹⁸. It was also observed that there was a *hiatus* in the coin currency between 578 and 587/588¹⁹.

The fortress of *Beroe* was less investigated. However, the diggings made in a building that has, probably, a military destination, show that this was quickly forsaken and burned. (Afterwards, it was not repaired). In the burning level were discovered also some coins, dated until 575/576²⁰.

At *Troesmis*, the destruction occurred around 576-584 is proved by a coin dated between 571 and 573, discovered in the civilian settlement, in a levelling layer set over a burned level²¹. E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu²² considers that the fire was caused by the Avar attacks between 570 and 573. But Dobroudja was not ravaged in those years and what is more, the place where was found the coin shows that it belonged to the layer that was levelled after the fire, with the view to the reconstruction. Therefore, the coin belongs to the previous phase and it is a *terminus post quem*. C. Chiriac (who dates the destruction in 578-579) points out also that the coin currency was interrupted at Troesmis, after 577/578²³.

Another destruction is attested at *Halmyris* in the period 576-584. It is proved by means of two hoards closed with coins from 574/575 and 576/577²⁴.

17. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, R. Ocheșeanu, *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române*, 77-79, (1983-1985), nr. 131-133, p. 177-184.

18. Z. Covacef, *Pontica*, 21-22, 1988-1989, p. 191, 194-195.

19. C. Chiriac, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

20. D. Vâlceanu, A. Barnea, *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, 26, 1975, 2, p. 210-215.

21. V. H. Baumann, *Peuce*, 8, 1980, p. 172.

22. E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, *ibidem*, p. 251, 264 (nr. 29).

23. C. Chiriac, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

24. C. Opaif, *Peuce*, 10, 1991, p. 458, 477-481.

The last fortress of Dobroudja about what we discuss here is *Ulmetum*. The researches of Vasile Pârvan proved the existence of three burned levels. In the south-western tower, a coin from 583/584 was discovered into a burned layer²⁵. Although Vasile Pârvan did not determine clearly which was the level where the coin was found, M. Sâmpetru thinks that that level is the second general burning level in the fortress²⁶. We do not know why M. Sâmpetru says this. M. Sâmpetru and C. Scorpan used as an argument that coin for the dating of the destruction in 586, in connection with the Avar campaign attested by Theophylact Simocatta²⁷. As a matter of fact, the fire could be dated also in 584. We shall prove below that the campaign of 586 concerned only the southern corner of Dobroudja.

About the fortresses of *Histria*, *Tropaeum*, *Dinogetia* and *Sacidava* it is known that were not destroyed in 576-584. About other places from Scythia we have no sufficient information.

Although the knowledge is not very plentiful, we could suppose that the Slavic invasions undertaken in 576 and recommenced in 581-584 concerned only the northern part of Dobroudja, that is *the limes' sector from north of Axiopolis*. We could not agree with C. Chiriac when he suppose that these destructions were caused by the Avar expedition of 578/579. The Avar warriors were surveyed by the Byzantine army. More probable, these destructions were caused by the Slavic attacks. C. Chiriac is instead right when he observes that the place where Avars crossed the Danube could not be around Durostorum, but somewhere on the territory of the province of Scythia, at Carsium, at Dinogetia²⁸, or —we could add this— at Capidava or at Troesmis (where are other fords used also in the Byzantine age)²⁹.

This means that the place whence the Sclavins attacked before 578 was somewhere in north-eastern Wallachia and southern Moldavia. The hiding of the hoard of Gropeni, dep. of Brăila (closed with coins from

25. V. Pârvan, *Cetatea Ulmetum*, II/1, București, 1914, p. 282-283, 304 (nr. 43).

26. M. Sâmpetru, *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche*, 22, 1971, 2, p. 218, nota 9.

27. It is not suitable the dating in 600-602, proposed by A. Petre, *Dacia, N.S.*, 7, 1963, p. 334.

28. C. Chiriac, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

29. See Gr. Florescu, R. Florescu, P. Diaconu, *Capidava. Monografie arheologică*, I, București, 1958, p. 12-13; N. Harțușe, *Istros*, I, 1980, p. 308.

577/578) is a clear proof³⁰. We could then suppose that the fortresses of Capidava, Beroe and Troesmis were ravaged in 576-577. The Sclavins crossed the Danube by the fords of Capidava or Troesmis. This means that is wrong the affirmation that Durostorum was the single ford used by the invaders³¹.

Axiopolis and Ulmetum (and probably also Halmyris) were attacked during those three years of continuous Slavic raids (581-584).

All these fortresses were reconstructed. A possible exception could be Beroe, about which there are few known data. The *limes* remained functional. These 8-9 years of "siege" provoked anyway great damages in Scythia.

The study of coin currency in Dobroudja is able to bring some quite precise data about the periods of crisis supported by the province. Such studies already exist, but are old. The problem is worthy to be reopened, because the number of discoveries increased very much. In 1971, Gh. Poenaru-Bordea arrived at the conclusion that the coefficient coins/year of reign diminished from 5,23 (under Justin II) to 1,80 (under Tiberius II). He also observed that the coins from the VIth and VIIIth years of Tiberius II (579/580 and 581/582) are missing in the collection of the Museum of Constanța and that the VIIth year (580/581) is represented by a single coin³². In a later study, he showed that there was a great reduction of the currency in Dobroudja in the period 577/578-583/584³³.

In another study of 1980, based only on the still unpublished collection of the Museum of Constanța, Gh. Poenaru-Bordea and R. Ocheșeanu applied a more subtle method. They transformed in *solidi* the nominal values of the bronze coins and they took into account the coefficient *solidi*/year of the reign. It resulted that the most significative reduction of the currency occurred in 580-582³⁴.

30. C. Chiriac, *op.cit.*, p. 201, 202.

31. D. G. Teodor, *op.cit.*, p. 40; M. Comșa, 1973, p. 222-223; P. Diaconu, in *Rapports du III^e Congrès International d'Archéologie Slave*, vol. 1, Bratislava, 1979, p. 167.

32. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, in *Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines*, vol. 3, Bucarest, 1976, p. 207-208.

33. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, Al. Popeea, *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, 27, 1976, 2, p. 226.

34. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, R. Ocheșeanu, *ibidem*, 31, 1980, 3, p. 389-390.

The increase of the number of coins makes possible and necessary the drawing up of a new statistical situation. We took into account the published coins with known value and year. There are missing many unpublished coins (some of these were used by the authors of the study of 1980). Because we have no sufficient knowledge about the part of Scythia that belongs today to Bulgaria, we included in the statistical situation only coins discovered on the territory of Romania (but without the south-western corner of Dobroudja, which did not belong to Scythia). We used the method of the calculation of the coefficient *nummia* / year, for every year of the period 573-617. The year 573/574 is considered the initial point, because we must have a short period of reference before 576 (when started the invasions in Scythia). The result is presented in *Appendix I*.

After a top of the coefficient *nummia* / year in 574/575 (this is specific also in other regions³⁵), it could be observed a sudden reduction in 575/576, which was followed by another one in 577/578. These are the consequences of the Slavic attacks of 576-578. After a short recovery in 578/579 (the year of the expedition against Dauritas), the coefficient *nummia* / year peaked out again in 579/580-583/584. The coin currency shows therefore the bad situation of the province in the period 576-584.

The crisis was surpassed, at least from the military point of view; the fortresses of the *limes* were reconstructed. Theophylact Simocatta (I.8.6.) mentioned the existence (in 585) of a commander (*ἡγεμῶν*) who has the mission to defend the Danubian frontier, on the Scythic sector. The defence system was still well organized. In this period all the sectors of the Danubian *limes* were functional. Only Sirmium was ceded in 582. The danger began after 584, when the Avars started the series of the wars against the Empire. The Avar campaign of 584 did not reach Scythia³⁶, but the Wallachian Slavins of Ardagast entered as far as Adrianopolis

35. See G. L. Duncan, *Coin Circulation in the Danubian and Balkan Provinces of the Roman Empire, A.D. 294-578*, London, 1993, p. 72, 117 and V. M. Butnariu, *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române*, 77-79, 1983-1985, nr. 131-133, p. 207 —for the north-danubian area.

36. Th. Sim., I.4.4; Euagrius, VI.10. See A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 94-95; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 77-78.

(where the general Comentiolus defeated them)³⁷. If we take into account the place of their home and the fact that Ulmetum was probably then destroyed, we could consider that these Slavs crossed by Durostorum or by Carsium, because from another passage we find that Ardagast was the leader of the Slavs from the zone placed *vis-à-vis* from Durostorum and near the river Helibachia³⁸.

The next Avar offensive in the Danubian provinces is dated in various ways by those who studied the Avar-Byzantine wars: in the autumn of 584³⁹, in 585⁴⁰, in 586⁴¹, or even in 586-587⁴². The dating of the first campaign in the summer of 584 is absolutely sure. If we are following the indications furnished by the text of Theophylact Simocatta, we find that:

- the first embassy of Elpidius to Baian took place after three months, therefore in the autumn of 584 (I.4.6.);
- the second embassy of Elpidius, “the next year”, took place, therefore in 585 (I.6.4.);
- “at the beginning of the autumn” of the same year, the Avars started the war (I.8.1.).

Therefore, the campaign related in the chapter I.8 is dated in the autumn of 585. We must pay attention that the coin of 586/587 from Tropaeum could not be used as an argument in the dating of the destruction of the town, because it was discovered out of the city, at the aqueduct⁴³.

The invasion pursued the direction: Bononia - Ratiaria - Durostorum - Tropaeum - Zaldapa - Marcianopolis. Only Tropaeum and Zaldapa are cities from Scythia.

Some researchers considered that this campaign was decisive for the destruction of the Scythic *limes* and, generally speaking, of the Byzantine civilization in Dobroudja. Especially the study of M. Sâmpetru,

37. Th. Sim., I.7; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 95-96; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 83-84.

38. Th. Sim., VI. 7-9.

39. V. Besevliev, *Etudes Balkaniques*, 5, 1966, p. 212; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

40. V. Popovic, 1975, p. 469; Idem, 1978, p. 617; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 86; U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

41. M. Sâmpetru, *op.cit.*, p. 218.

42. I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 433; A. Suceveanu, A. Barnea, *La Dobroudja romaine*, Bucarest, 1991, p. 175.

43. V. Pârvan, *Cetatea Tropaeum. Considerații istorice*, București, 1912, p. 146.

published more than two decades ago, is characteristic for the point of view that the attack of “586-587” represented a disaster for all Dobroudja⁴⁴.

This invasion was indeed very grave, but *only for the southern Dobroudja*, where Avars remained some time. The imperial counter-offensive of 586 took unawares the khagan in the “neighbourhood of the city of Tomis”. The Avar chief took refuge in an island, that could be placed in the Ovidiu lake⁴⁵. This means that the Avars were settled near Tomis. The city was probably attacked, as like as Tropaeum (where the destruction is proved by archaeological means⁴⁶. The Avars settled in this part of Dobroudja because the environment was suitable for a people habituated with the steppe. (The northern part of Dobroudja was a wooden country).

Did the Avars attack in 585 also the cities of the northern part of Dobroudja (north from the line Axiopolis-Tomis)? From the relation of Theophylact Simocatta results that the Avars pursued the Roman road Durostorum - Tropaeum - Zaldapa - Marcianopolis. Their aim was to attack the rich towns of the southern sea shore. They knew the wealth of these towns because in 584 the Avar khagan spent the winter in Anchialos. It is less probable that the Avars want to invade the northern part of Dobroudja, that was not so attractive. (In 585/586, the khagan halted near Tomis because he was afraid for the counter-offensive led by Comentiolus).

