

# ROMAN-BYZANTINE BASILICAE DISCOVERED IN DOBROGEA BETWEEN 1948–1958

In the last ten years archaeological research and excavations in our country have expanded to an extent unparalleled in the past. They have been carried out by the National Museum of Antiquities and, recently, by the Archaeological Institute according to a well established plan, under the aegis of the Academy of the Rumanian People's Republic. This was done in view of obtaining the best documentary information concerning life on the territory of our country, from the oldest times up to the beginning of last century. An attempt was made to clarify especially those problems and periods to which the former research had given too little attention.

Among the archaeological discoveries made in the last decade, we have chosen for the present study only the Roman-Byzantine basilicae (4th–6th century), the ruins of which were brought to light by the excavations made in Dobrogea. These studies have already been published in the annual report on excavations. Those concerning Histria also appeared in the first volume of the monograph issued in connection with this important city. In addition to the general presentation of all the basilicae, we shall try to add to each of them some observations besides those already made. In the present paper we are endeavouring to complete with the new discoveries our investigation on the Christian basilicae of Dobrogea<sup>1</sup>, published ten years ago. The monuments which are the object of our study were discovered in the following centres: *Histria*, *Dinogetia* and *Noviodunum*. Besides, we shall present some unpublished discoveries — especially capitals — from *Tomis*, *Callatis* and *Ibida*, which we consider as proceeding from basilicae formerly existing in those centres of the Scythia Minor province.

## 1. HISTRIA

A basilica with a crypt, a narthex, a nave and two aisles and, eastward, a semi-circular apse corresponding to the central nave (fig. 1) were discovered

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<sup>1</sup> I. Barnea, *Nouvelles considérations sur les basiliques chrétiennes de Dobroudja*, « Dacia », XI–XII, 1945–1947, pp. 221–241.

at about 50 m. East of the main gate of the city. The dimensions were:  $21 \times 12.50$  m. The walls of the basilica were of stone, irregularly shaped, cemented with mortar. The crypt (fig. 2) was built of bricks, also joined with mortar. On the inside wall of the apse, a layer of coating, divided into regular squares, was still visible. A large part of the brick pavement was found in the central nave.

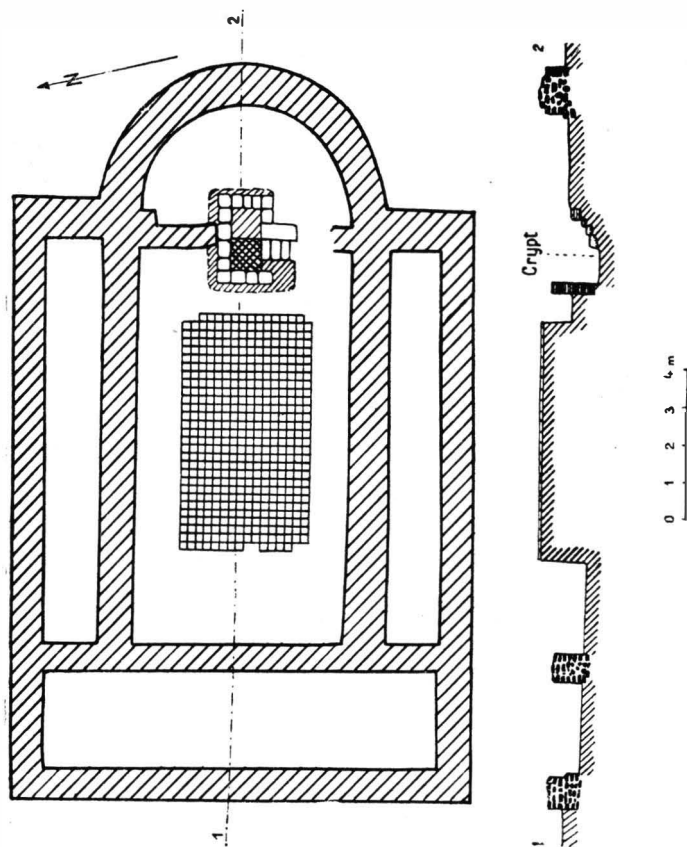


Fig. 1. — Histria: basilica with crypt (Vth—VIth century).

The bases of two columns were the only ones still in their respective places, between the central nave and the south aisle, where a coin belonging to Justinian's time (527—565) was found. In the interior of the basilica were also discovered: the fragment of a column with a diameter of 0.30 m. and another one, with a diameter of only 0.14 m, ascribed to a ciborium existing above the crypt, but the traces of which have not been identified<sup>2</sup>.

It should be noticed that the central nave of this basilica was much wider than the aisles. So far, it is the third basilica with crypt discovered in Dobrogea. The other two are: the «cistern basilica» and the T-shaped or «byzantine» basilica of Tropaeum Trajani (Adamclisi)<sup>3</sup>. The small dimensions of the crypts in three Christian basilicae of Dobrogea prove that they did not cover the entire body of a martyr or saint, but only part

of his relics. Such crypts, over which the altar was built, constitute a form, perhaps even an intermediary stage between the usual large dimension crypts and the plain hollow existing under the altar or in the altar itself wherein holy relics were deposited. They were usually vaulted and sometimes covered with marble plates. The stairs giving access to these crypts were mostly on the eastern side; the only crypts having stairs on the southern side are those of Dobrogea and the one belonging to Saint Demeter's basilica in Thessalonica<sup>4</sup>. The fact that no traces of stairs leading from the narthex to the naos were found, as for

<sup>2</sup> SCIV, II, 1, 1951, pp. 141—144, fig. 6—11; Histria I, 1954, p. 167, fig. 57—59.

<sup>3</sup> I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, pp. 226—227, fig. 6—7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Orlandos, Ἡ ξυλόστεγος παλαιοχριστιανικὴ βασιλικὴ τῆς Μεσογειακῆς Λεκάνης, II, Athens, 1954, pp. 463—466.

instance, in the «marble basilica» of Tropaeum Trajani, proves that the narthex was on the same level as the naos. As only the bases of the walls were preserved, the entrances into the narthex and those from the narthex into the naos could not be identified. It is most probable that the basilica had no galleries because no architectural vestiges proving their presence were discovered, while, in contrast with most Christian basilicae of Dobrogea, the narthex is here wider than the aisles<sup>5</sup>. The Histria basilica with crypt dates from the 5th—6th century.

The basilica in the south-east corner of the city was discovered during Vasile Pârvan's excavations, but this discovery remained unpublished<sup>6</sup>.

Its Christian character is pointed out today by the apse set towards east north-east and especially by the base of the *cancelli* on the north side of the presbyterium, which, in this case, did not confine itself only to the apse, but as usual, also extended over the eastern side of basilica's central nave (fig. 3)<sup>7</sup>. Though the southern side as well as a part of the eastern side of the apse towards the south-east corner were missing, it may be noticed that the plan of the basilica was irregular and had the following dimensions: north side, 18.20 m; western side, 12.30 m; southern side 21.20 m and eastern side, 10.94 m, including the diameter of the apse, which was only 2.84 m. The walls that still existed had a height of 0.20—0.60 m and an approximate thickness of 0.70 m. They were built of different kinds of stones, some of them being even architectural fragments joined with earth.

The presbyterium penetrated into the naos to a distance of 3.34 m and was 6.42 m in width. Only part of the bases of the *cancelli* which closed it up still exist, consisting, on the north side, of three blocks of limestone, 0.34 m wide and each respectively, 0.80, 0.88 and 1.14 m long; and, on the eastern side, of other blocks, of which only one is left, 0.83 m long, placed towards the northern corner of the *cancelli*. The blocks raise a few centimeters above the pavement and show on their upper part the holes in which the *cancelli* were fixed. A marble flag-stone, of 2.02 × 0.85 m, preserved in the north-west corner of the presbyterium, proves that it was paved with big flag-stones. Generally speaking, the altar showed a very neat technical execution, which did not at all tally with the off-hand building technique employed for the rest of the basilica, — a fact which was considered «an indication as to their different periods»<sup>8</sup>.

