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**THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT AT THE  
VILLAGE OF CHERVEN BREG, MUNICIPALITY OF  
DUPNITSA IN BULGARIA** (Preliminary report)

*Introduction*

The main aim of our preliminary report is to represent the development of the settlement at Cherven breg in almost two thousand years on the base of the architecture and its decoration, the Roman *vicus* and its name, the road net around it, the Early Christian basilica and the medieval settlement with church. The finds such as pottery, glass etc. found during the excavations and will be studied in the next special editions. The accent now is on the historical context of the development in this settlement in the Roman, Late Antique, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods.

Since very ancient time man has appreciated the natural and climatic richness of the Dupnitsa field<sup>1</sup> and has chosen it for his settlements. This field is surrounded from the north-northeast by the chain of the mountain Verila and from the south by the northern slopes of Rila Mountain, the highest one in Bulgaria and on the Balkans. The field is densely stewed with numerous rivers<sup>2</sup>; it possesses extraordinary natural resources, diverse forest vegetation, plain terrains for agriculture and stock-breeding, and natural resources: iron and copper ores. The villages of Yahinovo, Cherven breg and Kraynitsi are located comparatively near each other in the northern part of Gorno pole. On the land of it is discovered one of the earliest witness for human settlement in the area<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The field of Dupnitsa is divided in two parts: the so-called Upper field (Gorno pole) is situated to the north and east of the town of Dupnitsa, while the Lower field (Dolno pole) is west and south of the town.

<sup>2</sup> Several rivers (Djerman, Bistritza and Otovitsa (called also Samoranovska river) flow across the south part of Gorno pole and numerous feeders disgorge its waters into Djerman. The River Djubrena is the right feeder of Djerman and with its feeders is passing across the northern part of Gorno pole.

<sup>3</sup> One of the earliest Neolithic Settlement in Bulgaria is discovered at the village Kraynitsi. See С. Чохаджиев, А. Бакъмска, Разкопки на раннонеолитното селище в м.

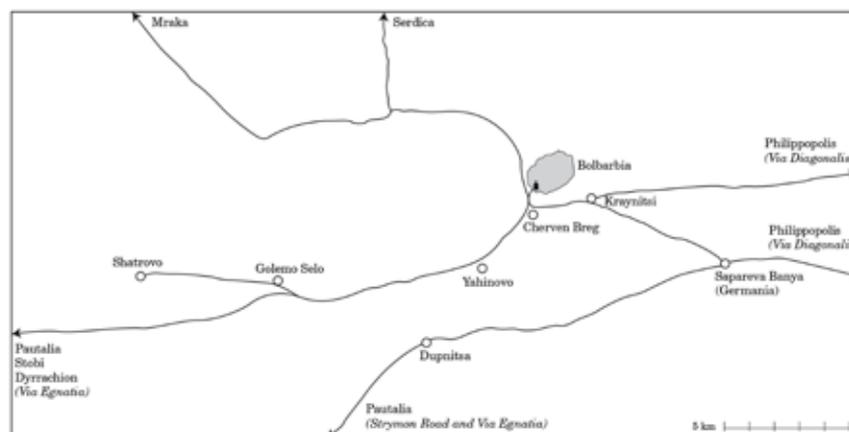


Fig. 1. A map of the region: ancient and medieval roads and settlements.

Сл. 1. Карта региона: антички и средновековни путеви и села.

A small bronze axe<sup>4</sup> from 12<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century BC has been found near Cherven breg and three fibulae from La Tene related to 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> BC<sup>5</sup>. The cult life during the Roman and Late Antique period is demonstrated by the votive plate to Hermes<sup>6</sup> discovered also at Cherven breg; by the votive plates to Dionysos<sup>7</sup>; by the veneration by the peasants of this village of Zeus Sbelsurdos, however in his sanctuary on another place; and by the brick-built vaulted Late Antique tomb<sup>8</sup> at Kraynitsi.

The early Christian basilica and the medieval church were discovered for science in 2012. The team of archaeologists and students began the actualization of the archaeological inheritance of the municipality of Dupnitsa in the villages of Yahinovo, Cherven breg and Kraynitsi<sup>9</sup> (fig. 1). There were found

Езерица – с. Крайници, Кюстендилски окръг. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1986 година*, Разград 1987, 33-35.

<sup>4</sup> В. Миков, *Материали за археологическа карта на България*, София 1933, 104, № 54

<sup>5</sup> Р. Попов. Халцатски и латенски фибули от разни находища в България. – *Списание на Българската академия на науките*, VI, 1913, 141-164.

<sup>6</sup> Я. Младенова, Необнародвани паметници на Хермес. – *Археология*, 4, 1967, 41, обр. 3.

<sup>7</sup> The inscriptions on the plates witness for the Thracian origin of the population in the settlement. See И. Велков. Антични паметници из България. – *Годишник на Народния музей*, III, 1921, 204; И. Венедиков, Два новооткрити паметника за религията на траките през римската епоха. – *Известия на археологическия институт*, XIX, 1955, 195-201.

<sup>8</sup> Ц. Дремсизова-Нелчинова, Л. Слокоска, *Археологически паметници от Кюстендилски окръг*. София 1978, 20, № 108, with references.

