

THE PLACEMENT OF THE FORTRESS TURRIS

(Procopius, *Bell. Goth.*, III.14.32-33)

Justinianus I tried to defend the Scythian flank of the Danubian *limes* also by some diplomatic means. In a digression occasioned by the story of Chilbudios, *magister militum per Thraciam*, Procopius says: βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς πρέσβεις τινὰς παρὰ τούτους δὴ τοὺς βαρβάρους στείλας ἡξίου ξυνοικίζεσθαι ἅπαντας εἰς πόλιν ἀρχαίαν Τούρριν ὄνομα, ἣ κεῖται μὲν ὑπὲρ ποταμὸν Ἰστρον, Τραϊανοῦ τοῦ Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορος ἐν τοῖς ἄνω χρόνοις αὐτὸν δειμαμένου, ἔρημος δὲ ἐκ παλαιοῦ ἐτύγχανεν οὔσα, ληϊσαμένων αὐτὴν τῶν ταύτη βαρβάρων. ταύτη γὰρ αὐτοὺς καὶ τῇ ἄμφ' αὐτὴν χώρα Ἰουστινιανὸς βασιλεὺς ἄτε προσηκούσῃ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ῥωμαίοις ὠμολόγει δεδωρήσεσθαι καὶ σφισι ξυνοικιεῖν μὲν δυνάμει τῇ πάσῃ, χρήματα δὲ μέγала σφίσι προῖεσθαι ἐφ' ᾧ οἱ ἐνσπονδοὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ὄντες Οὐννοις ἐμπόδιοι ἐξ ἀεὶ γένωνται, καταθεῖν βουλομένοις τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχήν.

"The emperor Justinianus sent messengers to those barbarians [the Antae], asking them to colonize, all of them, an ancient city, with the name of Turris, situated beyond the Danube, which was formerly built by Traianus, the emperor of the Romans and which had been deserted a long time ago. because it was destroyed by the local barbarians. Because [the city] with its territory belonged from the beginning to the Romans, the emperor Justinianus promised them to do his best in order to gather them and to give them a great amount of money, only if they accepted to be his allies from that moment on and to stop the Huns forever to invade the Roman Empire, as they had intended". (Procopius, *Bell. Goth.*, III.14.32-33).

Most probably, this happened in 545 or 546¹. The text needs some commentaries, because it was often used without any criticism. It must be pointed out the fact that Procopius named πόλις this city, and not φρούριον, ὄχυρομα or ἔρυμα (the words he used in his books for simply fortresses). Therefore, χώρα is, in this context, the proper term for the rural territory of an

1. See especially H. Ditten, "Slawen im Byzantinischen Heer von Justinian I bis Justinian II", in *Studien zum 7. Jh. in Byzanz* (BBA 47), Berlin, 1976, p. 82; C. Bonev, "Les Antes et Byzance", *Etudes Balkaniques*, 19, 1983, 3, p. 110-111.

ancient town. We believe that it is necessary to point the attention towards this circumstance, which is full of signification for our interpretation.

The placement of Turrís is still undecided. Many historians² considered that its name is a wrong transcription of *Tyras*, the ancient Greek colony founded at the mouth of the homonyme river (today, Nistru or Dnester). A special study on this problem was written by A. A. Bolşacov-Ghimpu³, who is right to assess that the Antae were able to hamper the Hunnic attacks only if they were settled in the south of Moldavia. But *Tyras* was too far from the road followed by the barbarian raids; this road passed through Moldavia and the eastern part of the Wallachian Plain and reached to Durostorum or to other fords west of this town⁴. *Tyras* had no strategic value in this respect. At the same time, it would be very difficult to explain how a such learned writer like Procopius could make such a mistake. It is unlikely that a Greek-speaking author could replace the genuine Greek name *Tyras* with the Latin word *Turrís*. The historical accounts given by Procopius do not correspond to reality, because *Tyras* was not a city founded by Trajanus.