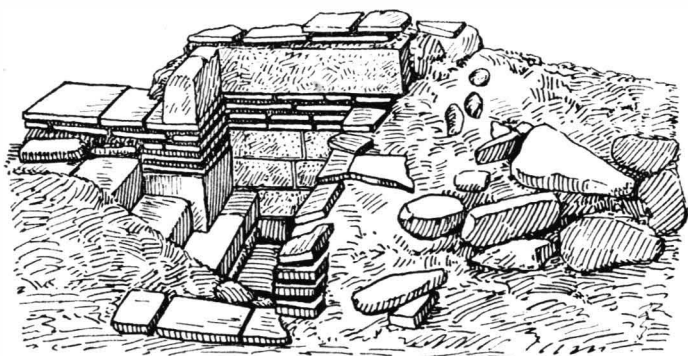


Fig. 2. — Histria: the crypt of the basilica (Vth—VIth century).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. P. Lemerle, *Philippe et la Macédoine orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantine* «Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome», fasc. 158, texte, Paris, 1945, pp. 324—325.

<sup>6</sup> I Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> Histria I, 1954, pp. 155—159, pl. I and fig. 55. Instead of *Schola cantorum*, the presbyterium or the sanctuary is meant here.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159.

It is difficult to admit, however, that the presbyterium could be older than the building itself. Had an older basilica existed on this spot and had it been utterly destroyed, the presbyterium could not have survived either. No sign is left of the existence of any vestiges of some more ancient basilica on the same spot, with better walls than the ones mentioned above. The difference in quality between the presbyterium and the building itself is due to the fact that, according to the custom of the times, better material was used for the former and, consequently, a better building technique too.

The naos or the basilica proper was divided into a nave and two aisles, the central nave was 5.28 m wide and the two aisles about 2.50 m each. This division made necessary by the width of the basilica, was proved by the discovery on the spot of certain bases of columns; one of these having a diameter of 0.50 m stood in the north-west corner of the cancelli, closing the presbyterium, while two others stood in the south-west part of the naos near the entrance. In the interior a fragment of the shaft of a column and a capital of Doric-Roman shape were also discovered. They had been brought over from older demolished buildings and used again in the basilica. The naos had a brick floor pavement of which some better preserved portions were found.

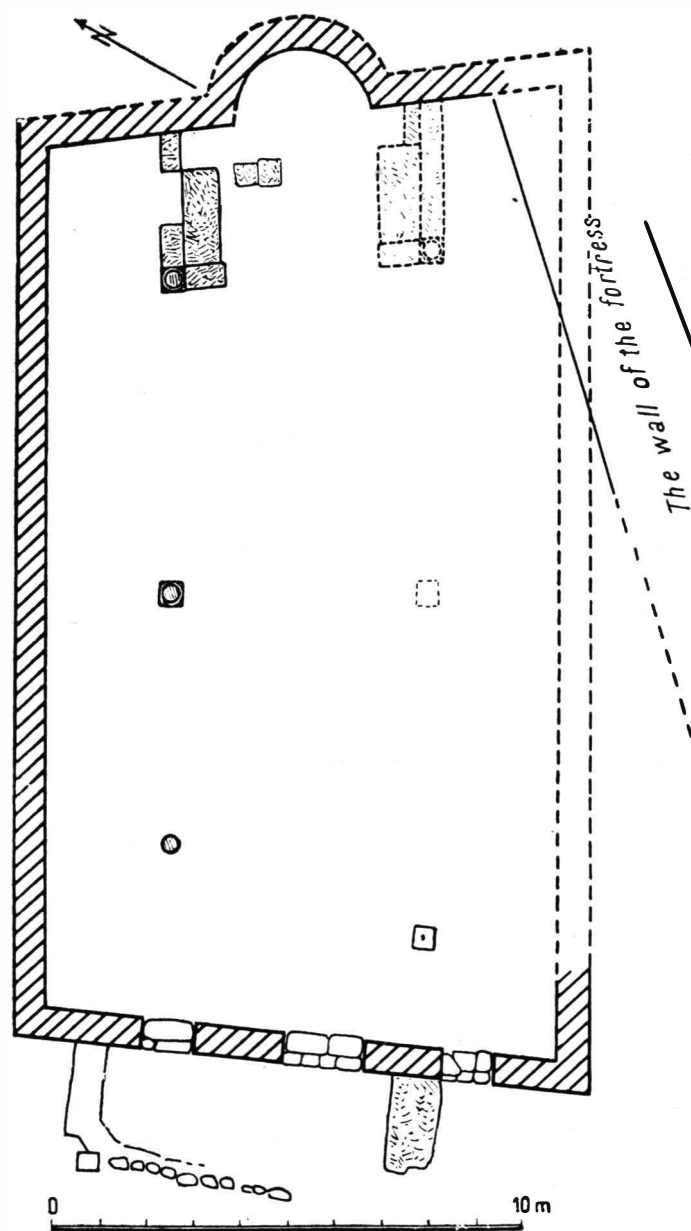


Fig. 3. — Histria: the basilica at the SE corner of the fortress (VIth century).

The fact that on the western side of the naos two entrances were identified, one corresponding to the central nave and the other to the northern aisle, implies the existence of a third entrance, in line with the other two and corresponding

to the southern aisle<sup>9</sup>. This further leads to the supposition that, in the eastern part of the naos a narthex must have existed; this supposition partly confirmed by the following assertion:

«In front of the entrance, judging by the existing remains, it looks as if the basilica had a porch 6.40 m wide and 2.50 m long. Only the bases of the walls are extant and this appeared later on when excavations were effected, but today these too are damaged. Here, also, the irregularity of the plan should be noticed, the porch being placed more towards the northern side and not in the middle of the entrance». The presence of a porch or parvis opening towards the west, as that of certain basilicae of Syria, North Africa and Dalmatia<sup>10</sup>, is difficult to admit for a basilica of the Dobrogea and especially in a Greek centre such as Histria. The presence here of a narthex seems more probable, if not certain. The late date of the building<sup>11</sup> as well as the existence of a narthex in nearly all the Christian basilicae of Dobrogea<sup>12</sup>, support such a supposition. The fact that the narthex was shifted towards the north, is not a unique case. Such examples are to be found in other regions<sup>13</sup>. A basilica with such a narthex was discovered in Dobrogea, at Argamum (Doljman)<sup>14</sup>.

The basilica in the south-west corner of the city of Histria belongs to the last building period of the city fixed at about the end of the 6th century. It is the work of some improvised craftsmen accomplished in hard times with great scarcity of material<sup>15</sup>.