<sup>9</sup> The distance between the contemporary villages Yahinovo-Cherven breg is smaller than 2 km, and from Cherven breg to Kraynitsi is about 1 km. All three villages are situated along the runway of the river Djubrena, following its stream. About 5 Roman miles south of



Fig. 2. The fallen from the earthquake northern wall of the basilica in *opus mixtum*.

Сл. 2. Од земљотреса обрушен северни зид базилике изведен у *opus mixtum*.



Fig. 3. Wall painting from the naos of the basilica. Fragments.

Сл. 3. Живопис из наоса базилике, фрагменти.

28 archaeological objects<sup>10</sup>. It was established that the basilica and the medieval church are part of enormous as surface Thracian, pre-Roman, ancient, late Antique and medieval site (village). Several villa complexes were located around it, a medieval guarding tower, etc. The site is situated on the lands of the contemporary villages Cherven breg and Kraynitsi. Several tumuli are found in the territory of the village of Yahinovo in direction to Cherven breg, and on the second over swept terrace over the river there are remains of a settlement from the Late Bronze and Early Iron period. The tumuli as well as the other findings discovered near to them suppose the existence of an ancient villa complex, situated in close proximity to the road to Serdica. Here are also localized traces of extraction of clay, but no pottery production was found and kilns. In our opinion here, around the probable villa complex, were situated the houses and workshops of the craftsmen, who were supplying with locally made pottery the close site, Germania and the ancient site at Dupnitsa, also possibly the more remote regions. Another complex with 3 tumuli is localized east of Cherven Breg, in the immediate vicinity of Kraynitsi.

The settlement is disposed on a place of crossroad communications, in a field largely opened to the south with a slight inclination to the same direction, near to the right bank of the river Djubrena, which in the ancient period had high-waters, forming in the field south, of the settlement, a lake with many marshy coves<sup>11</sup>.

the river is situated the ancient, Late Antique/Early Byzantine settlement Germania.

<sup>10</sup> С. Петрова, А. Геренска, Ж. Величков, В. Мутафов, Издирвания на археологически обекти в землищата на селата Яхиново, Червен брег и Крайници, Община Дупница. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2012 година*, София 2013, 534-536.

<sup>11</sup> Because of the particularities of the terrain, namely on a slop which is tangenting the contemporary bank of the river, since ancient time and up to in the 40s – 50s of the last



Fig. 4. Pedestal with a base for a column.  
Granite.

Сл. 4. Постамент базе од колонаде, гранит.

Like topography the basilica and the ancient settlement are situated about 1 km north of the village of Cherven breg, and circa 7 km north-eastern from the town of Dupnitsa.

#### *The Early Christian basilica and its settlement*

The Early Christian basilica and the medieval church are part of an enormous ancient, Late Antique and medieval site (village) over a surface of more than 350 decars. The basilica is in the south periphery of the village, similarly to the majority of the Early Christian basilicas in villages<sup>12</sup>. It was built after 330 during the reign of Constantine I<sup>13</sup> and his direct heirs, but not later than the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The archaeological research of the basilica began in 2014, excavating at the beginning its southwestern part, namely the narthex and part of the south wall. The research continued in the seasons 2016-2018 and still has not come to the end<sup>14</sup>. There are revealed four building periods<sup>15</sup>, from the reign of Constantine to the 80s of the same century and the 5<sup>th</sup> one.

Because of the found numerous amphora fragments for wine and oil, it can be accepted that there was a store-accommodation in the northern part, sticking from outside to the basilica<sup>16</sup>. The floor of the room is covered with

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century, there existed numerous swamps, united in small lakes near to the right bank of the river. Deposits of clay are located to the west in the suburbs of the village Yahinovo (between Cherven breg and Yahinovo), showing that in ancient time, when the high water was significant, here existed densely situated marshy places and morasses.

<sup>12</sup> В. Динчев, Селата в днешната българска територия през късноримската епоха (края на 3 – края на 4 в.). – *Известия на археологическия институт*, XXXIX, 2006, 256.

<sup>13</sup> According to the commemorative coin of Constantine I; mint of Constantinople in 330, unearthed in the foundation of the southwestern corner of the narthex of the basilica.

<sup>14</sup> The complete research of the basilica to the sterile earth will be possible only after strengthening of the medieval church.

<sup>15</sup> С. Петрова, С. Устинов, А. Геренска, В. Мутафов, Раннохристиянска базилика при сверновековна църква „Възнесение Господне“, с. Червен брег, община Дупница. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2014 година*, София 2015, 482-485.

<sup>16</sup> С. Петрова, А. Геренска, Раннохристиянска базилика при средновековна църква „Възнесение Господне“ при с. Червен брег, Община Дупница. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2016 година*, София 2017, 462-465.

middle-sized boulders, a technique unknown for this monument so far<sup>17</sup>. A little bit higher on the next level was discovered a pavement of cobblestones, part of a street pavement. The opened part of it is with direction north-south and wide 4.50 m. In the period from the 30s to the last quarter of 4<sup>th</sup> c., the basilica was rebuilt and the floor level was raised up in the northwestern part, where the basilica was most strongly burnt down. There are established thin brick fired layers with 11 coins, the biggest number discovered so far<sup>18</sup>.