The archaeological researches do not confirm the hypothesis of the extension of the invasion of 585/586 also in northern Dobroudja, M. Sâmpetru said that *Histria* was destroyed in 586, but the last chronology of *Histria* (draw up by Al. Suceveanu) rejects the supposed destruction in 586 of the phase IV B (that is posterior to the Kutrigur attack of 559)⁴⁷. In another study (published in the same time with that of M. Sâmpetru),

44. M. Sâmpetru, *op.cit.*, p. 218-224.

45. Th. Sim., II.10.8-14; I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 433-434; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

46. C. Scorpan, *Pontica*, 5, 1972, p. 349-354; Gh. Papuc, *Pontica*, 10, 1977, p. 357-358; I. Bogdan-Cătănicu, Al. Barnea, in *Tropaeum Traiani, I. Cetatea*, București, 1979, p. 39; I. Bogdan-Cătănicu, M. Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu, *ibidem*, p. 106.

47. Al. Suceveanu, *Histria VI. Les thermes romaines*, Bucarest - Paris, 1982, p. 91. See also Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, in *Actes...*, p. 208; Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, Al. Popeea, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

Al. Suceveanu and C. Scorpan observed that the “IIIrd level” (that is, the phase IV B) was burned after 592/593 (the date of the latest coin discovered in a firm stratigraphic situation, on the “IIIrd level”)⁴⁸. Neither the coin currency, nor the composition of the hoards are bringing data for the supposed destruction of 585/586. We shall discuss below the problem of the end of the phase IV B.

The situation of *Halmyris* is unclear because we could not be sure about the dating of the destruction of the levels 10 and 11. If the *foliis* from 584/585 discovered in S.II,c.11 belongs indeed to the 11th level, then the end of the level 11 could be dated after 585. It must be observed that the number of the coins issued under Maurikios is very small: 2 from 584/585, 1 from 586/587 (an accidental discovery made before the archaeological researches), 1 from 587/588 (were studied only the coins discovered before 1987)⁴⁹. From all these, only the coin from S.II,c.11 has a known stratigraphical context. Because of this, we could not be sure that the burning of the level 11 took place *immediately* after 585. On the other hand, we saw that *Halmyris* was probably reached by the invasions of 576-584. Cristina Opaïț said that the two hoards are belonging to the 10th level⁵⁰. If the level 10 continued until the end of the '70-ies, then it is less probable that the level 11 lasted only seven or eight years. (This level is characterized by an intense building activity). There is another point of view, which puts in relation the end of the 10th level with the invasion of 558/559. The coins discovered after 1987, still unpublished, could be able to clear up this problem⁵¹. However, it is improbable the destruction of the city *Halmyris* with the occasion of the Avar attack of 585/586. The testimonies brought by the researches made in other Dobroudjan cities did not support the hypothesis of the devastation of all the province in 585/586.

48. Al. Suceveanu, C. Scorpan, *Pontica*, 4, 1971, p. 159, 162, 164. See also Al. Suceveanu, *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, 33, 1982, 1, p. 83 —where the level IV B is dated between 561/562 and 592/593.

49. C. Opaïț, *op.cit.*, p. 472-473, nr. 118-122, p. 483, nr. 10; E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, *op.cit.*, p. 509, nr. 133.

50. C. Opaïț, *op.cit.*, p. 458, 477-481.

51. About *Halmyris*: M. Zahariade, Al. Suceveanu, A. Opaïț, C. Opaïț, F. Topoleanu, *Dacia, N.S.*, 31, 1987, p. 104; M. Zahariade, in *Roman Frontier Studies 1989. Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, University of Exeter Press, 1991, p. 316; A. Opaïț, *Peuce*, 10, 1991, p. 172.

Ulmetum was probably too burned by the Slavs, in 584/585. We do not agree with M. Sâmpetru who supposes, without any reason, that “of course, the Avars continued their march till Ulmetum and then till Histria and Tomis”⁵². We should have some reasons to suppose that the Avars made a raid in the central and northern parts of the province, only if the destruction of Histria in 585/586 would be a certitude. On the other hand, the few data published about *Libida* are not sufficient to draw a firm conclusion about the destruction of the level 5 (ascribed by A. Opaïț to the famous Avar invasion of 585/586)⁵³. It is more possible that *Libida* was destroyed with the occasion of the Slavic attacks of the last years of the eight decade, because the latest coin belonging to the phase II of the monastery placed at 2 km. near the city is dated in 576/577⁵⁴. On the other hand, the researches did not attest destructions in 585-586 at *Dinogetia*⁵⁵, or at *Sacidava*⁵⁶ (situated in south!).

We could conclude that the Avar invasion was not a turning point in the history of the province of Scythia and that its effects were limited at its southern corner⁵⁷. The data existing now are showing that the *limes* of the province of Scythia remained intact after this invasion.

The road followed by the Avars was: Durostorum - Tropaeum - Zal-dapa - Marcianopolis. This road turned to east at Sucidava (Izvoarele). Therefore, the city of *Sacidava* (Muzait) was out of this road; as we mentioned above, the researches made there showed that the fortress was not destroyed around 585/586. The situation is different at *Sucidava* - Izvoarele (Pârjoaia). Here, the latest of the published coins is dated just in 584/585⁵⁸. We do not know which was the fate of the city of *Sucidava* after the invasion, but it could be supposed that the hiding of the church treasure was provoked by the Avar attack of 585/586⁵⁹.

52. M. Sâmpetru, *op.cit.*, p. 218.

53. A. Opaïț, *SCIVA*, 42, 1991, 1-2, p. 25, 54.

54. A. Opaïț, C. Opaïț, T. Bănică, *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*, 59, 1990, 1, p. 22.

55. See Al. Barnea, *Peuce*, 9, 1984, p. 339-345.

56. C. Scorpan, *op.cit.*, p. 358; Idem, *Limes Scythiae. Topographical and Stratigraphical Research on the Late Roman Fortifications on the Lower Danube*, Oxford, 1980, p. 128.

57. I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 433; Gh. Poenaru-Bordea in *Actes...*, p. 208; Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, Al. Popeea, *op.cit.*, p. 226; C. Scorpan, *op.cit.*, p. 123-128.

58. B. Mitrea, *Dacia, N.S.*, 10, 1966, p. 414, nr. 61.

59. A. Rădulescu, T. Cliante, *Pontica*, 19, 1986, p. 127-158.

In the inside of the province (namely in its southern corner), the Avar raid has indeed hard consequences. The city of Tropaeum survived, but with big damages that conduced to the intensifying of the process of ruralisation. Somebody supposed that the precinct wall was repaired after the destruction, in the phase VI A⁶⁰, but the fact that the tower 15 near the western gate (which was blocked and transformed in a dwelling space) was not repaired makes unprobable the idea of the surviving of the precinct wall with its defensive function⁶¹.