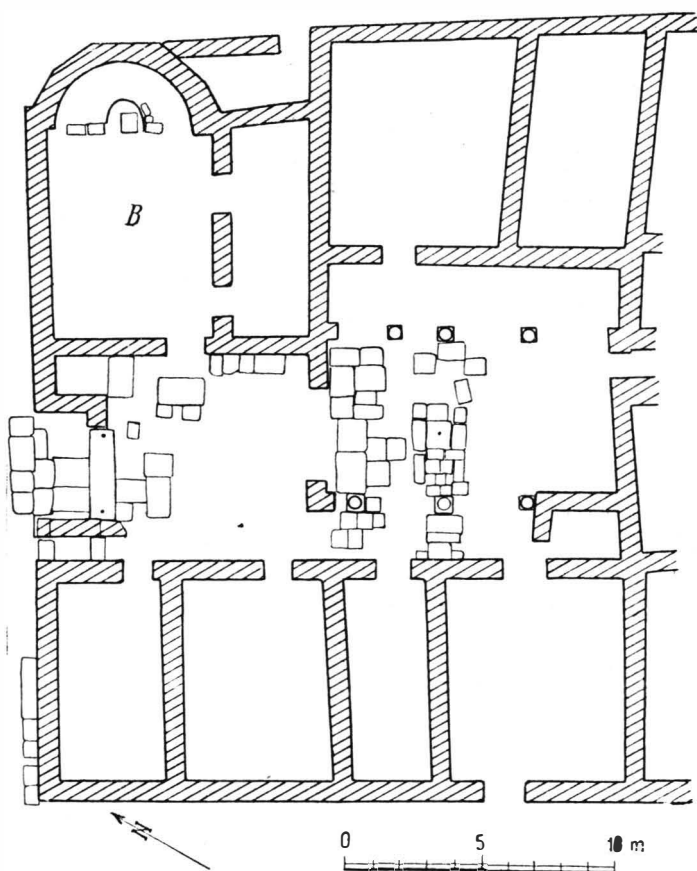


Fig. 4. — Histria: the basilica (B) of a Vth—VIth century building.

<sup>9</sup> Histria I, p. 157. The presence of the three entrances in the plan of the basilica, reproduced on plate I, right, upper part, is more clearly seen. About the entrances to the narthex, A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, I, Athens, 1952, pp. 130 f., 146—151, should be consulted.

<sup>10</sup> A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, pp. 132—135.

<sup>11</sup> About the apparition of the narthex, cf. *ibide.n.*, p. 130 f.; P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, pp. 323—324.

<sup>12</sup> I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 238. Also p. 229, fig. 10: The third basilica of Troesmis, which, instead of a narthex, has a porch with colonnades on the western side.

<sup>13</sup> A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, fig. 93, 99, 106, a.s.o.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Nicorescu, *Les basiliques byzantines de Doljman*, BSH, 25, 1, 1944, p. 99, fig. 6; I. Barnea *op. cit.*, fig. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Histria I, p. 159.

The private basilica of the eastern zone of the city of Histria. Inside a large edifice placed in «an upper-class residential quarter of Histria», a suburb which occupied the greater part of the peninsula towards the Sinoe lake, a rectangular hall

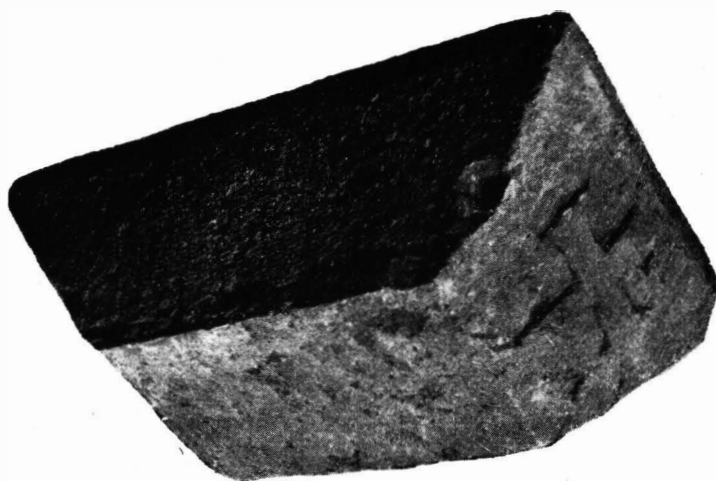


Fig. 5. — Histria: imposte with monogrammatic cross (Vth—VIth century).

The newer pavement was of yellow stamped earth, and the older one of *opus signinum*. In the pavement opposite the apse, not far from the stone border, an almost circular hollow, with a diameter of about 0.80 m, was found. Fragments

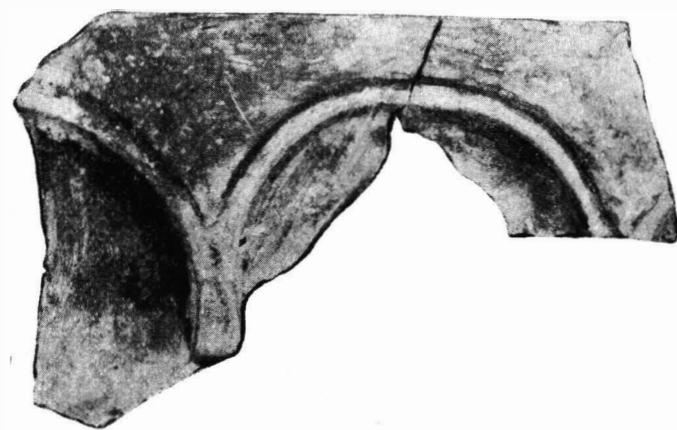


Fig. 6. — Histria: a fragment from the mensa martyrum (Vth—VIth century).

was discovered, with the apse towards the east (fig. 4). This had been used as a Christian place of worship. The rectangular hall «directed east-west was of remarkable regularity and had very carefully built walls». The dimensions were 7.60×6.00 m. The interior of the apse was semi-circular (with a radius of 2.55 m) and its exterior was irregularly pentagonal. Almost exactly in line with the semi-circular apse chord, regular stone blocks were placed, interrupted in the middle by an opening 1.25 m wide, likewise bordered with stones.

of white marble flag-stones, with continuous cavities along the border,<sup>16</sup> shaped as C (the Greek crescent-shaped sigma), were found in the neighbourhood. Some imposts adorned with the sign of the cross were also discovered among the ruins of this building. It is quite possible that another edifice formerly existed on the same site, later rebuilt<sup>16</sup>.

Such a discovery was unique in our country. It reminds us of much older buildings, known as *basilicae privatae*. The dating of the building

from the 5th—6th century was confirmed by the apse with a five sided exterior<sup>17</sup>, by the uncovered imposts in the inside of the edifice characteristic

<sup>16</sup> Iorgu Stoian, *Edificiul descoperit lângă marea locuință din zona de est a cetății*, in the report Șan-

tierul arheologic Histria (1954), SCIV, VI, 3—4, 1955, pp. 532—538.

<sup>17</sup> I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

of this period<sup>18</sup> as well as by the monogrammatic cross bearing the letter P with an open loop which adorned one of the imposts<sup>19</sup> (fig. 5).

The indubitable Christian character of the rectangular hall with apse is proved by the above-mentioned marble flag-stones with sculptures in the shape of continuous arcades on the border of the upper face (fig. 6). They belong to the well-known category of the so-called *mensae martyrum* (τράπεζαι μαρτύρων ἢ ἀγαπῶν) found in Syria<sup>20</sup>, Asia Minor, Greece and various other centres of the Palaeo-Christian world<sup>21</sup> of the east and the west. The fragments found at Histria were most similar to the fragments found at Ephesus and at Nea Anhialos, near Volo (Greece)<sup>22</sup>. We presume that the table of which they were a part was used as an altar. This is confirmed by the position of the fragments in the rectangular hall and by the opening in the pavement which leads to the conclusion that holy relics once lay underneath.