The excavated basilica is three-aisled, with one apse and narthex, built in *opus mixtum* from crushed stones of 7 different types and colours, all local. The stones and the bricks are plastered by white mortar (**fig. 2**). The stone rows are 1.20 m high, in succession of four brick rows high 0.40 m. The exterior walls are plastered, while the interior ones decorated with wall paintings (**fig. 3**). Fragments of wall paintings in *al fresco* were found in the ruins of the aisles of the basilica and around the narthex. The paintings were directly made on the still wet plastering, without a special base for the layer with paints. The colours are yellow, light green, Pompeian red, white, etc.

The north wall of the basilica was found almost intact, fallen during earthquake and firing of the building. The sides of the entrance from the north were built in the whole height by bricks (**fig. 2**). The south wall is almost entirely discovered, fallen also during the earthquake. But it was more ruined because of the displacement of the terrain. Stones and bricks from both north and south walls were re-used for building of the medieval church. The foundations of the church are made of crushed stones, linked together by clay, a building technique established in the neighboring sites from the same chronological boundaries<sup>19</sup>. The stone rows and the bricks are plastered up with white mortar.

The colonnades dividing the naos into three aisles, has a *stylobate* from big granite rectangular blocks. Obviously they had been taken and re-used for the second time from an older pagan building which I consider as an ancient temple. It is situated about 200 m east of the basilica in the locality St. Iliya (St. Elijah)<sup>20</sup>. The rectangular granite blocks first had been re-used in the Early Christian basilica and later again in building the medieval church. During the research of the south aisle also was found a fragment from a base with a part of the *plinthus*, also made of granite. A pedestal ending with a base for column, probably included in the cancel plate of the basilica, now is placed from the south side of the entrance of the medieval church (**fig. 4**).

<sup>17</sup> The building material is of crumbled stones. The boulders are met sporadically in the walls.

<sup>18</sup> Coins of the emperors: Gallienus (253-268), Claudius II Gothic (268-270), Aurelian (270-275).

<sup>19</sup> Р. Спасов, Спасителни археологически разкопки в местността „Аргъчки егрек“, с. Дяково, община Дупница, област Кюстендил, по трасето на АМ „Струма“, ЛОТ 1, от км 320+840 до км 321+100. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2012 година*, София 2013, 302-304.

<sup>20</sup> Still one can see granite architectural parts on the terrain. See С. Петрова et alli, *Op. cit.*, София 2013, 534-536.

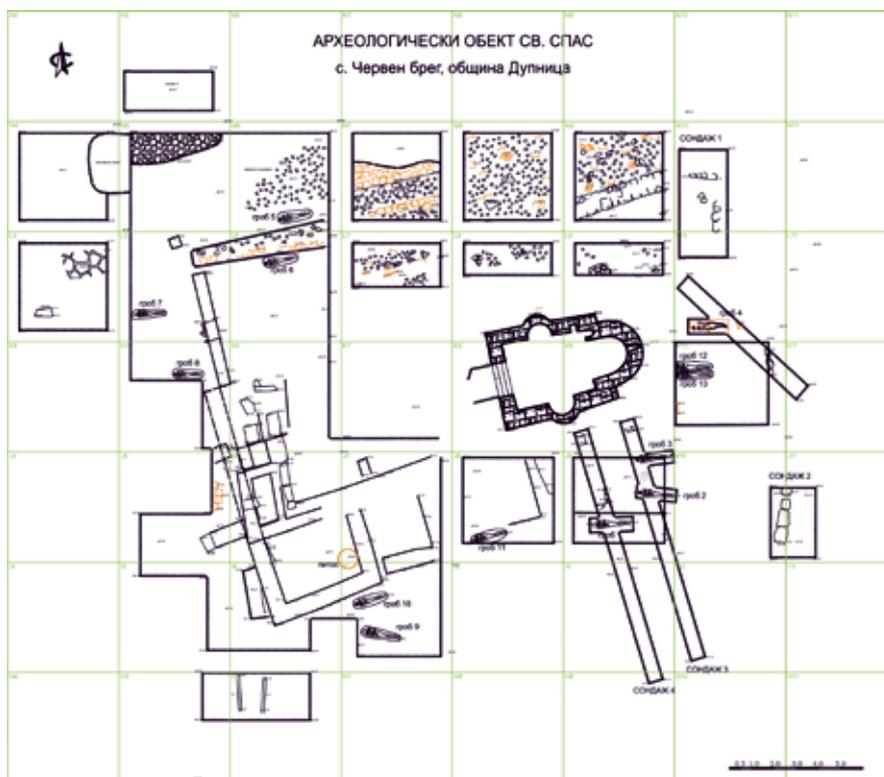


Fig. 5. Research of the basilica. Plan. In the center – medieval church.

Сл. 5. Истраженост базилике. Основа са средњовековном црквом у средишту.