About *Zaldapa* we know, from Theophylact Simocatta, that was again ravaged by the Slavs (in 595)⁶². Therefore, the city survived too after the Avar attack of 585/586.

The Avar campaign of 585/586 is the ending point of the first stage of the barbarian invasions of the period about which we discuss here. Almost without pause, these attacks caused destructions or in the north, or in the south of the province. The coin currency shows that after 583/584 the crisis was surpassed. In 584/585-591/592, the coefficient *nummia/year* became higher and reached two tops in 587/588 and 591/592. The small reduction of this coefficient in the year 588/589 could be explained by the Slavic invasion in (the diocese?) Thracia, mentioned by Theophylact Simocatta in 588 or 589⁶³.

Generally speaking, the period between 586 and 593 was peaceful in the province of Scythia. Then were rebuilt the destroyed cities. If we take into account that the attack of 585/586 concerned only the south of the province, we could say that this *intermezzo* began in 584/585.

The first campaign of the second stage of the Avar-Byzantine wars did not reach the territory of Scythia. The road followed by the Avar warriors was described by Theophylact Simocatta with high precision: Singidunum - Bononia - Procliana - Anchialos - Driziperia - Tzurullon⁶⁴. The Avars aimed to attack the region near Constantinople and they entered nor in the east of Moesia Secunda. The dating of this campaign (and of all the events of the '90-ies) is still discussed. This is not the

60. I. Bogdan-Cătăniciu, M. Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu, *Monumente Istorice și de Artă*, 12, 1975, 2, p. 61; I. Bogdan-Cătăniciu, in *Tropaeum Traiani, I. Cetatea*, București, 1979, p. 63.

61. G. Papuc, *op.cit.*, p. 358.

62. Th. Sim., III.2.2. See also Al. Suceveanu, Al. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

63. Th. Sim., III.4.7. See A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 96; U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

64. Th. Sim., VI.4-5; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 134-135.

place for a special study about the chronological problems posed by the relation of Theophylact Simocatta. We mention here only that the most probable dating of this campaign is 593⁶⁵. This point of view is based not only on the analysis of Theophylactus Simocatta's text, but also on a numismatic argument: the mint of Constantinople diminished its activity in the period August 593 - August 594⁶⁶.

In the period 581-586, the Slavic attacks were sometimes coordinated with the Avar campaigns. For instance, in 585, the Slavic tribes led by Ardagast attacked Thracia, at the urge of the Avar khagan. It is however very probable that the Wallachian Slavs were then subjects of the Avar "empire"⁶⁷. This cooperation between Avars and Slavs is characteristic also for the subsequent wars. The written sources did not mention a Slavic invasion in Scythia in 592-593, but such an event could be supposed on the basis of indirect information.

In the spring of 594, the general Priscus started an offensive against the Slav tribe of Ardagast. He crossed the Danube near Durostorum (probably by Pârjoaia) and he advanced towards the river Helibachia (that could be identified with Ialomîța) and then towards the north-eastern Wallachia⁶⁸.

We consider that the aim of this expedition was the punishment of that Slavians who attacked the territory of the Empire. If we take into account the place where was their homeland, we could suppose that they crossed the Danube by the fords north of Hârșova (Carsium). Archaeological data agree with this hypothesis. The latest coins discovered at Dinogetia⁶⁹ and at Troesmis⁷⁰ are issued in 591/592. At Histria, the end of the phase IV B ("III^d level") is dated after 592/593 —the date of the latest coin discovered *in situ*⁷¹. The year 593 is taken into account as one of the possible moments of destruction of Histria, accordingly to the

65. It took place one year after the Maurikios' unfinished campaign; (Th. Sim. VI.2-4); this one happened in 592. See W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 129, 134-135, with the previous bibliography.

66. V. Popovic, 1975, p. 476.

67. L. Hauptmann, *op.cit.*, p. 156-158; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

68. Th. Sim., VI.7; I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 435; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 104-105; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 136-138.

69. B. Mitrea, *Pontica*, 7, 1974, p. 69, nr. 64.

70. E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, *op.cit.*, p. 274, nr. 177.

71. See note 48.

information brought by the coin currency⁷². The hoard discovered at "Terme I" is closed with coins of 592/593⁷³ or 593/594⁷⁴ (the year of the reign of Maurikios is uncertain). All these are making probable the supposition that the Slavs invaded Scythia in 592/593. With this occasion was probably destroyed also the fortress Ulmetum (for the second time); the burning of the level 6 of Libida could be provoked also by this raid. The statistics of coin currency shows an important decreasing of the coefficient *nummia/year* in 592/593 and 593/594. In the next year, 594/595, the coefficient turns to the middle level proper to the period 585-592.

In the year 595⁷⁵ is mentioned another Sclavin invasion in the south of Scythia; then where sacked Zaldapa, Aquis and Skopis⁷⁶. The invaders crossed the Danube probably by Durostorum. It is not excluded that the hoard of Șocariciu (Unirea), dep. of Călărași, closed in 594/595⁷⁷, was hidden with the occasion of those events.

The general Petrus started a counteroffensive in the autumn of 595. His army passed over the Danube near Asemum and defeated the Sclavins of Piragast. But then, the Byzantine army lost its way and was in its turn defeated by the Slavs in a skirmish, near the river Helibachia⁷⁸. The mention of the river Helibachia could be a mistake, because the events took place far away from Ialomița⁷⁹. However, the Sclavins that were defeated by the Byzantine army lived somewhere in the central Wallachia. The province of Scythia was however ravaged in 595, because the coefficient *nummia/year* descended to the *value zero* in 595/596, after the quite high level of the years 592-594. The same

72. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, in *Actes...*, p. 209.

73. *Ibidem*.

74. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, in *Histria VI...*, p. 158, nr. 175.

75. The north-danubian offensive led by Priscus is dated in 594. In the next year took place the campaign of Petrus; soon after his return at Constantinople, he left for Marcianopolis, where he defeated a group of Slavs.