## 2. DINOGETIA

The basilica in the south-west corner of the Roman-Byzantine fortress of the Bisericuța settlement (Garvăn village, Galați region) was unearthed during the campaign of archaeological excavations in the years 1951–1952. These were the dimensions of the interior, without the apse: 16 m long × 9.70 m wide. The walls, between 0.70 and 0.80 m thick were built of stone and some brick, cemented with mortar. In some places they still are as high as 1–2 m. But the greatest part were damaged down to the bases or completely destroyed by the hovels or by the provision-pits built by the inhabitants of early feudal times (10th–12th century) (fig. 8). The long walls of the basilica were parallel with the south-east exterior wall of the fortress and the narrow western side bordered the wall on that same side. That is why the entrance to the basilica was not by the western side, as might have been expected, but by the western corner of the north side (fig. 7). The apse of the basilica was set towards east-north-east because of the older walls of the fortress. The interior of the basilica was divided into a nave and two aisles. Of these, the nave was 4.70 m wide and the aisles, 1.80 m each. The bases of the walls on which the roof-sustaining columns arose, were between 0.65 and 0.70 m thick and were greatly damaged, especially towards

<sup>18</sup> Paul Lemerle, *Le style byzantin*, Paris, 1943, p. 61; A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 313–317.

<sup>19</sup> The character P with such a loop is also found on other monuments of Scythia Minor. R. Netzhhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobruștscha*, Bucharest, 1918, fig. 26; I. Barnea, *Discul episcopului Paternus*, « *Analecta* », II, 1944, p. 182, fig. 3; *idem*, *Quelques considérations sur les inscriptions chrétiennes de Dobroudja*, « *Dacia* », N.S., I, 1957, p. 272. Cf. Alison Frantz, *The provenance of the open Rho in the Christian monograms*, *AJA*, 33, 1929, pp. 10–25 and rec. E.W(eigand), *BZ*, 31, 1931, p. 222.

<sup>20</sup> J. Lassus, *Remarques sur l'adoption en Syrie de la forme basilicale pour les églises chrétiennes*, « *Atti del IV congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana* », vol. I, Roma, 1940, pp. 343–353.

<sup>21</sup> A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 484–486; A. A. Barb, *Mensa sacra, The Round Table and the Holy Grail*, « *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* », XIX, 1–2, 1956, pp. 40–67, and especially pp. 43–44.

<sup>22</sup> G. Sotiriu, *Αἱ χριστιανικαὶ Θῆβαι τῆς Θεσσαλίας καὶ αἱ παλαιοχριστιανικαὶ βασιλικαὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, „*Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς*”, 1929, pp. 234–236 and fig. 136.

their extremities. Only one base of a column, of lime stone, whose dimensions were  $0.65 \times 0.55$  m was found in its place, towards the south-western corner of the basilica. Besides this, among the ruins in the interior, two other small fragments of columns were found, as well as capitals with volutes which quite likely belonged to some older buildings. Though the walls sustaining the column stop at some distance of the narrow south-west side, no remains of a transversal wall which would indicate the existence of a narthex was found. Taking into consideration the period in which the basilica was built (perhaps in the second half of the 4th century), the absence of the narthex must appear as a normal occurrence<sup>23</sup>. The basilica was paved with tiles. The pavement was better preserved towards the narrow south-west side. Here, two distinct levels of pavement may be noticed, one from the time of Anastase the 1st (491—518) as proved by tiles bearing that emperor's seal, and another and older one, in the 4th—5th century, when the building was most probably erected. The apse was semi-circular and its width corresponds to that of the central nave. Among the ruins discovered in the interior, a few fragments of coating were found with traces of red, dark blue and brown paint on them.

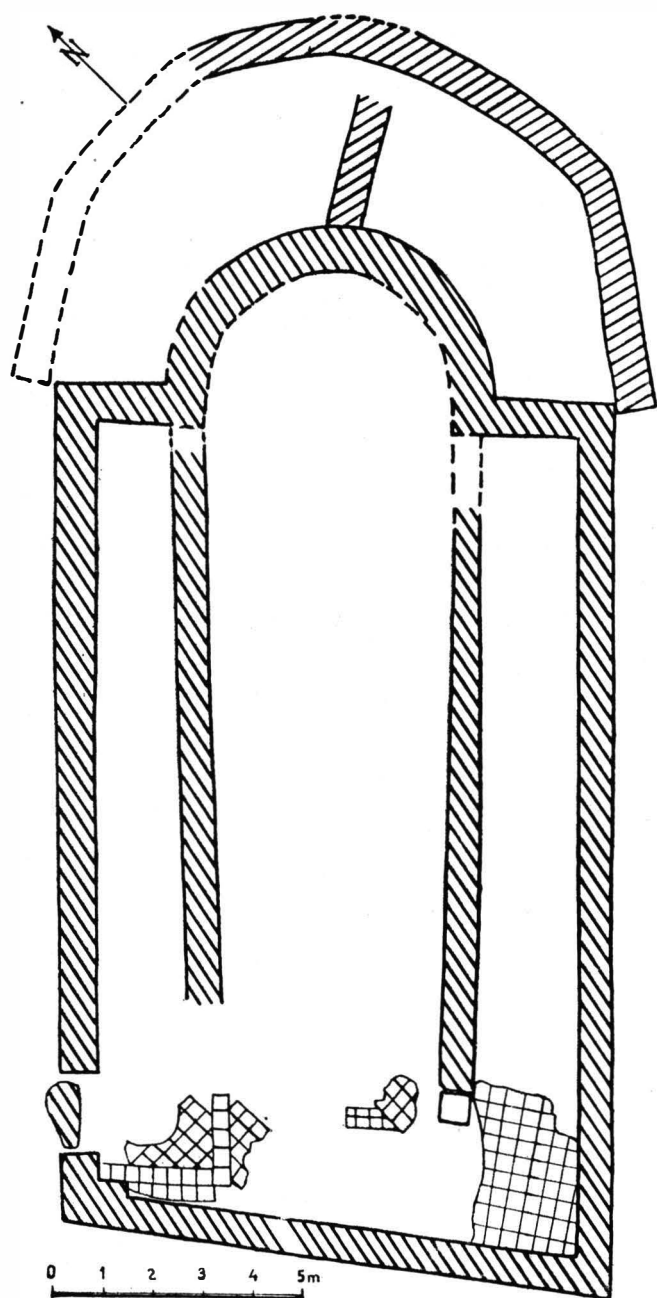


Fig. 7. — *Dinogetia*: the basilica from the south-west corner of the fortress (IVth—VIth century).

century. The space between the two walls could not be used as deambulatorium

<sup>23</sup> See above, n. 11.



as might appear at first sight because a transversal wall divided it into two chambers. From a symmetrical point of view a third chamber must have existed in the northern side, but it seems that the second dividing wall was completely destroyed<sup>24</sup>.

To support the theory of the Christian character of the basilica, the plan, the late period of the building and the above-mentioned small fragments of painted coating may be put forward, as well as the most certainly Christian numerous



Fig. 8.—*Dinogetia*: the ruins of the basilica from the south-west corner of the fortress (IVth—VIth century).

tiny objects of the 4th—6th century discovered in the inside of the fortress. Some of them were previously published<sup>25</sup>. Others, discovered in the last years, are still unpublished and a few have been made known by the annual reports on the archaeological excavations at *Dinogetia*<sup>26</sup>.

### 3. NOVIODUNUM

The ruins of the city and big port of *Noviodunum* are on the eastern border of the townlet *Isacceia*, *Tulcea* region. The greatest part of the northern side placed on the banks of the *Danube* is mostly under water. Among the ruins discovered in autumn 1956, when the level of the water was lower than usual, were the badly preserved bases of a basilica. These were situated in the immediate proximity of the compassing wall (fig. 9). The building was rectangular and set towards north-south, the interior was 13.80 m long and 10.75 m wide. On the northern side, the basilica ended with a great semi-circular apse, with a diameter of 7.80 m. The thickness of the exterior walls, made of stone and mortar containing pounded

<sup>24</sup> SCIV, III, 1952, pp. 393—394, fig. 2/4 and 27—28; *ibidem*, IV, 1—2, 1953, pp. 255—257, fig. 1/3 and 18.