The basilica is wide 16.20 m and long circa 20 m to the end of the east wall<sup>21</sup>, together with the narthex. It belongs by the plan to the basilicas with shortened naos. The width of the south aisle is 3 m; the width of the narthex (west-east along the exterior wall) is 5.20 m, along the interior one 3.60 m. The walls are thick 0.80 m, which reveal that the basilica was one-floored with ridge-tile-roof (**fig. 5**).

The narthex has an entrance from the west for the southern and central nave and one for the northern aisle which is slightly jutting out to the east, after a small retreat, built like this in the second building period of the basilica in the last quarter of 4<sup>th</sup> century. These corrections were to be made after the fire in the northwestern corner of the basilica<sup>22</sup>. It may be supposed that this first rebuilding was to be made at the end of the 70s – the beginning of the 80s of 4<sup>th</sup> century because of two reasons. The first is either during the time of Julian the

<sup>21</sup> The research to the east direction is still not complete, only the changes in the curve of the apse have been studied. The main obstacle is the imposed over the basilica medieval church, which has no foundations. At the moment each archaeological excavation in it is of great threat for the integrity of the church, therefore impossible at the present.

<sup>22</sup> See note 18.

Fig. 6. A part of the *pastophory* with *pithus*.

Сл. 6. Део пастофорије са питосом.



Fig. 7. Entrance for the southern nave from the south with an eastern brick side.

Сл. 7. Улаз у јужни брод.

Apostate or of the invasion of the Goths, at the head of Fritigern, which have ruined partly the completeness of the basilica in its northwestern part. The second reason may be a sequence of the novelties introduced in the liturgy in the 80s of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The changes in the northwestern part of the narthex, namely through the slight jutting out of the wall and the entrance<sup>23</sup> for the north aisle inside, continue also in southwestern part of the narthex. The entrance from the narthex to the south aisle has been walled up. A wall has been built in the narthex alongside the south *stylobate*, enclosing the room. This new room had entrance from the north, from the interior of the narthex. The room has inner dimensions 3.60x3 m with entrance from the north. In this way this new room was transferred to a *pastophory* of the basilica<sup>24</sup>. The floor of the *pastophory* was paved by stones of different dimensions. In the southeastern corner *in situ* was found a deeply dug *pithus*, covered with a stone plate (fig. 6), in which the grain was put, gifted by the Christians for kneading the bread for the Eucharist. Except the archaeological data, the identification of this room as *pastophory* can be also proved by the sources. According to the created around 380 decrees of the apostles, the place of the *pastophory* is categorically defined in the 16<sup>th</sup> decree: „during the Eucharist all to say Psalm 33, and when all men and women are taking Holy Communion, the deacons by taking the rest (of the

<sup>23</sup> These changes are a result of military activities. In the fire was found a coin of Julian the Apostate which was mint in the *First officina* of Cyzik.

<sup>24</sup> The word „*παστοφόρια* „ is to be met for the first time in the authors of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, describing the temples of north Syria. In later time the *pastophory* has the role of *diakonikon* or *skeuophylakion*, i.e. room for preparing the Eucharist.



Fig. 8. The stone of the *mensa sacra* of the basilica/medieval church.

Сл. 8. Часна трпеза средњовековне цркве.

Eucharistian gifts), let take them to the narthex [*pastophory*]<sup>25</sup>. Both the narthex and the *pastophory* were only plastered, but not painted.

Traces of two rectangular vaulted niches were found among the ruins on the interior eastern wall of the *pastophory*<sup>26</sup>, fragments of *pithuses*, red-polished pottery and glasses from night-light. It became necessary to open a new entrance made in the south exterior wall of the basilica, immediately after the eastern wall of the narthex (fig. 7). At the opening of this entrance the western side was built with bricks similarly to the norther wall of the basilica. A porticus or a court from the south was probably formed. Remains of wooden balks were excavated 3.50-3.80 m south and west from the outer wall of the basilica for which we suppose that are part of a wooden roof of a court from the south of the building. Such entrance is not an isolated phenomenon in the region. It is established in the early Christian basilica under Beliova church in the vicinity of Samokov<sup>27</sup>, on the road of Cherven breg-Samokov-Philippopolis.

Except the granite rectangular blocks of the *stylobate* of the Early Christian basilica, also the apse is preserved, which in our opinion served also as apse of the medieval church; as well as the place of the altar, now also playing the same role of the medieval building. The base over which the communion table is installed, is represented by the right part of a granite block, maybe previously base of a Roman statue (?), high 0.80

<sup>25</sup> R. Taft, *The Order and Place of Lay Communion in the Late-Antique and Byzantine East* – In: *Studia Liturgica Diversa: Essays in Honor of Paul F. Bradshaw, Studies in Church Music and Liturgy*, Portland: Pastoral Press 2004, 129-149.

<sup>26</sup> The wall of the room has fallen down together with the plaster due to earthquake. The preserved niches were taken out by a conservator together with the fragments of wall painting decoration, and brought for analysis to the Regional Historical Museum in Blagoevgrad.