Another point of view about the identification of Turrís relies on the supposition that its name was inherited by the modern city of Turnu Măgurele (district of Teleorman, Romania, in front of Asamus). One of the forefathers of the Romanian archaeology, August Treboniu Laurian, discovered here some Roman traces, in 1845. The first who identified them with Turrís was Grigore Tocilescu⁵. On the basis of his archaeological researches made in

2. Ph. Brunn, "Sitzungsberichte der koenigliche bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften", 2, 1870, p. 228-230; G. Manojlović, "Studije o spisu De Administrando Imperio cara Konstantina VII Porfirogenita", *Rad Jugoslavenske Akademije*, 187, 1911, p. 50; L. Hauptmann, "Les rapports des Byzantins avec les Slaves et les Avars pendant la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle", *Byzantion*, IV, 1927-1928, p. 146; J. Bromberg, "Toponymical and Historical Miscellanies on Medieval Dobroudja, Bessarabia and Moldo-Wallachia", *Byzantion*, XIII, 1938, 1, p. 58-59; Gh. Brătianu, *Marea Neagră*, ed. V. Spinei, Bucureşti, 1988, I, p. 245; D. Gh. Teodor, *Romanitatea carpato-dunăreană şi Bizanţul în veacurile V-XI e.n.*, Iaşi, 1978, p. 19 etc.

3. A. A. Bolşacov-Ghimpu, "La localisation de la forteresse Turis", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, VII, 1969, 4, p. 686-690.

4. D. Gh. Teodor, "La pénétration des Slaves dans les régions du Sud-Est de l'Europe", *Balkanoslavica*, Beograd, I, 1972, p. 40; M. Comşa, "Die Slawen im Karpatisch-donauländischen Raum im 6-7 Jh.", *Zeitschrift für Archaeologie*, 7, 1973, 2, p. 222-223; P. Diaconu, "Autour de la pénétration des Slaves au Sud du Danube", in *Rapports du III^e Congrès International d'Archéologie Slave*, I, Bratislava, 1979, p. 167.

5. G. Tocilescu, *Monumentele epigrafice şi sculpturale ale Muzeului Naţional de Antichităţi din Bucureşti*, I, Bucureşti, 1902, p. 245-249. Before him P. J. Schafarik (*Slawische*

1936-1943, Grigore Florescu⁶ supposed that these traces are belonging to a watch tower erected under Constantine the Great and restored in the VIth Century. On the other hand, he denies the identification with Turris. Gh. I. Cantacuzino proved recently that this tower is a medieval building (from the XIVth Century)⁷ and that the Roman phase of construction is uncertain. Even he pointed out that this tower could not be the city mentioned by Procopius, Dumitru Tudor⁸ believed (without any proofs) that another Roman fortress existed somewhere in the neighbourhood. The placement of Turris at Turnu Măgurele was sustained, with more or less conviction, by many other scholars⁹.

But this hypothesis is contradicted by serious reasons. As it has already been observed¹⁰, the Antae warriors had no chance to hamper the invaders, if they were established near Turnu Măgurele, because the enemies could penetrate by any other ford of the Danube (for instance, by Durostorum). It is obvious that a (supposed) watch tower could not be named *polis* by Procopius. There are no archaeological proofs for the existence of a Roman city at Turnu Măgurele.

Another point of view is supported by a single scholar, Mircea Rusu¹¹, who believes that Turris was at Pietroasele (district of Buzău). The Roman fortress discovered here, built in the IVth Century (or, perhaps earlier)¹² was

Alterthumer, II, Leipzig, 1844, p. 153) said that Turris was "wahrscheinlich Turna (sic!) am Einflusse der Aluta".

6. G. Florescu, "Cetatea Turnu", *Revista Istorică Română*, XV, 1945, 4, p. 432-439.

7. Gh. I. Cantacuzino, *Cetăți medievale din Țara Românească. Secolele XIII-XVI*, București, 1981, p. 140-146.

8. D. Tudor, *Oltenia romană*, 4th ed., București, 1978, p. 308.

9. A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiana*, II, București, 1914, p. 66; Radu Vulpe, "La Valachie et la Basse-Moldavie sous les Romains", *Dacia, N.S.*, V, 1961, p. 375; Idem, *Din istoria Dobrogei*, II, București, 1968, p. 121; H. Mihăescu, commentary at his translation of Procopius, *Războiul cu goții*, București, 1963, p. 13, 157; P. P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești*, București, 1969, p. 72; S. Patoura-Hatzopoulos, "L'œuvre de reconstitution du limes danubien à l'époque de l'empereur Justinien Ier (territoire roumain)", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 18, 1980, 1, p. 109; Ion Barnea, Octavian Iliescu, *Constantin cel Mare*, București, 1982, p. 117.

