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TWO PROBLEMS OF TOPOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY IN DOBRUDJA

I. REGINASSE – MONTEREGINE (*C. JUST.* IV 20. 8. 21.10;
PROC. DE AEDIF., IV. 11. 20).

II. GRATIANA (NDOR. XXXVIII 27; *PROC. DE AEDIF.* IV 11.20).

MIHAIL ZAHARIADE*

Abstract: The author sets out to discuss the possible location of two ancient place-names, *Reginasse* — *Monteregine* and *Gratiana*, recorded in the Late Roman period. A possible identity between *Reginasse* and *Monteregine* is taken into account and, as consequence, the author identifies the place-name with the Turkish attested toponym Regene-baÿir (*Regene* hill), situated between the modern Esehioi and Garvănul Mic, in the South-Western part of the nowadays Romanian Dobrudja. *Gratiana*, possibly built in the in the context of Valens' Gothic campaign from 369, is identified with the fortlet from Dunavătu de Jos, the so-called “Cetatea Zaporojenilor” (the “Zaporojians' Stronghold”), on the northern shore of the present day Razelm lake, in a large swamp-like area.

Keywords: *Reginasse*, *Monteregine*, Regene-baÿir, *Gratiana*, the “Zaporojians' Stronghold”.

Rezumat: Autorul discută în acest articol posibilele localizări ale unor toponime antice, *Reginasse-Monteregine* și *Gratiana*, ambele atestate în epoca romană târzie. Fiind luată în considerare o posibilă identitate între toponimele *Reginasse* și *Monteregine*, autorul propune identificarea acestui punct cu toponimul turcesc Regene-baÿir (Dealul *Regene*), situate între localitățile Esehioi și Garvănul Mic, în partea de sud-vest a Dobrogei. În același timp, *Gratiana*, care a fost probabil construită în contextual expediției gotice a împăratului Valens din anul 369, este identificată cu fortificația de la Dunavătu de Jos, în punctul numit „Cetatea Zaporojenilor”, într-o zonă mlăștinoasă, pe malul nordic al lagunei Razelm.

Cuvinte cheie: *Reginasse*, *Monteregine*, Regene-baÿir, *Gratiana*, „Cetatea Zaporojenilor”.

I. Reginasse – Monteregine

a. Ancient sources

In 294, Diocletian inspected some key points along the Lower Danube frontier¹. On that occasion Imperial edicts have been issued and public works examined. By October 17, 294 the Emperor reached Appiaria where a decree was issued². A day later, on October 18, 294, Diocletian entered Transmarisca, where a new edict was added to the legislation package on trusts³. On that occasion the progress of the

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¹ I. W. Enßlin, s.v. *Valerius* (Diocletianus), in: RE VII A², 1948, col. 2439; P. Brennan, *Imperial Campaigns A. D. 285-311*, Phoenix 30, 1976, 2, p. 187.

² *Coll.* X 5.

³ CJust 6. 42. 28 (*d.XV k.Nov*). Due to its medieval copyists, Transmarisca appears in modern editions of the Codex Iustinianus as *Trans mare*.

building works of a new massive fortress could have been inspected⁴. A large building inscription dated 294-299 confirms the particular attention paid to this very place in the Imperial strategy⁵.

The Imperial retinue seems to have remained at Transmarisca for three days (October 18th -20th), stressing its strategic importance. On October 21st and 22nd the Emperor was present in Durostorum, where two new edicts on creditors were issued⁶. An Imperial building inscription found here⁷ shows the same considerable importance given to the fortification of this key strategically position on the Lower Danube⁸.

Next step where the Imperial entourage moved was a rather mysterious place-name called in the Code *Reginasse*. Here Diocletian seems to have stationed two days and issued two edicts⁹.

The edict 4. 20. 8 in the Code bears simply *D(iem) K(alendis) Nov(embris)* without the specific day number. It is missing on the *mss. Pistorienses* XI 66 and also in Kreuger's edition¹⁰. Mommsen inserts *VIII* before *K(alendis)*, which is October 26. But *VIII* is conflicting with the *D(iem) VIII* of 4. 21. 10. The last day when the Imperial retinue is recorded in Durostorum was October 22nd. The dates indicated in the Codex refer strictly to the days when edicts were effectively issued and not the time span spent in a place. The first day in *Reginasse* is October 25th; therefore on 23rd the Emperor could have left Durostorum and arrived in *Reginasse* on 24th. 25th could be the day of the first edict at *Reginasse* (4. 20. 8) and therefore *D.VII* rather than *VIII* would fit well in that date.

After *Reginasse*, Diocletian seems to have turned SE, heading out to Marcianopolis; in his way he stopped at a place wrongly indicated in the later medieval manuscripts of the Code as *Romae*; here, on October 27th (*S. VI K. Nov.*) an additional provision is issued for the *Cornelia lex de sicariis*¹¹.

Reginasse is a place name formed of *Regina* + the suffix *-sse/-ssi*. The place is not recorded in other ancient sources. The name is clearly of Celtic origin¹². The suffix *-sse*, *-ssi*, used to build the toponym gives the meaning of 'at' - 'at Regina'¹³.

The word *Regina*, appears in Procopius' lists, in two other instances:

⁴ R. Zmiev, *Kastelat Transmarisca*, *Arheologija Sofia* 11, 1969, p. 45-54; V. Velkov, *Die Stadt Transmarisca (Moesia Inferior)*, *Archaeologia Polona*, 14, 1973, p. 263-268; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem an der unteren Donau zwischen Dorticum and Durostorum (Bulgarien) von Augustus bis Maurikios. Sonderdruck aus Bericht der Römisch-germanischen Kommission*, Frankfurt am Main 78, 1997, p. 487. Em. Paunov, *History of Transmarisca*, in: L. Vagalinski (ed.), *The Lower Danube in Antiquity* (VI c. BC-VI AD.), Sofia, 2007, p. 141-146.

⁵ CIL III, 6151 (294-299 CE); Gr. C. Tocilescu, *Monumente epigrafice și sculpturale ale Muzeului Național de Antichități din București*, vol., I, București, 1902, p. 173-184, nr. 21; M. Zahariade, *The Tetrarchic Building Inscriptions and the Lower Danube Limes*, in: *XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina*, Roma, 18-24 settembre 1997, p. 555.