<sup>27</sup> В. Хаджиангелов, Бельова църква. *Електронно списание „Онгъл“*, 2, 2001, 93-97. One-aisled church has been erected in 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century on this basilica, with a medieval necropolis around it from 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. Here also were established next repairs and a new wall painting decoration at the end of 16<sup>th</sup>-beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century. See: Б. Петрунова, В. Хаджиниколов, Късносредновековен некропол в двора на Бельова черква, Самоков. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1994 година*, София, 1995, 154; Б. Петрунова, В. Хаджиниколов, Проучвания на Бельова черква, Самоков. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1995 година*, София 1996, 106.

m, wide 0.60 m, and long 0.80 m. Three-lined inscription, now battered and non-readable, is chiseled over its front surface (at the moment to the south), in a frame wide 14 cm, each row marked by incised horizontal line (**fig. 8**). The granite block is placed on a low platform of thin stone plates and bricks, plastered with pink mortar directly on the red sterile earth, which has given the name of the village Cherven breg (Red bank). It impresses with the unusual horseshoe-like form of the apse whose, north and south end have been additionally curved and are mutually twisted inwards. The place in which at the moment the base of the altar of the medieval church is put, is too inward in the naos of the church<sup>28</sup> and shows the original place of the base of the table of the Early Christian basilica, while the floor level of it responds to the contemporary level of the medieval church.



Fig. 9. Grave № 4, of a *priest* or *chorbishop*.  
Сл. 9. Гроб бр. 4, на свештеник или епископ.

Two meters east of the apse of the medieval church a burial (No 4), was unearthed. It is done in the Christian way, oriented west-east, in a well formed burial pit which was dug in the sterile terrain, before the destruction of the basilica. The pit was without fragments of mortar and building ceramics, deep 1.80 m. (642.05 m altitude) from the contemporary level. This is the level the *tegulae* step over, covering the burial. It is with dimensions: 2.35 m (from west to east) and 0.65 m (from north to south). The vertical walls are well formed. A berma, with dimensions 1.94 m (length east-west), 0.45 m (width) and deep 0.11 m is dug in the well leveled up and horizontal bottom, in the sterile red-clay layer. The east wall of the berma coincides with the east wall of the burial pit. The walls and the bottom of this second pit are formed exclusively precise, the long south wall being concave to the outside (**fig. 9**). Because of the hard earth, it was very difficult to dig a pit with the necessary form and preciseness. Therefore the walls of the small pit have been strengthened with vertically put planks. The one from the south is made from a trunk with diameter about 0.11 m, rived in two parts alongside the length. The round part is put to the wall and after the wood has smoldered away, the rest of it became concave. The corpse is on his back, the arms stretched

<sup>28</sup> This reveals that the liturgy allowed the walking around the *mensa sacra*. During the middle ages the church continued to function not as a burial but as a settlement church, despite the discovered burials (12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> c.).



Fig. 11. Part of the route of the road at Cherven breg.

Сл. 11. Део трасе пута за Червен брег.

Fig. 10. Traces of the destroyed apse of the basilica, over grave № 4.

Сл. 10. Трагови апсиде базилике изнад гроба бр. 4.

straight alongside the body, with wrists in direction to the center of the pelvis. It impresses that the femur bones are disproportionally short and strongly curved. The skeleton is long 1.62-1.64 m<sup>29</sup>. After laying the body, the pit is covered very carefully with six *tegulae*, which form construction in the form of a ridge-roof, 0.30 m from the bottom of the small pit. The *tegulae*<sup>30</sup> are placed with its long edges over the bottom of the big pit. A broken *tegula* with dimensions 0.49x0.45 m is placed vertical next to the east wall, stepping on the bottom of the big pit. In identical way of covering the burial pit have the burials from the partially excavated necropolis at Separeva banya / Germania<sup>31</sup>, dated in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>29</sup> The bones are partially rotten away, preserved are only the long bones and the fingers, part of the vertebrae, the thigh bones and the right blade-bone. There is a dark spot of dark earth under the tibiae, most possibly remain of smoldered organic material. On the bones can be seen traces of the disease rachitis.

<sup>30</sup> The *tegulae* of the ridge-roof are arch-turned, the clay has achieved light reddish colour after the firing, which is uniform. The dimensions are: long 0.68 m, wide 0.41 m, inside at the edges 0.38 m, thick 0.03 m.

<sup>31</sup> В. Хаджиниколов, М. Христов, Спасително археологическо проучване в гр. Сапарева баня, парцел УПИ IX-2771, квартал 111. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2014 година*, София 2015, 493-494, with parallels обр. 2 и 3.

After placing the body and covering it with *tegulae*, in the eastern end of the grave and over the *tegulae* as a gift is placed a broken bottom-leg with part of the wall of the vessel, a fragment of a cup of grey well refined clay. A bronze coin from middle – second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century has been thrown as Charon's obol over the head of the deceased. It was discovered immediately over the edge, formed by two inclined *tegulae*. This construction of *tegulae* has been afterwards covered by the piled dark-brown earth, taken out from the pit, and mixed with small lumps from the red sterile one. The pile is without archaeological artifacts, showing that the burial has been dug before the basilica's destruction and that the burial pit is intact. Over the pit a layer is revealed from the destructions of a building on mortar welding, thick 0.50 m, which we consider as a result of a later and partial destruction of the apse of the basilica (fig. 10). The place of burial in front of the apse of the basilica and the precise building of the burial fitting show that here a person connected with the church should be buried, possibly its first priest or chorbishop.