10. J. Bromberg, p. 59; A. A. Bolșacov-Ghimpu, p. 688.

11. M. Rusu, "Aspects des relations entre les autochtones et les migrants (IIIe-IXe siècles)", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 19, 1980, 2-3, p. 249.

12. About the camp of Pietroasele, see: Gh. Diaconu and others, "L'ensemble archéologique de Pietroasele", *Dacia, N.S.*, 21, 1977, p. 199-220; Gh. Diaconu, M. Tzony, "Prezența romană la curbura Carpaților în secolele III-IV. Semnificația ei istorică în lumina cercetărilor de la Pietroasele", in the collection of studies *Spiritualitate și istorie la întorsura Carpaților*, I, Buzău, 1983, p. 69-77.

too far from the Danube and, by this reason, has no value for the defence of the Byzantine *limes* in the VIth Century.

Like other historians too¹³, we consider that the most probable solution of this problem is the placement of Turris at Barboși (Tirighina), a Roman camp near Galați. The main reason for which we share this idea is the great strategic value of this place and of its narrow territory (the zone situated between the bend of the Carpathians and the bend of the Danube). This position was used many times as an excellent defence line, until to the Second World War. Its value was remarked also by the Romans, who built here not only a fortress, but an entire system of earth-walls.

After the first Daco-Roman war of 101-102, two small *castella* were constructed near the mouth of the Siret river. One of them was afterwards included in the surface of a camp, large of 350×100 m., which functioned until the reign of Gordianus III (238-244). The small fortress (its area was about 3500 mp.) survived, with its military function, even in the Constantinian Age. The camp was surrounded by a civilian settlement with *urban character*, and protected by an earth-wall erected probably under Hadrianus, between the rivers Siret and Prut (between the present day villages Șerbești and Tulucești)¹⁴. The area behind the wall (of about 300 kmp.) was a *pratum*, i.e. a territory subordinated to the camp (like the χώρα of a πόλις)¹⁵. The Șerbești-Tulucești wall was completed with another one, east of Prut, between Vadu lui Isac and the Sasik Lake. This southern part of Moldavia between Prut and Nistru (now. included in Ukraina) was under Roman rule, until the middle of the IIIrd Century and was defended by other camps, like that one of Orlovka (Aliobrix)¹⁶.

The name of the Roman camp and settlement of Barboși is not attested

13. C. Jirecek, *Geschichte der Serben*, I, Gotha, 1911, p. 82; V. N. Zlatarski, "Die Besiedlung der Balkanhalbinsel durch die Slaven", *Revue Internationale des Etudes Balkaniques*, II, 1936, 3-4, p. 362; N. Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains*, II, Bucarest, 1937, p. 305; Maria Comșa, "Einige Betrachtungen über die Ereignisse im 6-7 Jh. an der unteren Donau", *Slavia Antiqua*, 21, 1974, p. 63; V. Velkov, "L'état ethnique de la Dobroudza au cours du IVE-VIe siècles", in *Dobroudza. Etudes éthno-culturelles*, Sofia, 1987, p. 17 etc.

14. Archaeological evidence about Barboși, in: Silviu Sanie, *Civilizația romană la est de Carpați și romanitatea pe teritoriul Moldovei. Sec. II î.e.n. - III e.n.*, Iași, 1981, p. 75-128, 202-224 and Ion Ioniță, *Din istoria și civilizația dacilor liberi. Dacii din spațiul est-carpatic în secolele II-IV e.n.*, Iași, 1982, p. 18-29. The first researches were made by Gheorghe Săulescu in 1837.

15. Emilia Doruțiu-Boilă, "Teritoriul militar al Legiunii V Macedonica la Dunărea de Jos", *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, 23, 1972, 1, p. 56-57.