⁶ CJust. 8. 41. 6 (*s. XII k. nov.*); CJust. 9. 22. 20 (*s. XI k. Nov.*)

⁷ I. I. Russu, *Inscripții latine din Durostorum*, *Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice* 2, 1936, p. 210-212= AE 1936, 10.

⁸ R. Ivanov, G. Atanasov, P. Donevski, *The Ancient Durostorum I: History of Silistra*, Sofia, 2006 (in Bulgarian).

⁹ CJust. 4. 20. 8. *Imperatores Diocletianus, Maximianus et caesares*

Servos pro domino, quaemadmodum interrogari non posse, pro facto autem interrogari posse non ambigitur. d. k. nov. Reginassi cc. cons.

Translation: There is no doubt that slaves may not be interrogated (under torture) for the master, any more than against him, but they may be interrogated as to their own transaction.

CJust. 4.21.10: *Imperatores Diocletianus, Maximianus. Victorino.*

Cum instrumentis etiam non intervenientibus venditio facta rata maneat, consequenter amissis etiam quae intercesserant non tolli substantiam veritatis placuit. Diocl. et Maxim. aa. et cc. victorino. a 294 d. viii k. nov. Reginassi cc. cons.

Translation: Since a completed sale is valid, though no documents showing that fact were executed, it has been properly decided that the loss of documents actually made does not destroy the truth of the matter.

¹⁰ We used P. Kreuger's edition, *Corpus iuris Civilis*, editio stereotypa, octava, volumen secundum, *Codex Iustinianus*, recognovit Paulus Kreuger, Berolini, 1906, note 10.

¹¹ CJust. VIII 16. 5 (6); see also Kreuger note 15.

¹² See examples offered by A. Holder, *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*, Leipzig, vol. II, 1897, col. 1107.

¹³ Cf. *Birgina-so* (Βιργινασσώ) Proc. *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20; V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung der Kastellnamen in Prokops Werk "De Aedificiis"*, Amsterdam, 1970, p.146, as another Celtic place name. Al I. Philippide, *Originea Românilor*, vol II, Iași, 1928, p. 437, 471 suggests for the suffix *-ss-a* diminutive, an idea worthy to be considered.

1. Μοντερεγίνε¹⁴, a Latin-Celtic toponym composed of *monte* (μοντε) (Lat. Abl.) + *Regina* (ρεγίνε)(Celt.), ‘the Mount Regina’, apparently a toponym, but in fact a settlement. V. Beševliev, locates *Monteregine* at Voivoda (Shumen district)¹⁵.
2. Πιγινικάστειλλον, ‘*castellum Regina*’; Latin-Celtic; *Regina* (Celt.) + *castellum* (Lat. Neutr., grecized with an ending in ον)¹⁶;

b. On ground identification

As the Imperial retinue moved constantly eastward, *Reginasse* seems to have been one day journey from Durostorum, which means no more than 20-25 km in slow motion. The place must be located somewhere in a circle around the main Moesian town and legionary base encompassing this distance at the most. It seems a place of some importance since the Imperial entourage resided there and issued edicts as in other key strategically positions along his Danubian journey.

Procopius records two more place names containing the term ‘mount’ (*mons*) in eastern Balkan regions: Γεμελλμοῦντες near *Aquae Calidae* (Θεομά)¹⁷, in Thrace, and Τηεσιμόντη, in the province of Haemimons¹⁸. The phylaktos Simocatta mentions Καλβομοῦντις¹⁹ placed by V. Beševliev in eastern Thrace, in the same region as *Gemellomuntes*. However, all three are far from the area and context in which Μοντερεγίνε is recorded.

¹⁴ Proc. *De Aedif.*, IV 11, 20.

¹⁵ V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, 145.

¹⁶ Proc. *De Aedif.*, IV 11, 20. The fort is situated in the area of the town of *Germane* (P. Skok, *op. cit.*, p. 453, 456; V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, p. 53. The place name *Regina* is common in Roman western provinces: *Regino*, in Baetica, present day San Pedro de Villacorza (Plin *NH* III 14); Πηγίνα (Ptol. *Geogr.* II 4. 10); *Regiane* (It. *Ant.* 415.1); *Regina* (Rav. *Cosmogr.* 4. 44); *respublica Reginensium* (CIL II 1037); *Reginum/Regino – Castra Regina* (Regensburg) (Tab. Peut. III 4.o); *Regino* (It. *Ant.* 250. 1); *Regia* (Tab. Peut X 1 u; NDOcc XXXV 17); *Reginca* (Erguy?) (Tab. Peut. I 1/2. o). For the Celtic place names in Procopius’ list see V. Beševliev, *Keltische Ortsnamen in den Kastellverzeichnisse bei Prokop*, in *I^{er} Congrès International des Études balkaniques et sud est Européenes*, vol. VI, Linguistique, Sofia, 1968, p. 415-423. It is worth noting that the Bulgarian scholar makes no mention of *Monteregine* in this particular study.

¹⁷ Proc. *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20. *Gemellomuntes* is a Latin toponym commonly located in Eastern Balkans towards the Black sea shore for it is placed by Procopius after Θεομά which was identified with the earlier *Aquae Calidae* (Burgaski Bani), in Thrace. V. Beševliev, *Zur Geographie Nordost-Bulgariens in der Spätantike und im Mittelalter*, Linguistique Balkanique IV, 1962, p. 57-80, especially p. 59-63; idem, *Bemerkungen über die antiken Hereestraßen im Ostteil der Balkanhalbinsel*, *Klio* 51, 1969, p. 485, 488 places *Gemellomuntes* straight under Θεομά. For the discussions on the identification of *Gemellomuntes* and its position in Procopius’ *De Aedificiis* see: P. Skok, *Zum Balkanlatein IV¹*, *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 4-5, 1934, p. 454; V. Beševliev, *Zur Topographie der Balkanhalbinsel in Prokops Werk “De Aedificiis”*, *Philologus* 111, 1967, 3-4, p. 280; idem, *Bemerkungen...*, p. 485, 488; idem, *Zur Deutung ...* p. 53, 142 no. 23; 144-145. The translation of the place name goes either as ‘the two mount’ peaks (P. Skok, *op.cit.*, p. 454) or ‘the Twin Mountains’ (J. Jireček, *Die Heerstraße von Belgrad nach Konstantinopel und die Balkanpässe*, Prag, 1877, p. 8). The correct form would have been *Gemelli montes* ‘the Twin Mountains’, but Procopius reproduces a term in Vulgar Latin circulated by the 6th century Romanic population in the region. *Muntes*, written in Greek, μουντες goes for the Lat. pl. *Montes* and has a much greater linguistic significance for the early stages of Romanian language, the transformations of the Latin language into a Romanic one north and east of the Balkan Peninsula, and the circulation of such linguistically modified terms reproduced by Procopius. Cf. Lat. pl. Nom. *Gemelli* > Rom. pl. Nom. *gemeni*; Lat. pl. Nom *Montes* > Rom. sing. Nom *Munte*, pl. *Munți*; Philippide, *op.cit.*, p. 436, 438; H. Mihăiescu, *La Romanité dans le sud-est de l’Europe*, Bucharest, p. 89, 156, 389. *Gemellomuntes* might be very likely the Biberna heights (Bulgaria). Special attention has been paid to this specific area by V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, p. 142.