76. Th. Sim., VII.2.2.

77. I. Dimian, *Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică*, II, 1958, p. 413-416; V. M. Butnariu, *op.cit.*, p. 228. See also V. Popovic, 1978, p. 623.

78. Th. Sim., VII.2.5; I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 436; A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 106; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 141-143; U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 11-12.

79. N. Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains*, II, Bucarest, 1937, p. 316 supposed that Helibachia was the river Ilfov.

statistics shows that in the next two years, the coefficient returned to values comparable to those of 592-594.

The years 596-598 were rather peaceful in the province of Scythia, because the military operations moved on the western sector of the *limes*. The situation was very bad in that zone of a great strategic value. The road Singidunum - Naissus - Philippopolis - Thessalonica - Constantinople was in danger. The general Priscus started a new offensive against the Avars with the purpose of defending the initial point of the road (Singidunum) and to destroy the Avar center of power of the Sirmium zone. In the spring of 596, Priscus freed Singidunum, but his offensive has no other results. The Empire lost all the fortresses of the western sector of the *limes*, except Singidunum and Viminacium⁸⁰. Then followed a peaceful period of about 18 months, between the spring of 596 and the autumn of 597.

In the autumn of 597, the Avar warriors started a new offensive, similar to those of 584 and 585. Theophylact Simocatta tells that "in this time, the khagan honoured by the Avars assembled the armies and left towards Thracia and Moesia and then besieged the city Tomis (Τομέα τῆ πόλει)"⁸¹. The siege lasted all the winter and the spring of 598. The siege was finally removed because the Avars heard that Comentiolus started a counter-offensive. The Avar army went then towards Nicopolis ad Istrum with the purpose to encounter Comentiolus' army. In his turn, the Byzantine general decided to advance towards Zicidiba and Iatrus⁸². Zicidiba was placed somewhere in the region Iatrus - Appiaria, not necessarily on the bank of the Danube⁸³. Therefore, the march of the Byzantine army was directed towards east. We agree the opinion that the besieged city Tomis is Constanța. Gh. Ștefan proposed some time ago the identification with a small fortress of Dacia Mediterranea, Tomea, attested in *De Aedificiis*, IV.4⁸⁴. Some recent studies

80. Th. Sim., VII.7.10-12. See V. Popovic, 1975, p. 476-486; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 144-146.

81. Th. Sim., VII.13.1.

82. *Ibidem*, VII.13.8.

83. See V. Besevliev, *Linguistique Balkanique*, 4, 1962, p. 62; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 153, 388 (note 12).

84. Gh. Ștefan, *Dacia*, N.S., 11, 1967, p. 253-258. The hypothesis was accepted by I. Barnea, *op.cit.*, p. 436-437, M. Sâmpetru, *op.cit.*, p. 239-240, note 99, V. Popovic, 1975, p. 478, C. Scorpan, 1980, p. 128-129, U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 12. D. M. Pippidi, *Contribuții la*

are rejecting the Ștefan's hypothesis, using as an argument also that Dacia Mediterranea was not involved in those events⁸⁵.

We consider therefore that the events of the winter of 597 and the spring of 598 took place also in Dobroudja. The coin currency recorded this new shock; in 598/599 and in the next year, the coefficient *nummia*/year peaked out to zero. The year 597/598 was proposed as the moment of destruction of the city of Histria, on the basis of the hoard discovered in the "economic sector"⁸⁶.

In 599-601, Dobroudja was not involved in the military operations. This caused the recovery of the coin currency in 600/601.

In november 602 occurred the famous Phokas' rebellion. The idea of the fall of the *limes* just in 602 is now obsolete. This historiographic *clichéé* was founded on the negative image of Phokas created by the Byzantine chroniclers. For Theophylact Simocatta and Theophanes, Phokas is an evil personage, a type of a tyrant, an antithesis of the exemplar emperor Heraklios⁸⁷. The western chroniclers did not have such a bad opinion about Phokas. Paulus Diaconus (who was a contemporary of Theophanes) wrote that: *Phokas fuit utilis rei publicae* and even that he defeated the Avars (*Hunni quoque, qui et Avaros appellantur, eius virtute devicti sunt*)⁸⁸. About this victory against the Avars we know nothing, but it could not be in principle excluded. The age of Phokas must be studied with more attention and without the preconceived ideas imposed by the chroniclers favourable to his ennemy, Heraklios.

Of course, the critical situation provoked by the rebellion of the Danubian troopes was an opportunity for pillages made by barbarian

istoria veche a României, București, 1967, p. 506-507, note 38 expressed some doubts concerning the ideas of the study published later by Gh. Ștefan.

85. V. Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity (Studies and Materials)*, Amsterdam, 1967, p. 57, 107, 183; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 152, 387 (nota 3). See also H. Mihăescu, in Teofilact Simocata, *Istorie bizantină*, București, 1985, p. 147, note 37; Z. Covacef, *op.cit.*, p. 195, note 39 (who admits the identity Tomis-Constanța).

86. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, in *Actes...*, p. 209.

87. Recent historiography is on the way of reconsidering the reign of Phokas. See R. J. Lilie, *Südost-Forschungen*, 44, 1985, p. 17-19; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 237-238; U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 13, but also the study of F. Barisic, *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta*, 4, 1956, p. 73-88.

88. Pauli *Historia Longobardorum*, IV.26 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum, sec. IV-IX*), Hannover, 1878, p. 125.

invaders or just by revolted soldiers. The diminishing of the coefficient *nummia/year* in 602/603 reflects this critical situation.

The archaeological data are scarce. The destruction of Histria around 602 is not proved. About other fortresses we know nothing. Only at Sacidava, the burning of the level II has as a *terminus post quem* a coin from 599/600⁸⁹. Because the next level (I) lasted till 614, the destruction of the IInd level could not be placed too late after 600. On the other hand, it is less probable a destruction in 600-601. By these reasons, we consider that Sacidava was burned in the circumstances created by the rebellion of Phokas.