The basilica has its parallels in the numerous basilicas from the urban territory of Pautalia, dated in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century; also with the Early Christian basilicas in the Upper and Middle stream of the river Strouma / Strymon. The research has revealed so far only the plan of the basilica and its wall paintings. Because of the later imposing of the foundations of the medieval church over the *stylobate* of the colonnade of the Early Christian basilica, at the present moment it is impossible to reach the floor level of the latter. It can be seen, that the village had a relatively big basilica, but in my opinion, it hardly was the only one in this site, having in mind the vast area of it.

The data from the archaeological research of the basilica reveal that both the basilica and the site has been left at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, during the time of emperor Zeno as a result of the Goths' invasions, a fact established also during other excavations of the neighbor sites<sup>32</sup>. The established two destructions in the northern part of the basilica and the fallen after the fire roof, together with the discovered numismatic materials confirm, add to and widen our observations on the existence of the basilica from the 30s – the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the second half of 5<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *The ancient coins from the basilica and the excavated part of the settlement*

The coins found on the terrain of the basilica allow tracing the chronology of the basilica built over an earlier Roman building<sup>33</sup>. They can be related to a narrow chronological period – from the last quarter of 2<sup>nd</sup> to the second part of 5<sup>th</sup> century, in three separate groups. The first group may possibly fuse to the next one, when new coins will be found. This first group is represented by bronze coins of the Severan period till the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century: denarius

<sup>32</sup> For instance the one in the locality „Artuchki egrek“ (see up P. Спасов, *Op.cit.*). The data given by the research of the basilica reveal that it and probably the whole settlement has been left most lately at emperor Zeno. This is shown by the coin finds on the terrain of the basilica.

<sup>33</sup> Петрова et alli, *Op. cit.*, София 2015, 482-485.

from Severan era from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> – beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; bronze *denarii* of Diadumenian (217-218), Elagabalus (218-222), Severus Alexander (222-235) and Roman colonial bronze, nominal E (5) the features of Sever Alexander. Next is the group of the soldier emperors (barracks emperors): from the 235 – till the last quarter of 3<sup>rd</sup> century. To this group belong the coins of the soldier emperors with radiate crowns. The layers and the depth of its discovery are below the layer of destruction from the basilica and refer to the ancient site preceding the construction of the early Christian temple. This group is presented with *denarii*, antoninianuses (*follises*) and one silver coin of Gordian III (238-244). There are bronze coins of Gallienus (253-268) and of Claudius II Gothic (268-270), which are almost ¼ from all discovered coins; of Aurelian (270-275), stuck to a coin of Claudius II. Some of the coins have burnt, which excludes the possibility of their belonging to a dispersed collective find.

The stuck after the fire coins of Aurelian and Claudius II show that probably the site has been set on fire immediately after the end of the reign of Claudius, when his coins still were not withdrawn from circulation, and the beginning of the Aurelian rule. It can be affirmed with a great amount of certainty that the site had a short but impetuous economic flourishing only in the limits of several decades: from the Severans to the reign of Aurelian, and has been ruined probably in 270/5 by a fire during the Goth invasions in the region.

The third group is the coins from the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century of Licinius (308-324), mint of Thessaloniki, and of Constantine I (306-337); Constans (337-350); of Constantius II (337-361), mints in Thessaloniki and Constantinople; of Julian the Apostate (360-363), mint in Cyzicus. Small nominal (*minima*) dated in the 4<sup>th</sup> and from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century till emperor Zeno (474-475/476-491). Because of the lack of the last soldier emperors and of the other representatives of the Tetrarchy, allows for the moment to propose a working hypothesis that after the fire possibly of the Goths, in this part<sup>34</sup> of the settlement the active life has stopped for 3-4 decades. As a result of this hiatus is formed a layer of destruction of buildings of the site and also with earth brought from the slope, thick up 0.25-0.40 m, established by us during the research of the northern part of the basilica.

The coins of Licinius and Constantine confirm our already proposed hypothesis that the basilica was built over the destructions of a Roman building of the ancient site, most probably after 330 during the reign of Constantine and his sons. The found bronze silvered coin of a big nominal of Julian the Apostate (360-363), mint of 1<sup>st</sup> *officina* of Cyzik, immediately under the destructions of the north wall of the basilica allows supposing that parts of the basilica have been ruined and marking the second building period of the basilica's existence<sup>35</sup>.

The coins from the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> century are related to the next building periods of reconstruction of the basilica, which according to the

<sup>34</sup> It is possible that the whole settlement to have moved to the east, having in mind the enormous area on which its remains are localized. Since the archaeological research was spread only on a limited part of this area, while the majority of it is not excavated at all, it cannot be claimed that the settlement has been totally abandoned at that period.

<sup>35</sup> The third building period is connected with the erecting of the pastofory in the narthex and the opening of entrance from the south to the south aisle of the basilica.



Fig. 12. The *stylobate* of the basilica: “foundations” of the medieval church. Wall painting over granite blocks – on the straight walls and in the northern conch.