<sup>25</sup> Gh. Ștefan, *Anciens vestiges chrétiens à Dino-*

*getia-Biserițuța*, « *Dacia* », XI—XII, 1945—1947, pp. 305—306.

<sup>26</sup> SCIV III, 1952, p. 394; *ibidem*, IV, 1—2, 1953, p. 257; V, 1—2, 1954, p. 164, fig. 4 a.o.

brick, varied between 0.90 and 1.40 m. The basilica having been built later than the surrounding edifices, some of its walls were adapted to the existing ones and others were destroyed. Thus, the walls of the apse had to be thinned at the top in order to be fixed to the compassing wall of the fortress. In the southern half,

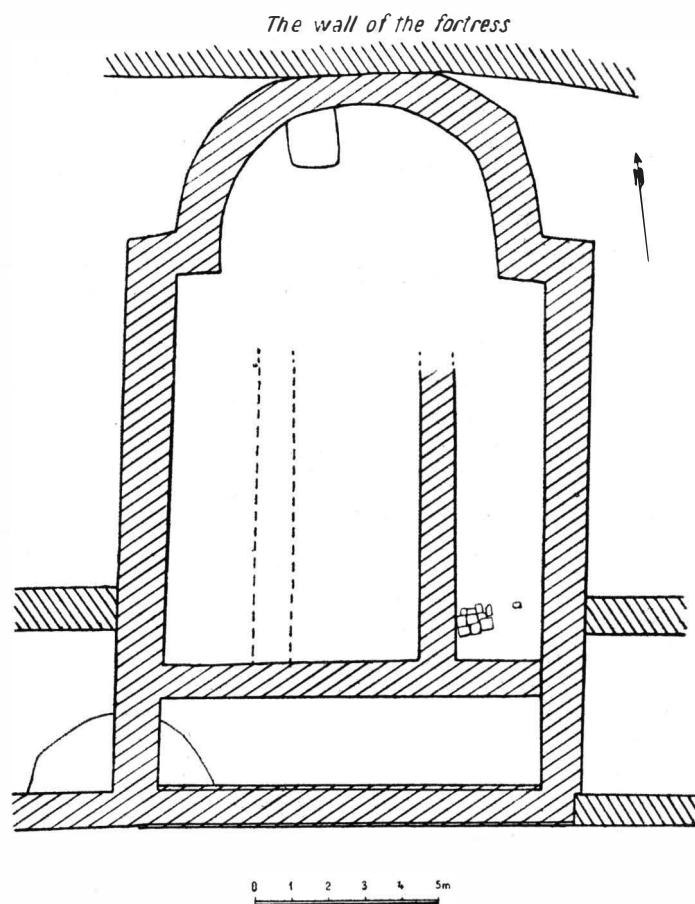


Fig. 9. — Noviodunum: the basilica from the northern side of the fortress.

the basilica met a long transversal wall and intersected a street which was in its way. The narrow southern side of the basilica met another long wall, parallel with the former one, but in this case the wall was made use of. In this part, the south-east corner of the basilica had to be adapted to the previous wall and the south-west corner was built over an older mortar platform.

In the interior at the southern end, the basilica had a transversal room (narthex) 2.50 m wide. The interior itself was divided into a nave and two aisles. This was shown by the bases of the eastern interior colonnade which still existed in part. Tiles belonging to the remains of a pavement discovered in its proper place, in the basilica's right aisle are set obliquely and lower than the basic wall of the right side colonnade and thus seem to be prior to the basilica. In the western half of the apse, near the semi-circular wall, a block

of stones cemented with mortar was discovered; perhaps these were the remains of another more ancient construction.

No characteristic features were found inside the basilica to prove its Christian character. A tiny fragment of a marble wase, with a plant decoration in relief, found in the middle of the basilica was of no avail <sup>27</sup>.

The presence of a narthex — as the transversal room at the southern end of the building can only be considered as such — seems to be a decisive argument. In the case in point, this late element of Palaeo-Christian architecture <sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> I. Barnea and Bucur Mitrea, *Săpăturile de salvare de la Noviodunum (Isaccea)*, «Materiale», V, 1959, p. 466—468.

<sup>28</sup> See above, n. 11; cf. also A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, I, fig. 41/4.

looks like the only one which could indicate not only the character of the building, but also its approximate date: 5th—6th century namely, perhaps even the epoch of the emperor Anastase the Ist.

#### 4. TOMIS

No systematic archaeological excavations on a large scale can be undertaken to unearth the ruins of the old city of Tomis, because these are under the present day town of Constanța. A whole row of monuments of the greatest importance for the knowledge of the history of this city, were discovered accidentally when work was being done in the past for quite different purposes (buildings, drains a.s.o.). But chance did not bring to light any of the basilicae belonging to the Roman-Byzantine period, about which we are informed through certain literary sources and an inscription<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand some accidental noteworthy discoveries were made within the last few years.

Thus, in the autumn of 1955, when some drainage work was being carried out in Marcu Aureliu street, at about 50 m north-east of Ovide's statue, a polychromatic mosaic paving slab, with geometrical figures, dating from the second half of the 4th century, was discovered. The character of the building could not be established for the time being. However, we should mention that in a hole which perforated the mosaic a flag-stone dating from the 5th—6th century was discovered having on one side a Byzantine cross in relief with arms widening towards their extremities<sup>30</sup>.

In 1956 two impost-capitals of the 6th century, were discovered in Remus Opreanu street, no. 10, where diggings were made for the construction of a workers' block of flats. The sculptured decoration which adorned them proved that most probably they belonged to a basilica, whose ruins had not yet been identified. Both were of limestone, out in a four-sided pyramidal stem. One of these was completely broken. The other three were fully or fragmentally preserved and were decorated in relief with geometrical and floral ornaments.

One (fig. 10/1 *a—b*) is 0.33 m high, having one side completely preserved and two fragmentary ones. The length of the complete side on the upper part is of 0.45 m. In the middle of the face fully preserved is a Byzantine cross, inscribed in a crown which has on the upper part an ovum in a valve. From the lower part of the crown rises an ivy stem ending in leaves which bow down towards the edges of the capital. Above the crown, from one edge to the other stretches an indented ornament which descends over the lateral faces of the capital. Higher up the faces of the capital are adorned with a round plain profile, ending with an abacus, 0.035 m wide and without any ornament. The inferior half of the lateral faces are embellished with small grooves, arched at the top, like the shafts of an Ionic column.

<sup>29</sup> I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, pp. 223, 230—231.

<sup>30</sup> Vlad Zirra and Petre Alexandrescu, *Cercetări*

*arheologice în Constanța*, in the report *Șantierul arheologic Histria*, «Materiale», IV, 1957, pp. 88—94.