We must take into account that the "rebellion of Phokas" meant only the uprising of the *comitatensis* army (or, of a part of it) and of the Constantinopolitan plebs. We do not know if the civilian people of the provinces were also involved. The uprising was provoked by the discontent of the soldiers. The rebellion began far of Scythia, near Securisca and Asemum. By these reasons, it is not surprising that the rebellion has no major consequences in the province of Scythia.

The situation of the Danubian provinces in the age of Phokas is little known. In 604, Phokas concluded a treaty with the Avars; the tribute mounted at 140.000-150.000 *solidi*. It seems that this treaty was concluded after a new Avar victorious campaign, occurred in 603-604⁹⁰. This peace permitted the dislocation of the European army on the Persian battle front. Somebody affirmed that the treaty did not prevent the Slavic attacks⁹¹. Other researchers are supposing that the Slavs settled south of the Danube became *foederati* after 602⁹². The sources are too poor for drawing up such conclusions. A discussion about the possible *foedus* concluded with the Slavs is out of our subject. However, the lack of *solidi* given by Phokas as *subsidia* makes unprobable the hypothesis of this *foedus*.

89. C. Scorpan, 1972, p. 358; Idem, 1980, p. 66, 74, 128.

90. W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

91. H. Ditten, in *Byzanz im 7. Jh. Untersuchungen zur Herausbildung des Feudalismus*, Berlin, 1978, p. 95.

92. R. Florescu, *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice*, 41, 1972, 3, p. 25-26; A. Avenarius, in *Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines*, vol. 2, București, 1975, p. 301-302.

In the province of Scythia, the coefficient *nummia/year* turned again to high values in 603-608, similar to the period 591-598. This shows the recovery of the province and the keeping of the relations with the Empire. On the other hand, as it can be observed from *Appendix II*, the coin currency in the age of Phokas kept a level comparable with that registered under Maurikios. The coefficient coins/year is even the highest among all the reigns. This phenomenon is not an exception. For instance, at Corinth, the coefficient under Phokas is 7,00 (2,04 under Maurikios); at Caričin Grad, its value is 0,55 (0,28 under Maurikios)⁹³. In Scythia, the age of Phokas is not very different from that one of Maurikios. The town-life survived sometimes. We note here only few interesting data. At Tomis, the big church near the northern gate functioned also in the time of Phokas (on a brick floor was discovered a coin from 602/603)⁹⁴. The precinct of Histria (in the phase E, contemporary to Phokas) was repaired in a technique similar with the previous one. The three earth ramparts, built in the same time, strengthened the town defence⁹⁵. Histria kept its urban character after 602, probably until the new wave of invasions of the second decade of the VIIth Century⁹⁶. The situation became grave only at the end of the reign of Phokas, by cause of the troubles provoked by the rebellion of Heraklios of 609. In the same time the Avars attacked again the Balkan Peninsula. Very dangerous Slavic and Avar invasions are attested in 614-616, 617, 619, 623. The failure of the siege of Constantinople of 626 put an end to these invasions⁹⁷.

The written sources are saying nothing about the fate of the province of Scythia after the rebellion of Phokas, but it is sure that it was stricken by the invasions of that period. The year 614 was considered by M. Sâmpetru as the ending point of the Byzantine civilization in Dobroudja⁹⁸.

93. See K. M. Setton, *Speculum*, 27, 1952, 3, p. 354; V. Ivanisevic, in *Caričin Grad. II. Le quartier sud-ouest de la ville haute*, Belgrad - Roma, 1990, p. 264.

94. A. Rădulescu, in *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines*, II, Bucarest, 1991, p. 34.

95. C. Domăneanțu, A. Sion, *SCIVA*, 33, 1982, 4, p. 388.

96. A. Petre, *op.cit.*, p. 324-334; Al. Suceveanu, *Histria VI*, p. 92.

97. A. Avenarius, *op.cit.*, p. 110-112; V. Popovic, 1975, p. 489-496; R. J. Lilie, *op.cit.*, p. 17-23; W. Pohl, *op.cit.*, p. 237-255; U. Fiedler, *op.cit.*, p. 13-14.

98. M. Sâmpetru, *op.cit.*, p. 230-235.

It is true that the latest coins discovered in many cities are dated in the period 613-616: at Halmyris (612/613)⁹⁹, at Sacidava (612/613)¹⁰⁰, at Histria (613/614)¹⁰¹, at Aegyssus (613/614)¹⁰², at Ulmetum (614/615)¹⁰³, at Axiopolis (614/615)¹⁰⁴, at Libida (614/615)¹⁰⁵. In some cases (for instance, at Sacidava), these latest coins were discovered in burned levels. At Tomis, the destruction of the building with mosaic floor is dated with a coin from 613¹⁰⁶. The effects of the invasions of 614-626 were, of course, very grave also for the province of Scythia, but not all the cities were destroyed. For instance, Histria was not attacked. The coin of 613/614 is only a guide mark of absolute chronology for the last phase of settlement. Histria survived some decades after 614¹⁰⁷.

The chronology of the process of the dismantlement of the Danubian *limes*, proposed by Maria Comşa¹⁰⁸, is worthy of take into account, because it rejects the conception of the abandonment of all the *limes* just in 602. The fall of the *limes* is seen as a gradual process. In each of the stages of this process was left one of other of the sectors of the *limes*. The frontier did not fail at once. Maria Comşa considers that some isolate fortresses resisted until the end of the reign of Heraklios. As concerns the province of Scythia, in the first stage (the end of the VIth Century) was abandoned only the sector Dinogetia-Troesmis. In the second stage (the beginning of the VIIth Century) were left Noviodunum

99. C. Opaïț, *op.cit.*, p. 473, nr. 123.

100. C. Scorpan, 1980, p. 70.

101. C. Preda, H. Nubar, *Histria III. Descoperirile monetare 1914-1970*, București, 1973, p. 227, nr. 2042.

102. A. Opaïț, *Pontica*, 10, 1977, p. 309.

103. B. Mitrea, *Dacia, N.S.*, 10, 1966, p. 413, nr. 60.

104. Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, R. Ocheșeanu, E. Nicolae, *Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică*, 9, 1989, p. 72, nr. 209.