¹⁸ Procopius, *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20. V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, p. 33.

¹⁹ Thophylact Sim., *Hist.* II 15. 3 The identification of Γεμελλμοῦντες with Καλβομοῦντις (V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, p. 142; idem, *Zweirandnotizen zu Theophilaktos Simmokatthes*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 43, 1950, 257-258; idem, *Bemerkungen ...*, p. 488 is probable, for both places are situated somewhere in the Little Balkans, on the road between *Aquae Calidae* (Burgas) and *Anchialos*, in the Burgas gulf.

Procopius' geographical context of *Monteregine* is rather puzzling. V. Beševliev suggests a certain circumstance in connection with a group of four other forts: Ἀβριττος, Ἀλτῖνα, Μαυροβάλλε, and eventually Δινισκάρτα and advocates 'vielleicht auf dem Hügel von Voivoda, an dem eine Strasse entlang ging'²⁰. V. Avramov locates also Δινισκάρτα (former Roman *Dineia*) at Voivoda²¹ (Shumen, distr.). V. Beševliev accepts the suggestion in a conflicting attempt of identification with the same modern place of both *Monteregine* and *Diniscarta*.

There is a catch in Procopius' list of this area. From *Abrittus*²², Procopius jumps east, to *Diniskarta* (i. e. *Diniskastra*), with the likeliness that Ρουβοῦστα have lied in between²³. The Procopius' trend of the description would have run north, towards Danube. In his scheme, after Βέκις follows *Altina* (Ἀλτῖνα=*Altinum*), which is on the River. Μαυροβάλλε is corrected on good ground by V. Beševliev in Μαυροβάλλε and associated with *Nigrinianis* (Malāk Preslavets) also on the River²⁴. The list continues with place names which are situated only on the Danube line: Τίγροα = *Tegra* (Marten), Σκεδεβά= *Scaidava* (Stäklen), and finally Νόβας = *Novae*. That means that the description follows a zigzagged direction, from SW to NE in a triangle like area, with the southern side *Abrittus-Rubusta-Diniscarta* and its top on *Altinum* on the Danube. The succession on the SW-NE line, with *Diniscarta* as starting point and continuing with *Monteregine-Bekis-Altinum* heading slightly SW-NE, offers a rough picture of the topographical arrangement made by Procopius. That would set *Monteregine* before *Bekis*, but south of the Danube, on the eastern side of the triangle which headed north to *Altina/Altinum*. Once *Altina* was reached, the Procopius' listing goes westward along the river. The correct succession on the Danube would have been therefore: *Altinum - Tegra - Maurovalle (Nigrinianis) - Skedeba- Novae*.

Monte-Reginae, > *Mons Regina* > *Reginae Mons*, reminds very well *Regina-sse*. The resemblance is striking. Beševliev's location of *Monteregine* at Voivoda is not tenable not because such a place name could not have existed somewhere else, but because of the clear context of Procopius description who traces a slightly SW-NE oriented line: *Diniscarta-Monteregine-Bekis-Altinum*. *Reginasse* was certainly close to *Durostorum*, according to CJ 4. 20. 8 and 4. 21. 10, which attests the Imperial presence, at one day distance. If so, the same common term *Regina-Reginae* makes easier the likely identification of *Reginasse* with *Monteregine*, the last but one place before *Altinum*.

If *Monteregine* is apparently *Reginasse* and the latter is one day journey from *Durostorum*, a mount, *Mons* > *Monte*, Μοντε (Abl.), or at least a hill of considerable height, as a major topographic element on or near a fort repaired by Justinian, must be searched for and demonstrated to have existed in the area. To bear such a name, the place must have reflected a topographic reality.

Except Procopius' *Monte-regine*, there is no other reference in ancient sources to a 'mount' within one day distance south of the Danube, as *Reginasse* was. The mid-Byzantine and Genovese sources yield little, if at all, evidence on the physical geography of the area Procopius is describing in this very passage²⁵.

An unexpected spark of hope in identifying *Monteregine* comes however from the Ottoman toponymy in medieval times. As the composed toponyms created by the native Turkish speaking population are characterized through juxtaposition of the constituent terms in a syntactic construction

²⁰ V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, p. 144-145.

²¹ V. Avramov, in *Iubileen Sbornik Pliska-Preslav*, Sofia, 1928, vol. I, p. 235-236. It would sound more likely Δινισκάστρα than Δινισκάρτα or worse Δινισκόρτα, which certainly are copists' blunders: *Diniskorta* or *Diniskarta*; cf. V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, p. 144, no. 42.

²² For *Abrittus* and other attempts of identifications in the area see V. Beševliev, *Zur Geographie...*, *Linguistique Balkanique*, 4, 1962, p. 57-80.

²³ Procopius, *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20; Al. I. Philippide, *op. cit.*, p. 437, 470; V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, 144; V. Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity (studies and Materials)*, Amsterdam, 1977, p. 102, 114.

²⁴ V. Beševliev, *Zur Deutung...*, 145 no. 46.