Сл. 12. Стилибат базилике – „основа“ на средњовековне цркве. Живопис на гранитним блоковима – на стени и у северној конхи.

numismatic data is probably again destructed in the 80s of the 5<sup>th</sup> century during the time of Zeno. The walls were still sticking up maybe 30-40 years more, when they fell down after earthquake at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>36</sup>. The site itself also has been abandoned. It was revived in the forest, 2.5 km north of the ancient site<sup>37</sup>, in the lower parts of the mountain Verila, and remnants of it we localized during our terrain research.

#### *The road connections of the ancient site at Cherven breg*

A dense road net connected the enormous by its surface site in Antiquity and Medieval age with the rest of sites in the field of Dupnitsa and the ones

<sup>36</sup> See the earthquakes at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in: А. Орчев, Писмени известия за земетресения в Югоизточна Европа и Северозападна Мала Азия и техните последици в Ахтопол. – *Морски вестник*, октомври 2012, 13-14.

<sup>37</sup> Remnants of this settlement, which has been founded at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century according to the archaeological materials, found on the terrain, show a well-planned settlement with streets and massive, probably two-store houses having in mind its massive stone foundations. The locality “Gramadite”, object No 3. See С. Петрова, А. Геренска *et alli*, *Op. cit.*, София 2013, 534-536.

from the urban territory of Pautalia. These roads are defined as inter provincial roads the so called Stymon road<sup>38</sup> and the road Philipopolis – Germania/Cherven Breg – Pautalia – Stobi – Lychnidos and Dyrrachium<sup>39</sup>; provincial roads – connecting the settlements from the urban territory of Pautalia with the settlements of the neighboring urban territories – Serdica, Nicopolis ad Nestum, Philipopolis. The existence of the third category of road – *Via Vicinalis*, connect the different closely situated settlements with Cheven Breg, namely Germania the settlement at Dupnitsa, the settlements to the west from Cherven Breg – towards Dolno Pole, Razmetanitsa etc. In some cases these roads overlap with the provincial roads from the urban territory of Pautalia.

The researchers of the roads from Pautalia to Germania and its connection with *Via Diagonalis* point to several routes without speaking about their importance. One of the roads passes through the modern way Samokov – Borovets – the village of Maritsa and connects with *Via Diagonalis*<sup>40</sup>. A separate part of this road-bed, at the modern town of Dolna banya, was discovered by me already in 1988. Other authors speak of different roads connecting Pautalia-Germania with *Via Diagonalis*<sup>41</sup> (Геров 1961, 241 and notes 6 and 7). For us the shortest way from Germania to Pautalia is the one passing on the low north slopes of Rila mountain (the south part of Gorno pole) and from the site at Dupnitsa in west direction descends to the field to Golemo selo towards Pautalia. The road to the east direction probably goes through the mountain pass<sup>42</sup> in Rila and comes out over the Shishman kale. The road across the ancient site over the villages Yahinovo, Cherven breg and Kraynitsi was also of big importance rather not only as connection to Pautalia, but also as a direct one to Serdica to the north. According to the opinion of N. Tuleshkov, a mansio was situated near Cherven breg<sup>43</sup>, which our terrain research situates near the settlement, namely southwest of it.

In 2018 during the terrain research northwest of the ancient and medieval village, we discovered in several places of the locality Sreden rid parts of the ancient road-bed connecting it with Pautalia, through the so-called Strumski

<sup>38</sup> This road passes through the province of Thrace and the province of Macedonia. Connects *Via Egnatia* and *Via Diagonalis*, following the current of Strymon.

<sup>39</sup> This is a different inter provincial road, one of the main roads for the settlements of the urban territory of Pautalia, together with the other main road along the river Strymon.

<sup>40</sup> We consider that this layout is rather passing through Golemo selo, where a derivation is in order to come across the ancient settlement at Dupnitsa and, following the low hill terrain at the skirts of Rila Mountain, is reaching Germania.

<sup>41</sup> Б. Геров, Проучвания върху Западнотракийските земи през римско време. – Годишник на Софийския университет, филологически факултет, София 1961, 241 and notes 6 and 7.

<sup>42</sup> The so-called “Dervish pass”.

<sup>43</sup> In his book: *Предантични, антични и средновековни пътища и крайпътни обекти (крепости, мостове, пътни станции, беклемета и др.) от района на общините Белово, Септември и Велинград – IV век пр. Хр. – XIX век* (in print); where one the routes the author has traced from the bridge above Maritsa between Belovo and Momina Klisura (Momina Pass) till Kyustendil and defines on the same place a *mansion*, at the village of Cherven Breg.

road (*Strymon road*), and with *Via Diagonalis* to the east<sup>44</sup>. The road is wide 2.30 m (fig. 11), similar to the other roads of known sites in Thracia, situated comparatively close<sup>45</sup>. The roadway is paved with different crushed stones and represents part of the road-bed Pautalia-Germania-*Via Diagonalis*.