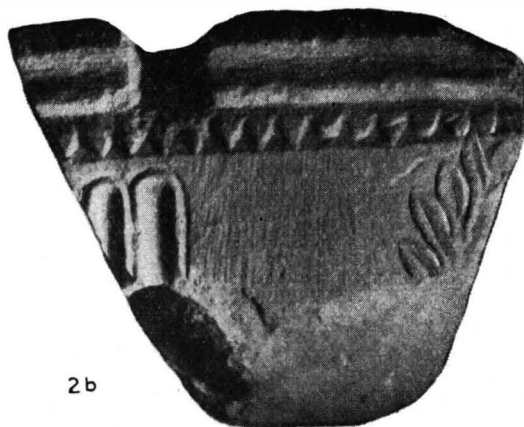
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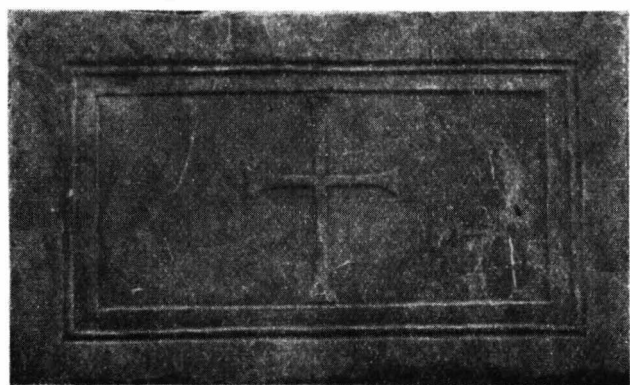
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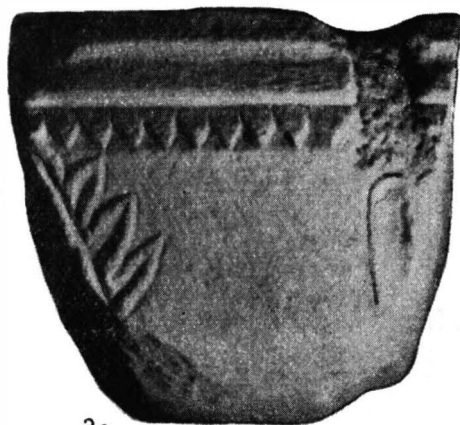
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3



2c

Fig. 10. — Tomis: 1—2, capitals; 3, slab of cancelli.

The second impost-capital (fig. 10/2 a, b, c) was 0.32 m high. Out of the four faces, the upper part of three was almost completely preserved, having different lengths (0.42, 0.48 and 0.41 m). In the middle of the main face was a «Latin» cross with the ends of its arms slightly widened. On each side rose a thin stem with three leaves at the top which filled the spaces between the upper and the lateral arms of the cross. Towards the edge, is half of a four lobbed acanthus leaf which, together with the other halves on the lateral faces, covered the border of this part of the capital. The plain profile over the main surface, decorated in relief, continued in the unadorned abacus.

The centre of the two lateral faces were completely unadorned. Only towards the right and left oblique edges an achantus leaf was sculptured on one side and on the other, two shafts rounded at the top; of these only the upper part was preserved. Above, about 1/3 of the height of the two lateral faces —just as in the preceding capital— was an indented ornament, a round plain profile and an unadorned abacus. Later on, for practical purposes, a vertical hole, 0.07 m wide and 0.04 m deep, was made towards one of the upper corners of each of the lateral faces.

In the summer of 1957, two identical marble slabs, one complete and the other broken in two, were quite accidentally discovered in Moșilor street, no. 14, in the Palas quarter of Constanța. Each of the two slabs were 1.445 m long  $\times$  0.88 m wide and 0.05  $\times$  0.06 thick. On one of the faces, in the middle of a field of 1.03  $\times$  0.50 m bordered by one narrow and one broader moulding, a «Latin» cross 0.48 m high and 0.34 m wide (fig. 10/3) with the ends of its arms widened, was carved in relief. On the other face of the slab was a similar decoration, the difference being that the cross was here inscribed in a medallion in relief and that the two mouldings were more pronounced than those on the afore mentioned surface. According to the characteristic features of the decorations, the slabs dated from the 6th century and were then used for the cancelli of a Christian basilica<sup>31</sup>. As no building vestiges were discovered<sup>32</sup> in the place where they were found, it is more probable that the basilica to which they belonged was inside the Tomis city wherefrom, later on, in unknown circumstances, they had been removed and taken a few kilometers more to the west, where they were actually discovered.

## 5. CALLATIS

The earlier archaeological excavations at Mangalia (Callatis) brought to light among other things a cluster of ruins considered by some scientists as the bases of a basilica and by others, as the remains of some thermae. Taking as a basis the plan of the building and the great and various number of the different sculptural monuments found among the incompletely unearthed ruins, we

<sup>31</sup> Cf. P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, p. 511, fig. 65, pl. XIII /a, XXXI/39, and LXXV/32—35; Semavi Eyice, *Les fragments de la décoration plastique de l'église des Saints-Apôtres*, « Cahiers Archéologiques », VIII, 1956, pp. 69—70, fig. 6; D. Cončev, *Новооткрити*

*старици от Пловдивско*, « Izvestiia-Institut », XV, 1946, p. 213, fig. 121 (especially the moulding).

<sup>32</sup> Information from Adrian Rădulescu, from the Constanța Museum.

ourselves think that it was a Christian basilica<sup>33</sup>. O. Tafrali, when publishing upon several Roman-Byzantine sculptural monuments found at Mangalia, observed that some of them were older pieces, sculptured later by the Christians<sup>34</sup>. Keeping in mind the widespread practice of the Christians (including Scythia Minor) of making use of different older sculptural monuments and of adapting them to their needs and conceptions<sup>35</sup>, we must observe that the monuments referred to by the above-mentioned author do not enter this category. On the contrary, their exterior aspect and especially the sculptural decoration of the said monuments prove that they have been used from the beginning not only for one, but for at least two Roman-Byzantine basilicae existing at Callatis in the 5th—6th century. Among the monuments mentioned by O. Tafrali there is for instance a Corinthian capital, which we date from the second half of the 5th century<sup>36</sup>, a compost-capital from the same period<sup>37</sup>, a few Ionic impost capitals from the 6th century, some of which not yet finished<sup>38</sup>, marble flags for the cancelli from the 5th—6th century, sculptured on both faces<sup>39</sup> a.s.o.

One of the Ionic-impost capitals discovered by Tafrali among the ruins of the Callatis «thermae» belonged to the atrium of a Roman-Byzantine basilica which we think existed on this spot (fig. 11/1). It was mentioned solely for its short inscription, which was read and wrongly interpreted by the discoverer<sup>40</sup>. This fragmentary capital was of white marble with blue veins and had the following dimensions: 0.315 m high, the length of the impost main side on its upper part 0.61 m, the height of the capital itself, 0.10 m and its width, 0.45 m. The volutes on the main face of the capital, less high than they were wide, looked as if deformed by the weight of the impost. Three ova were among them, of these the left one was half covered by the volute. The lateral faces of the capital were adorned with two acanthus leaves, each horizontally and symmetrically placed from the centre towards the edges<sup>41</sup>. The main face of the impost had no decoration. Only a monogram with the characters ΕΠΦΤ, which we presume, was the short form of the great name 'Επαφρόδιτος was inscribed<sup>42</sup>. In the middle

<sup>33</sup> I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>34</sup> O. Tafrali, *La cité pontique de Callatis*, AArh, I, 1927, p. 38, n. 15, pp. 52—54.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. I. Barnea, *Quelques considérations sur les inscriptions chrétiennes de Dobroudja*, loc. cit., p. 266.