²⁵ See the collection of 15th -18th century medieval maps picturing North-Eastern territories of Bulgaria and the comprehensive analysis of these documents: V. Beševliev, *Die Darstellung Thrakiens auf alten historischen Landkarten aus dem 15. Bis 19. Jh.*, *Linguistique Balkanique* 21, 1978, 2, p. 11-28; idem, *Orographie und Hydrologie Bulgariens in einigen alten Landkarten aus dem 16. und 17. Jh.*, *Sudia Balcanica* 1, 1970, p. 149-178; idem, *Dolen Dunav v antichnata kartografia*, *ArheologiaSofia* 27, 1985, p. 1-9.

(attributive), in which the determinant term is always placed before the determined one, there are composed toponyms + a common noun ex: Caçamac *baĵir* (the ‘Caçamac hill’) (caçamac-place of refuge); *baĵir* is extremely common in Bulgaria and Dobrudja²⁶. The Turkish toponyms of the south east Dobrudjan tableland were comprehensively investigated and described in late 19th and in 20th century²⁷.

The tableland S and SE of Silistra (the ancient Durostorum) shows a dense network of low and high hills labelled in Turkish *baĵir*- ‘hill’, and old water courses, rivulets, steep waterless valleys named *derē-ĉaĵir* ‘valley of the river’. The heights of this uneven terrain have a maximum of ca. +170-190m.

Among the considerable number of Turkish oronyms in the region two show a particular interest for our discussion: *Regene-baĵir* (‘the Regene Hill’) and *Regene ĉaĵir derē* (‘the valley of the Regene rivulet’). The hill (+164m) is situated between the villages of Esehioi (the official present day Romanian spelling for the Turkish Eseköy) to the W and Garvānul Mic (‘Little Garvān’) to the E, today both on the territory of Romania (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. ‘Regene baĵir’ (The ‘Regene Hill’) in south-west Dobrudja. The oronym retains very likely the ancient place name ‘Reginasse’ (CJust. IV 20. 8. 21.10) and Μοντερεγίβε (Proc. *De aedif.*, IV. 20).

Regene-baĵir was also a bench mark in the establishment act of the Romanian-Bulgarian frontier from December 17th 1878, according to the decision of the European Commission for the Boundary Delimitation between Romania and Bulgaria²⁸. The modern topographical description of the area which was made in an article in ‘The Geographical, Statistic, Economic, and Historical Dictionary of the Constanța county’, Bucharest, 1897 goes as follows: “Regene bair, an important hill in the district of new

²⁶ See in general: I. Penișoară, *Elemente de toponimie turcească din Dobrogea*, *Limba Română* 27, 1978, 3, p. 293-297; E. Mahmut, *Structura numelor topice turcești medievale din Dobrogea*, *Limba Română* 27, 1978, p. 259-266.

²⁷ Cpt. M. D. Ionescu, *Dobrogea în pragul veacului al XX-lea. Geografia matematică, fizică, politică, economică și militară*, București, 1904.

²⁸ Cpt. M. D. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 38-39; the establishment of the Romanian-Bulgarian boundary in this very area was finally decided in an additional act entitled: ‘Modificările aduse de comisiunea de delimitare art. 6 și 7 ale actului din 17 Decembrie 1878 care fixează frontiera româno-bulgară’ (Cpt. M. D. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 38 note 2).

Silistra, on the territory of the rural commune of Garvăn (namely on the one of its hamlet Cuiugiuc); it is a prolongation of the hill ‘Garvăn-*baĵir*’ and has the aspect rather of a (mountainous) massive, situated south and west of the borough and to the south west of the commune. It is 164 m high and, through its height, it overlooks the valley of Nursus- *ĉaĵir* which runs to its eastern bottom; the country road Gârlița-Küciuk-Kainargi goes along the valley; a country road runs close to hill’s edge; along the southern bottom of the hill runs the border of Dobrudja towards Bulgaria”²⁹.

Regene derē ĉaĵir is a narrow valley of a rivulet close by *Regene-baĵir*. It lies on the territory of the commune Esehioi and is formed from the reunion of two other valleys: *Punar-Orman- ĉaĵir* to the W and *Kilege ĉaĵir* to the E. The *Regene* valley has the general orientation to the N, slightly SW-NE between the hills *Tiumbet* and *Tanas Sirtī*. It is 6 km long and opens in the Esehioi valley, at 2 km S of the Gârlița village³⁰.

The two toponyms *Regene baĵir* and *Regene derē ĉaĵir* seems unique not only in this area, but in the entire Dobrudja. The leading term, *Regene* in both cases seem to have had no particular significance in the Osman or modern Turkish language. The *Regene* hill (+164m), although not the highest in the region (cf. *Ciugiuc baĵir* +171m), has literally the aspect of a mountainous massive. The toponym *Regene baĵir* translates exactly Procopius’ Μοντερεγῖνε > *Regine Mons*. If we accept the identification of the unique *Reginasse* (CJ 4. 20. 8 and 4. 21. 10), with also the distinctive Μοντερεγῖνε (Proc. *De Aedif.* IV. 11. 20) and the exclusive *Regene- baĵir*, then we might conclude that there have been three names of the same place in different periods: *Reginasse* (October 294), Μοντερεγῖνε > Mons Regina (ca. 530), and *Regene baĵir* (ca. 15th –early 20th century). Surprisingly, although of Celtic origin, the place name was transmitted throughout centuries by a strong local tradition, all merging in indicating one and the same place³¹.

The future projects of land surveys in the area will have to include the identification of some ruins which could indicate with certain degree of sureness the ancient place name recorded in the Code and Procopius’ work.

II. Gratiana

a. The sources

Two places bear this name in the Later Roman Empire. One belongs to Moesia Prima, where Notitia Dignitatum records *auxilium Gratianense* as the regiment in garrison in the 4th century³². The 4th century Moesian *Gratiana* might allegedly correspond to the 6th century *Cantabaza* (φρούρια Κανταβαζά) in Procopius *De Aedificiis*³³; the place has been identified certain enough with the present day Saldum-Gradač fortlet³⁴.

²⁹ Gr. Gr. Dănescu, *Dicționarul geographic, statistic, economic și istoric al județului Constanța*, București, 1897, s.v. Rege-deresî ĉaĵir and Regene- baĵir, p. 653-654 = *ibidem*, in G. Lahovari, *Marele Dicționar geographic al României*, V, București, 1902, p. 227-228; see also Cpt. M. D. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 92, 125, 157, 159.