105. A. Opaïț, *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, 42, 1991, 1-2, p. 54.

106. M. Sâmpetru, *op.cit.*, p. 225, 230.

107. Al. Suceveanu, *Histria VI*, p. 92. The coin was discovered in a group of chambers from the sector "Temple", where was found also a buckle of "Pá pa" type, dated in the first third of the VII Century. (D. M. Pippidi, G. Bordenache, V. Eftimie, *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice*, 7, 1961, p. 232-233). About the buckle, see Al. Madgearu, *SCIVA*, 44, 1993, 2, p. 171-183.

108. M. Comşa, in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis. 8. Jh.*, München, 1987, p. 222-223.

and Nufărul (identified by M. Comșa with Thalamonium). Under Heraklios, the sectors Durostorum-Axiopolis, Carsium-Beroe and the Aegysus zone were still in function.

Another chronology was drawn by Alexandru Barnea¹⁰⁹. The phase 5, posterior to the Kutrigur attack of 559, closes in the age of Maurikios and is characterized by the preserving of the *limes* as a defensive system. The phase 6 begins at the end of the VIth Century and continues until the reign of Heraklios. The Byzantine authority survived at least until 613-615.

The chronology proposed by Maria Comșa could be developed and detailed. *Appendix III* contains a synoptical table of the destructions of the fortresses of the Scythian *limes* in the period here discussed.

It is necessary to make a distinction between the end of the settlement and the end of the military function of a city. From our point of view, it has importance only the end of the military function. In almost all cases, the settlement continued some decades after the end of the military function. In this respect, another distinction is worthy of take into account: town-life and life-in-town. "Life-in-town" is the specific way of life in the ruined Roman or Byzantine cities. This "ruralization" could be observed in post-Roman Dacia or Britannia, but also in Scythia, in the VIIth Century. Usually, after the end of the military function, the town life continued some time and only after this stage the former city became a rural settlement¹¹⁰. For instance, at Halmyris, the precinct was dismantled with the occasion of the destruction of the level 11 (in 576-584), but the settlement continued in urban forms (in the level 12) and than in rural forms¹¹¹. The situation of Beroe is different, because there are no data about the chronology of the fortress. It is possible that Beroe kept out its military function even in the age of Heraklios, because in the tombs of its cemetery were discovered *pieces of military equipment*, dated until the first third of the VIIth Century (a triangular buckle adorned with little circles)¹¹².

109. Al. Barnea, *Dacia, N.S.*, 34, 1990, p. 288-289.

110. About the term "life-in-town", see D. A. Brooks, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 5, 1986, 1, p. 79.

111. See note 51.

112. A. Petre, *La romanité en Scythie Mineure (II^e-VII^e siècles de notre ère). Recherches archéologiques*, Bucarest, 1987, p. 70-71, fig. 204b. About this type of buckle, see

The situation observed at Halmyris shows also that the process of the disappearance of the *limes* began in 576-584. This marginal fortress was neglected and its precinct was not reconstructed. Only more important cities like Capidava, Axiopolis, Ulmetum or Troesmis were preserved in the defensive system of the province after 576-584. But the damages were of small importance in this first stage of the fall of the *limes*. The period between 585-592 was quite peaceful. The Scythic *limes* was almost intact. Probably in this interval was built the small *castellum* of Capidava. At Capidava, the coin currency recommenced in 587/588 (after ten years of absence); this could be the data of the reconstruction¹¹³. The published information do not support the hypothesis of the dating of the *castellum* at the beginning of the VIIth Century¹¹⁴.

The second stage of the fall of the Scythic *limes* could be dated in 593-595. Then were destructed the fortresses Troesmis, Dinogetia and Histria (may be also Ulmetum). Histria was rebuilt (as like as Ulmetum), but the sector Troesmis - Dinogetia was lost. It seems that the northern Dobroudja (including Halmyris) was no more defended after this period. This neglecting is not at all surprising, because the major danger was represented by the Avar attacks that concerned only the southern part of the province. After 595, the main battle front moved in the western sector of the Danubian *limes*, in the region of Iron Gates. By this reason, the efforts of the imperial army were directed towards the keeping of those fortresses.

The Avar attack of 597/598 and the rebellion of 602 provoked no major destructions on the *limes*. Only Sacidava was burned in 602, but then was too rebuilt. It is true that the stratigraphy of this city was severely criticized¹¹⁵, but in this context we are interested only by the real fact that Sacidava continued to exist also in the VIIth Century. Besides the coin of 612/613, there was discovered also a buckle of "Syracusa" type, dated in the first third of the VIIth Century¹¹⁶.

The third stage of the fall of the *limes* began around 614. The

V. Varsik, *Slovenska Archeologia*, 40, 1992, 1, p. 84-85, 93.

113. C. Chiriac, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

114. A. Petre, *op.cit.*, p. 339-345; Z. Covacef, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

115. P. Diaconu, *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, 31, 1980, 1, p. 123-130.

116. C. Scorpan, *Pontica*, 11, 1978, p. 70, nr. 54, pl. XI/54 (from the level I₂).

invasions that lasted until 626 destroyed probably for ever fortresses like Axiopolis or Capidava. It is possible that in the same time was left also Noviodunum (where, until now, there were no coins subsequent to Phokas). Some fortresses of the inside, like Ulmetum or Ibida, were destroyed in 614-619. Other (Histria, Tomis, Callatis) survived for an unknown time¹¹⁷.

We could conclude that the Avaro-Slavic attacks caused a gradual abandonment of the Scythic *limes*. In the first stage (576-584), the losses were unimportant, but in the second one (593-595), the northern Dobroudja was virtually lost¹¹⁸. The situation observed at Aegyssus could not be interpreted as a proof of the function of the fortress until 614, because the coin of 613/614 could belong to a level dated after the end of the military function.

After 595, the *limes* remained intact south of Troesmis. The real disappearance of the *limes* could be dated only beginning from 614. Even after the third stage, some inside fortresses survived. Histria kept its precinct and the three ramparts until the end of the city. It could be supposed that also Tomis and Callatis survived after the invasions of 614-626.