<sup>36</sup> O. Tafrali, *op. cit.*, fig. p. 21 down. Cf. R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte des spätantiken Kapitells im Osten vom vierten bis ins siebente Jahrhundert*, «Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte», 9, Berlin—Leipzig, 1936, pl. 13, nos. 176—177 and pp. 55—56. Three similar capitals were lately brought to the Constanța Museum together with most of the inventory of the former Museum of Mangalia.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. p. 53 and 54; I. Barnea, *Chapiteaux à protomes de bœliers de la Scythie Mineure*, «Balcania», VII, 2, 1944, pp. 408—416.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. p. 23, in the middle (A. Orlandos, *op. cit.*, II, fig. 274), fig. p. 52 and p. 53 down. Cf. Th. Sauciuc-Săveanu, *Callatis*, VII, «Dacia»,

VII—VIII, 1937—1940, p. 36, fig. 17/4; *idem*, *Callatis*, VIII, «Dacia», IX—X, 1941—1944, p. 281, fig. 16/12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38, n. 15; p. 54 and fig. p. 46, down (the plan of the «thermae»). We do not exclude the existence of more ancient thermae on the same spot, above or inside the ruins of which a Christian basilica was erected in the Vth—VIth century.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. R. Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 178 and pl. 35, n. 566 a.

<sup>42</sup> O. Tafrali, *op. cit.*, p. 38, n. 15, makes the statement which we consider wrong, that «the inscription was perhaps added later on, in the era in which the Christians tried to make use of the capitals and columns of the thermae for building a church». At the same time, we cannot accept the reading ἐπιτρ(πος) or ἐπισκοπος Π(ἐ)τρ(ος) of the same author, because on the stone the character Φ not P is clearly inscribed.

of the upper part of the profile, in the centre of the lower face of the capital, was a square hole with a depth and sides of 0.45 m in which was stuck the iron bar which was meant to fix the capital on the top of the shaft of the column. Another



Fig. 11. — Callatis: byzantine capitals (VIth century).

smaller and square hollow was carved out of the edge of the impost and used for fastening some horizontal metal bar.

Another fragmentary Ionic-impost capital of the same material and smaller than the former (fig. 11/2) was discovered at Mangalia in unknown circumstances. Its total height was 0.25 m, the height of the capital being of 0.08 m, the dimensions of the impost, in the upper part, being  $0.72 \times 0.455$  m and those of the capital at its base of  $0.31 \times 0.31$  m. A Byzantine cross of  $0.17 \times 0.125$  m was sculptured in very slight relief in the middle of the main face of the impost. The capital itself had still two volutes, between which there was an ovum. In the centre of the inferior face there was a square hole similar to that of the



abovementioned capital. Both capitals date from the 6th century, most probably from the time of Justinian<sup>43</sup>.

An impost-capital from Callatis, lately added to the collection of the Constanța Museum, was especially interesting due to its form and decoration (fig. 11/3 a—b). It was of white marble, unbroken 0.22 m high and the dimensions of the great base were  $0.69 \times 0.44$  m. It seems that the capital was not finished in its lower part, because it was smaller, the dimensions of the small base being of  $0.27 \times 0.22$  m, and looking like a second stem of a four-sided pyramid with top turned down and with no decoration. It is probable that this pyramid stem was intended to be sculptured as an Ionic capital — but this did not occur.

The two main faces of the impost were the only ones adorned with sculptures cut in flat relief. One of these (fig. 11/3 a) had a Byzantine cross in the middle, of  $0.17 \times 0.13$  m, with a medallion in its centre. In the lateral arms of the cross the apocalyptic characters A and  $\omega$  were inscribed and in its vertical ones, the name ΕΥΧΤΑΘΙΟΥ. The height of the characters was of 0.01—0.025 m. A conventionalized plant rises on each side. From this, farther on and directed towards the centre were two long stems bearing at their end a flower not yet open, drooping between the superior and the horizontal limbs of the cross.

The second main face of the impost bore in its middle the monogram 'Ι(ησοῦς) Χ(ριστός), inscribed in a double circle in relief and with a smaller one in its centre. The characters of the monogram were grooved in the middle and had the ends widened (fig. 13/3 b)<sup>44</sup>. The monogram was flanked by an S shaped ornament. This, in its turn was placed between plants with oblique stems bearing three berries on their tops. The larger spaces between the double circles of the monogram and the upper part of the S shaped ornament were filled by a decoration made of two lines in relief, placed at an acute angle with its apex pointing downwards.

The lateral faces of the impost each had a vertical groove down the middle, 0.16 m long, 0.065—0.075 m wide and 0.04 m deep. The ends of some beams were most probably fixed in these grooves. This proves that though the capital was not finished it was used in one of the Roman-Byzantine basilicae in Callatis.

## 6. IBIDA

In 1917, at Ibida, today Slava Rusă, Constanța region, a basilica with three eastern apses was discovered. It is the only one of its kind known up to now in Dobrogea, which we date in the last quarter of the 6th century<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> R. Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 176—178.

<sup>44</sup> Similar monograms are also to be found on other monuments at Tomis as for instance a capital dated VIth century (R. Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne de la Dobroudja*, Bucharest, 1938, pl. XLII, fig. 74: only one of the capital faces, that with a Latin cross) and three sepulchral stelae from the Vth—VIth century (*ibidem*, pl. XLIII, fig. 76—77; D. M. Teodorescu, *Monumente inedite din Tomi*, BCMI, VII, 1914, p. 189, fig. 25, and I. Barnea, *Quelques consi-*

*dérations sur les inscriptions chrétiennes de Dobroudja*, p. 272.

<sup>45</sup> I. Barnea, *Nouvelles considérations sur les basiliques chrétiennes de Dobroudja*, pp. 227, 233—234. Cf. A. Grabar, *Les monuments de Tsaritchin Grad et Justiniana Prima*, « Cahiers archéologiques », III, 1948, p. 54 and especially P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, pp. 437—439 and A. Grabar—W. Emerson, *The basilica of Bélovo*, « The Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute », I, Paris, 1946, pp. 58—59.



The archaeological excavations continued by the Rumanian archaeologist G. G. Mateescu immediately after World War I brought to light four capitals coming most probably from the above-mentioned basilica and which only lately were added to the collection of the Tulcea Museum.

The capitals were of white marble with bluish veins. They belonged to the category of Ionic-impost capitals and only fragments of them still exist. The imposts had on their upper part a simple outline. One of each of their four sides was decorated with a «Latin» cross (fig. 12/1) and only one had a disk in relief. The main characters of the Ionic capitals were clumsily carved and only by lines, a fact which proves their local execution and their late date corresponding with the one assigned to the basilica. One of the capitals had a total height of 0.41 m about  $3/4$  of which was the impost; these proportions were already found at the other Ionic-impost capitals at Ibida. In the centre of the main face of the impost was a «Latin» cross with the ends of the arms widened and whose dimensions were  $0.26 \times 0.19$  m. On the Ionic capital, only a portion of the main face was preserved. This had a volute with one of the two leaves with three lobes sculptured between the volutes<sup>46</sup>. The second fragment (fig. 12/2) came from a capital smaller than the first (0.35 m high) and differed from it by the presence between the inferior limbs of the cross of a three lobed leaf similar to a lily<sup>47</sup>.

The fragment of the third capital (fig. 12/3 a—b) was 0.38 m high. The top left lateral limb of the cross could hardly be seen on the main face. The entire left side volute of the main face and about half of the lateral face of the Ionic capital was still preserved; next to it and decorated with an acanthus leaf with two tops, worked more roughly than the similar one of the Callatis capital could be seen<sup>48</sup>.

The fourth fragment of the capital, 0.71 m wide (fig. 12/4) on the upper part of the main face, was nearly entirely preserved and differed from the other three by the not too high disk in relief, with a diameter of 0.14 m, which was in the middle of the main face of the impost. Only a small part of the left volute of the main face of the Ionic capital was preserved.