³⁰ See note 29.

³¹ In my opinion the existence of the hydronym *Regene-derē – ĉaĵir* (‘the valley of the Regene rivulet’) would imply an identical name containing *Regina-Regine* in Antiquity applied for the valley and rivulet.

³² NDO. XLI 26

³³ Proc. *De Aedif.* III 6

³⁴ V. Kondić, *Cantabaza, Smorna, Campsa*, *Starinar* 22, 1974, p. 53-57. On the fort see: P. Petrović, *Saldum Gradač-rimsko paleovizantijsko utvrđenje*, *ArhPregled* 10, 1968, p. 106-108; idem, *Saldum-Gradač-fortification d’*époque romaine et byzantine I-VI siècles**, in *Stari Kulturi u Džerdapu*, Beograd, 1969, p. 94-95; V. Kondić, *Ergebnisse der Neuen Forschungen auf dem Obermoesischen Donaulimes*, in *Actes du IX^e Congrès international d’études sur les frontières romaines*, Mamaia 6-13 septembre 1972, București, Köln, Wien 1974, p. 46 no. 5; P. Petrović, *Saldum-rimsko i ranovizantijsko utvrđenje na ušcu potoka Kozica*, *Starinar* 33-34, 1982-1983 (1984), p. 129-134; M. Vasić, *L’architecture à l’intérieure des camps romaines des Portes de Fer au IV^e et V^e siècles*, in: *Roman Frontier Studies 1989, Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman frontier studies*, edited by Valerie A. Maxfield and Michael J. Dobson, Exeter, 1991, p. 309.

The second *Gratiana* was situated in the province of Scythia according to the same two sources; The Scythian section of Notitia records it on the last but one place on the list of the forts and assigns *milites primi Gratianenses* as its garrison³⁵. Procopius mentions Γρατίανα among some place names only in the list ἐν [...] τῇ μεσογείᾳ[....]³⁶.

The identification of the Scythian *Gratiana* was frenziedly debated among the early 20th century historians. J. Weiss³⁷, C. Patsch³⁸, and V. Pârvan³⁹, placed successively *Gratiana* at present day fortress 2.5 km east of the centre of the Murighiol village, the administrative hub of the commune with the same name. The suggestion was broadly accepted especially since 1938, when R. Vulpe's monumental *Histoire ancienne de la Dobroudja* placed *Gratiana* at Murighiol⁴⁰. That triggered a common place in the studies on historical geography of the north-east Dobrudja. I. Barnea and Gh. Ștefan⁴¹, Em. Popescu⁴², and H. Gajewska⁴³ tackled the *Gratiana* subject from this viewpoint. The straightforward question marks put forward by Al. Suceveanu⁴⁴ and Al. S. Ștefan⁴⁵ did not produce any additional commentaries at that time.

In 1977, A. Aricescu strongly challenged the solution Murighiol=*Gratiana* and proposed the location of *T(h)alamonium* of Notitia Dignitatum at Murighiol⁴⁶, while *Gratiana* was thought to have been located on the western section of the Danube frontier of Scythia⁴⁷. A. Aricescu construed on μεσογείᾳ as a roughly W-E oriented strip of land between the Danube and the Black Sea in which Procopius (*De Aedif.* IV. 11. 20) included some place names⁴⁸. The idea looks attractive and is an attempt to explain many of the downsides in the geographical order of the place names recorded in *De Aedificiis*. In Aricescu's view, the mid Dobrudjan area encompassed by μεσογείᾳ would have comprised, from S to N, on the Danube line, Ἀξίοπια, Καρσώ, while on the sea shore the limits were Ἀργαμώ to the N and Τόμις to the S. In accordance with the author, that would result in a trapeze like form of the Scythian μεσογείᾳ with the southern side along the line Axiopolis-Tomis, and a north one, Carsium-Argamum. However, according to the map provided by A. Aricescu, Γρατίανα would fall outside μεσογείᾳ although Procopius includes *Gratiana* in the area and he himself says literally that the place belong to *mesogeia*. A. Aricescu also suggests the likelihood of a later interpolation in Procopius' text by a copyist willing to make more understandable the amalgamation of place names next to the Black Sea, the Danube and ἐν τῇ μεσογείᾳ. Therefore, according to Aricescu, the later copyist would have introduced the titles Τὰ Θρακῶν λειπόμενα. Παρὰ τε τὸν Εὐξεινον πόντον καὶ ποταμὸν Ἴστρον, κὰν τῇ μεσογείᾳ, οὕτως ('the other fortresses from Thrace, next to the Pontus Euxinus and the Istros River, but

³⁵ NDOr. XXXIX 27

³⁶ Proc. *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20

³⁷ J. Weiss, *Die Dobrudscha im Altertum*, Sarajevo, 1911, p. 55-56.

³⁸ C. Patsch, s.v. *Halmyris*, in RE VII 1910, col. 2878-2879 but places it rather botched "um Dorfe Dunavetz".

³⁹ V. Pârvan, *Ulmetum*, AARMSI II XXXIV, Bucarest, 1913, p. 597 note. 2; idem, *Municipium Aurelium Durostorum*, Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica, N. S., 2, 1924, p. 335; idem, *Nuove considerazioni sull' vescovato della Scizia Minore*, Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia. Rendincotti, Roma, II, 1924, p. 130.

⁴⁰ R. Vulpe, *Histoire Ancienne de la Dobrudja*, Bucarest, 1938, p. 301 and the map.

⁴¹ I. Barnea, Gh. Ștefan, *Le limes Scythicus des origines à la fin de l'antiquité*, in: Actes du IX^e Congrès international d'études sur les frontières romaines, Mamaia 6-13 septembre 1972, București, Köln, Wien 1974, p. 23-24.

⁴² Em. Popescu, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, (TIR), L 35, Bucarest, 1969, p. 44 (s.v. *Gratiana*), p. 52 (s.v. Murighiol).

⁴³ H. Gajewska, *Topographie des fortifications romaines en Dobrudja*, Wroclaw-Warszaw, 1974, p. 154.