16. I. Ioniță, p. 30-36.

by epigraphical sources. Nicolae Gostar¹⁷ thought that it was *Piroboridava* (Ptolemy, III.10.8), but it is proved that the real placement of that one was at Poiana (district of Galați)¹⁸. Radu Vulpe¹⁹ and Gheorghe Ștefan²⁰ sustained that the name of the fortress of Barboși was *Dinogetia*, which was placed by Ptolemy III.8.2 on the left bank of the Danube, near the mouth of Hierasus (Siret). Because the same Ptolemy (III.10.1 and 10.5) and other later sources give another placement, on the right bank of the river, it was supposed that the name *Dinogetia* was transferred upon another fortress, built in the late IIIth Century²¹ in front of Barboși, on the right bank, at Garvăn (district of Tulcea).

We think that the small *castellum* of Barboși, used again in the time of Constantine the Great, could not keep the ancient name *Dinogetia*, after the foundation of the new city on the other bank of the Danube. We suppose that it received a new name, and this was *Turris*.

The name *Turris* was justified by the aspect of the fortress²²: a polygonal construction erected on the top of a high promontory, like a tower.

This point of view accords with the pieces of information given by Procopius. Barboși was indeed a city (πόλις), founded by Trajanus and it had a χώρα belonging to the Roman province of Moesia Inferior; in Procopius' age, it had been deserted for more than two centuries.

We do not know if the proposal expressed by Justinianus was fulfilled by the tribe of Antae. In the following period, they acted as allies of the Roman Empire, in the wars against the Avars²³, but there is no proof for their settlement near Barboși. Few years after 546, Jordanes (*Getica*. 35) said about them: *a Danastro extenduntur usque ad Danaprum*, but it seems that he did not know anything about the alliance between the Empire and the Antae, because in *Romana*, 388 he mentions the Antae among the enemies

17. N. Gostar, "Cetățile dacice din Moldova și cucerirea romană la nordul Dunării de jos", *Apulum*, Alba Iulia, 5, 1964, p. 146-147. See also S. Sanie, p. 18.

18. Radu Vulpe, "La civilisation gëto-dace et ses problèmes à la lumière des dernières fouilles de Poiana, en Base-Moldavie", *Dacia, N.S.*, I, 1957, p. 162; Idem, "Les Gètes de la rive gauche du Bas-Danube et les Romains", *Dacia, N.S.*, IV, 1960, p. 327-329.

19. R. Vulpe, 1957, p. 162; Idem, 1960, p. 331.

20. Gh. Ștefan, "Dinogetia. A Problem of Ancient Topography", *Dacia, N.S.*, II, 1958, p. 317-329.

21. See foot-notes 19 and 20. About *Dinogetia*: Al. Suceveanu, Al. Barnea, *La Dobroudja romaine*, Bucarest, 1991, p. 185-187, with the up to date bibliography.

22. See Sanie, p. 79.

23. H. Ditten, p. 82; C. Boney, p. 111-112.

of the Roman empire. Therefore, it is possible that his remark refers to an elder situation. More credible than Jordanes is Procopius. In *Bell. Goth.*, I.27.2, the latter said about the tribes of Huns, Sclavins and Antae that they "are lying beyond the Hister, not too far from the bank" (οἱ ὑπὲρ ποταμὸν Ἰστρον οὐ μακρὰν τῆς ἐκείνῃ ὄχθης ἴδρυνται). But this assertion is too vague.

An accurate chronology of the settlement of the Slavic tribes in the Lower Danubian region could be established only by archaeological proofs. This is not the subject of this paper, but we wish to point out the fact that the Penkovka type of ware (ascribed to the Antae)²⁴ was discovered in Romania in various sites and not into a single area, and that it was often found together with the Korceak type. Therefore, the diffusion of the Penkovka type has no significance for our subject. We think instead that the longstanding friendship between the Empire and the Antae led to a greater Byzantine influence among the Antae than among the Sclavins and, perhaps, to a degree of civilization next to that of the Germanic barbarians. Therefore, some objects of Byzantine fashion could help us to distinguish the Antic discoveries, if these are dated into an earlier period (the second half of the VIth Century). This could be the case of the habit of wearing *fibulae*, buckles and starshaped ear-rings.

*Institute of Military History and Theory
Bucharest*

24. See, for instance: M. Comşa, 1973, p. 213-214; J. Herrmann, "Probleme der Herausbildung der archäologischen Kulturen slawischen Stamme des 6-9 Jh.", in *Rapports du IIIe Congrès International d'Archéologie Slave*, I, Bratislava, 1979, p. 55.