The monuments examined above supplement the series of those from Scythia Minor already known and proving the intensive building activity which took place in the cities of this border-province of the eastern Roman Empire, in the decomposition period of the Greek-Roman slavery epoch. The last great efforts for the strengthening and endowment of the cities of Dobrogea with new buildings were made in the days of the Emperors Anastasius the Ist and Justinian, and we suppose that most of the monuments we have presented here date from that period. The great number of tiles with the seal of the emperor Anastasius the Ist, found at Histria<sup>49</sup> and at Dinogetia<sup>50</sup>, the data of Procopius, Justi-

<sup>46</sup> Cf. R. Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 176—178, pl. 35, no. 566 d.

<sup>47</sup> R. Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>48</sup> See above, p. 44.

<sup>49</sup> V. Pârvan, *Fouilles d'Histria, «Dacia», II*, 1926, p. 248, n. 45.

<sup>50</sup> SCIV, II, 1, 1951, p. 53, fig. 21 and fig. 22 (wrongly attributed to the emperor Theodosius); SCIV, III, 1952, pp. 393—394, fig. 29; V, 1—2, 1954, p. 167 and fig. 7. Others are still unpublished.

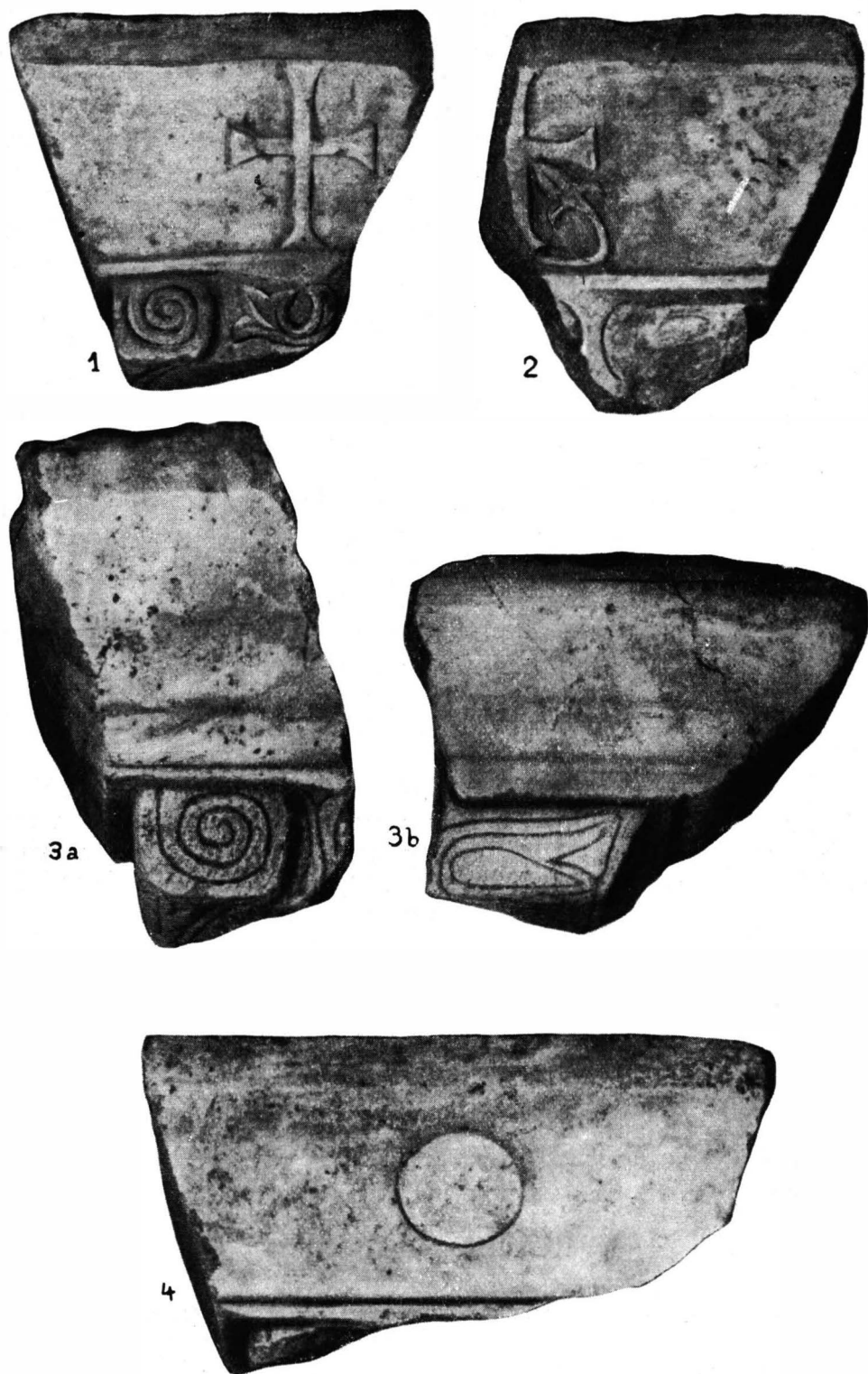


Fig. 12. — *Ibida*: ionic-imposte capitals (VI<sup>th</sup> century).

nian's historian, an architrave found at Mangalia, with the epithet φιλόκτιστος assigned to this emperor<sup>51</sup> and other documentary evidence confirm the hypothesis. Special attention was given to the buildings for Christian-worship. The number of basilicae discovered up to now in some of Dobrogea cities, only partly excavated (five at Tropaeum Trajani, four at Histria<sup>52</sup>, a.s.o.) is unexpectedly great. The explanation is to be found in the unusual conglomeration of people crowded up behind seemingly impregnable walls, a phenomenon characteristic of the decomposition of the slavery epoch<sup>53</sup>. On the other hand, one should keep in mind the great progress and expansion of Christian art and religion during this period, the official character of the new religion, and, in the case of the Dobrogea moreover, the populations' trust in Christ in these cities which were more and more threatened with destruction by inner and outer danger.

A more thorough examination of monuments dating from the 5th—6th century, seldom from the 4th century, discovered in the already mentioned centres of Dobrogea, enables us to establish some points of similarity between these and others from Constantinople, Thessalonica, Ephesus and various other Roman-Byzantine centres of Asia Minor, continental Greece a.s.o. Especially the sculptured monuments show a strong southern influence. Most of the marble of which these were made was brought from Procones. It is well-known that during the 5th—6th century the famous Procones work-shops used to send marble or ready made pieces and in the first place capitals all-over the Empire. We find both of them in Dobrogea. Some of the monuments sculptured with superior technique and almost identically resembling others, discovered in different southern centres were most probably sent ready-made. Others, of the same good quality material, but sculptured with a provincial technique inferior in quality (Ibida's capitals, etc.) were wrought by local artisans, usually after patterns sent together with the material. The unfinished capitals from Mangalia<sup>54</sup> were probably sent only in rough shape and had to be finished on the spot. On the one hand, such a proceeding shows the intention to lighten transport by reducing as much as possible the marble block, on the other hand, a measure of precaution, so that the already sculptured monuments should not be deteriorated during transport, especially when the sculpture was a very refined one.

The monuments here described together with all the monuments of the same period discovered in Dobrogea and with all the documentary information constitute another means to a better knowledge of the life of the province of Scythia Minor during the last centuries of its existence.

## I. BARNEA

<sup>51</sup> V. Bechevliev, *Notes épigraphiques*, « Godišnik-Plovdiv », II, 1950, p. 63, n. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Although according to the six-sided exterior of the apse, the basilica near the thermae from Istria seems of a later date, the lack of a more precise proof makes us doubt that this construction

was a building used for Christian worship. I. Barnea, *Nouvelles considérations sur les basiliques chrétiennes de Dobroudja*, pp. 228 and 233.

<sup>53</sup> Histria, I, pp. 59—60.

<sup>54</sup> See above, p. 360.