⁴⁴ Al. Sucevenu, *Viața economică în Dobrogea romană, în secolele I-III e.n.*, București, 1974, p. 58, 96, 132.

⁴⁵ Al. S. Ștefan, *Cetatea romană târzie de la Murighiol. Studiu aerofotografic*, Peuce 9, 1984, p. 297.

⁴⁶ A. Aricescu, *Armata în Dobrogea romană*, București, 1977, p. 116; in fact Aricescu offers no focused analysis of the location of *Thalamonium*=*Salmorus*=*Halmyris*. The only attempt is made rather vaguely as: "Talamonium, localitate neidentificată încă, dar care se află, fără îndoială, de la Tulcea spre vărsarea Dunării în Mare, posibil dincolo de Salsovia".

⁴⁷ A more detailed and comprehensive approach was undertaken by A. Aricescu for the location of *Gratiana* in an attempt to demonstrate its position north of Carsium: A. Aricescu, *Quelques précisions sur la carte de la Scythia Minor*, Dacia N. S. 14, 1970, p. 308-309; Idem, *Armata...*, p. 118-119; p. 168-169.

⁴⁸ A. Aricescu, *Quelques précisions...*, p. 308-309.

also those in interior of the country'). On this basis, Aricescu distinguishes two categories of fortresses: those inside and those outside *μεσογεία*. In fact there are three categories which is clearly specified by Procopius: those next to the Black sea, those along the Danube and those in the interior. A later intervention of a medieval copyist in Procopius' text in an attempt to put the lists of the place names in a certain order is possible. But if that indeed happened, then he (they) must be made responsible for a major jumble and disorderly citation of the place names upon which had no slightest geographical knowledge. The intervention is indeed hardly demonstrable, for a comparison between the three main codices: *Vaticanus*, *Laurentianus* and *Ambrosianus* shows no significant differences. The nine other derivative secondary codices show insignificant differences or other noticeable modifications in the texts. There is, however, a visible striking contrast, difficult otherwise to explain, between the relative Procopius' fluency in the text describing extensive Justinian's building activity and the remarkable confusing disorder in the lists with many place names mentioned randomly and apparently without no geographical vision.

In Procopius' text, *Gratiana* would not fall outside, but inside *μεσογεία*, as Aricescu himself vows in his text (not on the map), because it is recorded under that title. The problem is whether *μεσογεία* was indeed oriented W-E, as suggested by the well-known scholar, or there is a random group of place names without no geographical order, in which case the term loses its significance. Beside the unidentified place names, the title *ἐν δὲ τῇ μεσογείᾳ* includes both fortresses on the Danube (*Axiopa=Axiopolis*, *Carso=Carsium*) and on the sea shore (*Argamo=Argamum*, *Tzasklis-Ad Salices?*, *Tomis*, *Creas=Ecrene*). There are also doublets: *Preidis-Presidio*, *Argamo-Ergamia*. *Gratiana* appears located in the list after *Carsium*, therefore north of it. The bizarre aspect of the picture is that even if we accept the location of *Gratiana* after *Carsium*, as suggested by Aricescu⁴⁹, the citation in the list briskly jumps on the Black sea shore, with *Argamum*, *Tzasklis*, *Tomis* and *Creas=Ecrene*. That would be a solid argument in favor of Aricescu's proposal to read *μεσογεία* as a W-E oriented strip of land with N and S sides on the Danube and the Black Sea.

Gratiana and the infantry regiment that garrisoned the fort, *milites primi Gratianenses*, are certainly later interpolations in the Scythian list of *Notita Dignitatum Oriens*. As convincingly shown quite a few times⁵⁰, additions to the main Scythian list of troops and forts occurred throughout the 4th century, until the final edition which was sent to the central bureaus of *primicerius notariorum*. By 394/395, he finally edited it together with the entire *pars Orientis* of the document. The second last significant intervention in the list was operated allegedly shortly before or after 369. There are two interpolations, both envisaging Valens' reign: one refers to the western front, where a new cavalry regiment replaced an older unit, supposedly at *Cius*⁵¹; another indicates the very last segment towards the mouth of the river where *milites primi Gratianenses* was billeted in the newly rebuilt *Gratiana* fort⁵². Adequately, the names of a new regiment and place name were added in the document. However, Valens' massive repair and rebuilding works were not the final interventions in the defensive scheme to mirror interpolations in the Scythian list. The last one occurred during Theodosius' time, very likely after 384/385, when *cuneus equitum Arcadum*, a Theodosian regiment, was brought from Egypt and garrisoned at *Thalamonium=Halmyris*⁵³.

⁴⁹ Remarkably, *Gratiana* does not appear marked in the *mesogeia* on the map provided by A. Aricescu, although in the text of the article (*Quelques précisions...*, p. 309) he affirms openly that the place belongs to *mesogeia*

⁵⁰ A. Aricescu, *Armata...*, p. 118; p. 168-169; M. Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda, Scythia și Notita Dignitatum*, București, 1988, p. 87-88; idem, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman province (284-681)*, Amsterdam, 2006, p. 175.

⁵¹ There are two *cunei equitum stablesianorum* indicated successively: one at *Cius* (NDOr. XXXIX 14) and another at *Beroe* (NDOr. XXXIX 15), two neighbour places. The old Constantinian scheme construed on a regular alternation *cuneus* (cavalry regiment)-*milites* (infantry unit) seems to have been broken by Valens, probably because of tactical reasons or rather a quick on spot transformation of a cavalry unit from the field army which allegedly worked at the reconstruction of the *Cius* fort (IGLR 233; (M. Zahariade, *Scythia Minor...*, p. 171).

⁵² NDOr. XXXIX 27. There is another fort in Scythia, *Valentiniana*, recorded only in Proc. *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20, which bears the name of Valentinian II, the son of Valentinian I and another Valens' nephew.

⁵³ NDOr. XXXIX 18; A. Aricescu, *Armata...*, p. 118; 168-169; M. Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda...*, p. 82-83; 92-93 idem, *Scythia minor...* p. 178; idem, *Cuneus equitum Arcadum and Classis [In]plateypegiis at Halmyris. An exchange of troops between Egypt and Thrace during the reign of Theodosius I: the case of Scythia*, in *Near and beyond the Roman frontier. Proceedings of a colloquium held at Târgoviște, 16-17 october 2008*, O. Țentea, I. C. Opris eds, Bucharest, 2009, p. 347-354.