Therefore, the Avaro-Slavic attacks did not caused a sudden end of the Byzantine civilization in Scythia. The fall of the limes and the decline of the town-life were gradual processes. This step-by-step evolution permitted the adaptation to the new situation created by the settlement of the Slavs in the territory of the former provinces of the Empire. It was a "transition" age, not a discontinuity.

117. For Histria, see note 107. With special regard to Tomis and Callatis, we note here the discovery of some coins dated after 619 (I. Dimian, *Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică*, I, 1957, p. 197; R. Ocheșeanu, *Pontica*, 14, 1981, p. 312, nr. 3, 4; Gh. Poenaru-Bordea, I. Donoiu, *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române*, 75-76, 1981-1982, p. 238, nr. 4).

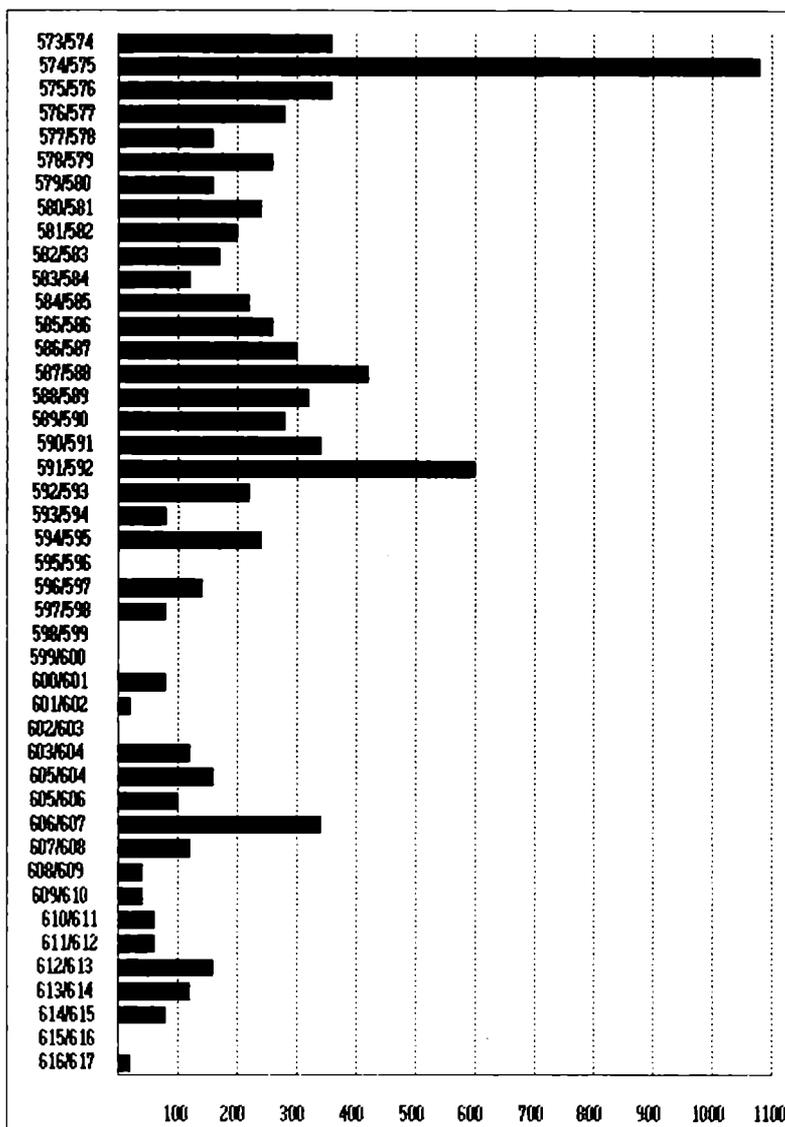
118. See also C. Scorpan, 1980, p. 131.

Appendix I

Year	nr. of coins	nr. of coins with known value	nummia/year
573/574	10	10	360
574/575	39	39	1080
575/576	12	12	360
576/577	7	7	280
577/578	7	7	160
578/579	7	7	260
579/580	4	4	160
580/581	6	6	240
581/582	5	5	200
582/583	6	6	170
583/584	7	6	120
584/585	7	7	220
585/586	8	8	260
586/587	14	12	300
587/588	13	13	420
588/589	11	10	320
589/590	10	10	280
590/591	10	10	340
591/592	22	22	600
592/593	10	10	220
593/594	3	3	80
594/595	7	6	240

Year	nr. of coins	nr. of coins with known value	nummia/year
595/596	0	0	0
596/597	6	5	140
597/598	2	2	80
598/599	0	0	0
599/600	1	0	0
600/601	3	3	80
601/602	1	1	20
602/603	1	0	0
603/604	4	4	120
604/605	5	5	160
605/606	5	4	100
606/607	9	9	340
607/608	3	3	120
608/609	2	2	40
609/610	1	1	40
610/611	2	2	60
611/612	2	2	60
612/613	6	4	160
613/614	4	3	120
614/615	3	2	80
615/616	0	0	0
616/617	1	1	20

(Appendix I)



Appendix II

<i>Emperor</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Number of coins</i>	<i>Number of coins with known value</i>	<i>Number of coins on year</i>	<i>nummia</i>	<i>nummia/year</i>
Tiberius II	578-582	32	31	8,00	1050	262,50
Maurikios	582-602	166	157	8,03	4315	210,75
Phokas	602-610	66	56	8,25	1500	187,50
Heraklios	610-617	19	15	2,71	540	77,14

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Appendix III

<i>Fortresses</i>	<i>Destructions followed by reconstructions</i>	<i>The end of the military function of the fortress</i>	<i>Civilian settlement after the end of the military function</i>
Sacidava	602 (N.II)	614 (N.I.)	YES (N.I ₂ , N.I ₁ , post 614)
Axiopolis	576-582	614 (?)	?
Capidava	576-578	614 (?) (<i>castellum</i>)	?
Beroe	576-578	?	YES (until the first third of the VII Cent.)
Troesmis	576-578 (N.5)	593 (?)	?
Dinogetia	(558/559)	593 (?)	?
Halmyris	576-584	576-584 (N.11)	YES (N.12, 13 - after 613)