But *Gratiana* is not the last place name in the list. It is followed by a place with a rather intriguing name, *Inplateypegiis*, recently restored as *in [loco] plateypegiis* and considered as having been the base of the *plateypegia* as a specific type of ships in the Danube Delta⁵⁴. That shows that the later interpolator(s) kept track of the real situation on the ground and inserted any specific change that had taken place in the meantime. Interventions in the list could have taken place either successively, which is likely, or at once, at the final revision which is less probable. Either ways, the assignment of *Gratiana* on the Scythian list passed through at least two major revisions (Valens, Theodosius) and a final edition (394/395) before being sent out to the central authorities. Each time, the Scythian *Gratiana* has been maintained in its geographical location since it appeared as a new place name on the map. Had it been on the western front, as vowed by A. Aricescu, the final revision would have brought it to its place, somewhere between Carsium and Troesmis, which is not the case. However, Notitia apparently did not err and placed it where it physically lied, in the Dunavats peninsula (see below).

b. On ground identification

Gratiana was a new name at that time among older ones in the province. It had to appear as a new Imperial foundation and for that it either was built from the foundations or the new name must have been assigned to an older fort rebuilt or entirely repaired.

East of the *Salmorude/Halmyris/Thalamonium* fortress two more fortlets have been identified and partially investigated. Some 2 km east, in the centre of the present day village of Dunavățu de Sus, a 50 x 47 m square stone fortlet was initially described by P. Polonic in 1898⁵⁵; ca. 6 km west of the Dunavățu de Jos village, another 45 x 53 x 30 x 53 trapezoidal stone fortlet is known for centuries as Cetatea Zaporojenilor ('the Zaporojians' stronghold'). Both were partially excavated between 1982 and 1990, but interest has been focused between 1986 and 1990 on the latter⁵⁶. The fortlet is situated on the northern shore of the present day Razelm lake in a large swamp-like area as the result of the siltation process of the Razelm lacustrine complex, as well as of some canals, once some secondary branches of the Danube.

The environmental circumstances on the ground fit well the Themistios' description of a fort built after Valens' Gothic campaign of 369. The environment in which the new fort was built is described by the orator as follows⁵⁷:

"Those who have been in that region, the most beautiful of Scythia under the Empire's dominance, know that it is little protected against the barbarians, because the river which runs along has not a continuous course, is mixed with land, creates a deep marshy bay, is improper for navigation, and the foot cannot walk through. This region had been a hiding place before; from here they fomented inroads [...]; they hid themselves and were on the watch in their boats in eyots and pounced unexpectedly upon the dwellers in the proximity".

⁵⁴ M. Zahariade, *Cuneus equitum Arcadum...*, p. 352-353.

⁵⁵ E. Desjardins, *Voyage archéologique et géographique dans la région du Bas-Danube*, RA 17, 1868, p. 267; Polonic, *Cetățile antice de pe malul drept al Dunării (Dobrogea) până la gurile ei*, Natura 24, 1935, p. 7, 25; TIR L 35, p. 40; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *The Fortifications of Lower Moesia (A. D. 86-275)*, Amsterdam, 1997, p. 83, no. 56

⁵⁶ The surveys carried out by E. Desjardins, *op. cit.*, p. 267; P. Polonic in 1898 (at Tocilescu mss 5132, 94-95; 5139, 188) (cf. Polonic, *op. cit.*, p. 7, 25) remain the most solid evidence thus far. A highly valuable and exceptionally rich topographic, geographical, as well as historical description of the eastern parts of the Dunavăț Peninsula is offered by Captain M. D. Ionescu, *op. cit.*, *passim*; see also J. Weiss *op. cit.*, p. 55-56. The diggings carried out at Dunavățu de Sus in 1982-1983 and Dunavățu de Jos occasioned some ground reconnaissance of the area which have not been yet published. For the excavations at Dunavățu de Jos see: Al. Barnea, *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice în România*, SCIVA 40, 1989, 3, p. 296; *ibidem*, SCIVA 41, 1990, p. 317-318; *ibidem*, SCIVA 42 1991, 3-4, p. 257; *ibidem*, SCIVA 43, 1992, 4 p. 435; I. Barnea, M. Zahariade, *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice. Campania 1993*, Satu Mare, 1994, p. 24, no. 47; *iisdem*, *Situri arheologice cercetate în perioada 1983-1992, Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România*, Brăila, 1996, p. 44, nr. 93; *iisdem Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2004*, Mangalia, 2005, p. 155.

⁵⁷ Them. *Or. X* (Ἐπὶ εἰσόδῳ τῆς Οὐάλεντι) 136-137 (ed. L. Dindorf, Leipzig 1832).

A first observation: the environment pictured by Themistios strongly suggests a swampy terrain as the place where the fort was built (or rather rebuilt) and not at all the lands between the two pairs of twin branches of the Danube ‘Balta Ialomiței’ and ‘Insula Mare a Brăilei’, both sided to the east by the high Dobrudjan plateau. On the contrary, the description fits well with the marshy region between the Sf. Gheorghe branch and the Razelm Lake, whose siltation began already in late antiquity, nowadays an area of sandbanks and aits (**Fig. 2**).



Fig. 2. The location of the fort called ‘Cetatea Zaporojenilor’ (‘The Zaporojians’ stronghold’), nowadays in the territory of the Dunavățu de Jos village, Murighiol Commune, Tulcea County.

The orator continues his account: “*the Emperor did not leave the place at nature’s discretion. Finding a small and narrow tongue of land which advanced in the marsh and ended in a high hillock, from where the entire surrounding region could be overlooked, he erected again a fort, tracking down some traces of walls, difficult to perceive, which one of the previous Emperors had built them, having in mind this propitious settlement, but which he abandoned because of the difficulties [...]*”.

The fort must have been small in size (as the Dunavățu de Jos fortlet really is) for the Emperor attended the erection of a considerable part of it. The small and narrow tongue of land (τῆς γῆς ἐκεῖνης⁵⁸ λεπτήν ταινίαν) which advanced into the marsh (ἐς τὸ τέναγος προσιούσαν) has a striking correspondence to the situation of the fortlet at Dunavățu de Jos, which lies precisely on such a terrain, while ca. 1 km N from the fort a highest point of the area easily overlooks naked eye a great part of the Razim Lake to the south, the Popina island to the SW and Sf. Gheorghe branch of the Danube to the N (**Fig. 3**).

⁵⁸ Ἐκεῖνος, κεῖνος is a poetic form, specific to panegyric language, meaning persons or things previously mentioned (i.e. Valens).



Fig. 3. The fort at Dunavățu de Jos, identified as *Gratiana* (NDOr. XXXVIII 27; Proc. *De Aedif.* IV 11.20). It is a striking correspondence between the environment and the description of Themistios, *Or.* X 136.

The orator carries on his narration: “*there is neither stone or adobe in the neighbourhood nor the sand can be brought over easily, but everything must be transported with numerous cattle from a distance of many stadia*”. The area is indeed lacking building stone and the ‘many stadia’ from where it could have been provided corresponds to the ‘Dealul Cetății’, at ca 5-6 km to the N, which surrounds the Murighiol (Halmyris) fortress in an amphitheatre like form. In ancient times the place served as a source of stone for construction. The far distance to the sand source invoked by Themistios is explainable through the remoteness of the Danube from the place, at ca. 8-9 km. The burned bricks in the orator’s text which was ‘grinded’ would have been integrated into the composition of the mortar, although, as analysed by the researchers, it yielded very few, if at all, traces of grinded bricks. Instead, fine gravel and shells were detected in the fabric⁵⁹. How can we meet, therefore, Procopius’ statement of the location of *Gratiana* ἐν τῇ μεσογείᾳ (‘in the middle territory’) with A. Aricescu’s theory on the position of the place name on the W front of the province of Scythia? The issue is not simple for there are conflicting data between *Notitia Dignitatum* and Procopius’ arrangement. As shown above, there are strong counter arguments as to the location of *Gratiana* north of Carsium. The new installation where the Emperor Valens was present, and symbolically helped to be built, received the name of *Gratiana* in honour of his nephew, Gratianus. The solution in order to come to an agreement that satisfies both apparently irreconcilable groups of information could be an extension of the line of Scythian μεσογείᾳ from Καρσῶ (Proc. *De Aedif.* IV 11. 20), on the Danube, directly to the north shore of the Razim lake where the fort described by Themistios (Them *Or.* X 137) and placed by the Scythian section of *Notitia* apparently lies (NDOr. XXXVIII 27) (**Fig. 4**).

⁵⁹ See note 56.

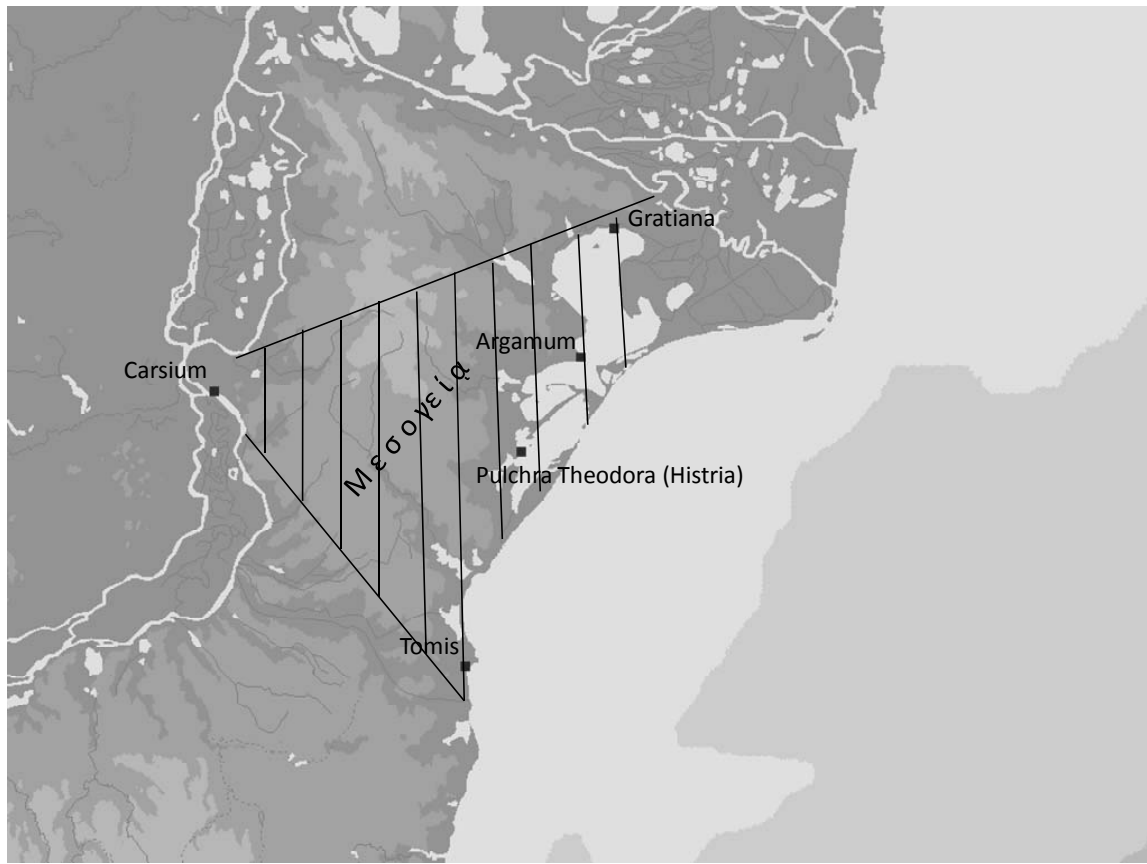


Fig. 4. *Mesogeia* according to the Procopius' text (*De Aedif.* IV 11. 20),
A. Aricescu's vizualization, and the new location of Gratiana at Dunavățu de Jos.

In that case the N line of μεσογεία, drawn by A. Aricescu, must be corrected and include Γρατίανα not somewhere on the western front, but along with other Black Sea shore place names. Consequently, the Procopius' passage becomes more intelligible and can explain the apparent Procopius' statement *vs* other two sources discussed above.