After Pautalia the road passes through a series of sites to the east, crossing and in some places probably following the layout of the main, so-called Strumski road<sup>46</sup>, coming out to the northwest of ancient site at Cherven breg<sup>47</sup>. After that the road passes through or in close proximity to the site, crossing the river Djubrena and alongside its current to the east direction was reaching to the pass, the contemporary Klisurski pass<sup>48</sup>; there is a deviation after the crossing of Djubrena to the southeast, going to the river Djerman to the ancient town and Early Byzantine fortress Germania. After the Klisurski pass the ancient site was connecting through local roads with the fortified site now known as Tsari Mali grad, and then with *Via Diagonalis*.

The data from the research on the road reveal the direct road connection of the ancient site at Cherven breg with Germania, proved also indirectly by the numerous coin finds treasured along the road-bed during different historical periods. The biggest coin treasure in the region is discovered namely on this road. It is described as "...about 12 okki<sup>49</sup>, silver Roman coins, 12 gold coins without data about the kind and two golden bracelets"<sup>50</sup>. In the lands of the village Yahinovo, near to the village of Cherven breg, another treasure has been found: parts of a silver belt, earrings and numerous grosches of king Sigismund III Vasa (1587-1632), "all pierced and probably part of a necklace or kosichnik"<sup>51</sup>. The

<sup>44</sup> This road is known among the local population as the Mrach (the region of Radomir) or Drach road, i. e. the road coming from Drach / Durrës (*Dyrrachium*).

<sup>45</sup> S. Petrova, Nicopolis ad Nestum and Its Place in the Ancient Road Infrastructure of Southwestern Thracia. - *Известия на Националният археологически институт. Proceedings of the First International Roman and Late Antique Thrace Conference "Cities, Territories and Identities"* (Plovdiv, 3rd – 7th October 2016) (eds. L. Vagalinski, M. Raycheva, D. Boteva, N. Sharankov), XLIV, 2018, 37-56. It should be noted that not only in the region of Nicopolis ad Nestum the ancient roads are called "Kaldaruma", but also in the Balkan mountain (Stara planina) at Etropole (See Д. Ботева, За локализирането на бесите и на тяхното Дионисово прорицалище (шестнадесет години по-късно). - В: В. Коцева (съставител), *История и култура на старопланинското население (по примера на общините Етрополе и Сунгурларе)*. София: Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2013, 95), as well as in the area of Pautalia, where the road is known as Kaldarama.

<sup>46</sup> For the "Strumski road" see: С. Петрова, *Парѝкополѝс и мястото му в античната пътна мрежа* (under press).

<sup>47</sup> The road was coming from the present-day village of Dyakovo, then under the village of Topolnitsa and climbing down to the south-southeast to the contemporary villages Cherven breg and Krajnitsi.

<sup>48</sup> The river Djubrena rises from the Rila mountain namely in the pass in proximity to the present-day village Klisura.

<sup>49</sup> Okka – an Ottoman Turkish measure of weight = 1.2892 kilograms.

<sup>50</sup> Н. Мушмов, *Колективни находки на монети през 1891-1914 г. – Известия на Българското археологическо дружество*, IV, 1914, 232. For us this treasure is possibly connected with the salaries of the commanders of the cohort in the garrison of Germania.

<sup>51</sup> Kosichnik is a traditional jewelry with which was worn on the head (in the hair)



Fig. 13. The covert with dirt southern and northern walls.

Сл. 13. Нанос преко северног и јужног зида.



Fig. 14. The medieval church. A look from the southeast.

Сл. 14. Средњовековна црква. Поглед са југозапада.

medieval travelers who have passed through Kyustendil (ancient Pautalia) by this road across Cherven breg on the way to Germania (whose name then was Gorna Banya or only Banya), Samokov and Plovdiv, also describe this road, as well as of the existing “good stone bridge” across a river<sup>52</sup>.

In the 90s of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in Germania was billeted *Cohors II Lucensium*<sup>53</sup>, thus making the Thracian settlement at Cherven breg-Kraynitsi important for the region. On the first place the military cohort dislocated in the interior of the province and far from any military activity, should be charged with guarding functions, namely to guard the road and the passes to it, the so-called Klisurski pass and the pass to Shishman kale, known also as Shishman or Dervish pass. Two subdivisions of the cohort for guarding the roads were quartered in *castelli* at the modern settlements of Gulubnik and Topolnitsa<sup>54</sup>. Probably the cohort also had to guard and watch the work of the iron and copper mines, where next to the important for the area roads there possibly existed also mines<sup>55</sup>.

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of the women. Т. Герасимов, Колективни находки на монети през 1955. – *Известия на археологическия институт*, XXI, 1957, 326.

<sup>52</sup> Ђ. Иванов, *Северна Македонија. Исторически издирвания*, Софија 1906, 149-158; 183-190.

<sup>53</sup> Т. Иванов, Археологически проучвания при Сапарева Баня. – *Известия на археологическия институт*, XXI, 1957, 211-232; Б. Геров, *Op.cit.*, 1961, 303-3-4;

<sup>54</sup> CIL III, 123339; Б. Геров, *Op.cit.*, 1961, 238.

<sup>55</sup> For these inscriptions and the ores in the region see: В. Хаджиангелов, А. Чолакова, *Обработка на желязо през ранновизантийската епоха – обект „Шишманово кале“ при Самоков. Онгъл, електронно списание, 2012*, кн. 4, 133-141. The ancient Thracian



Fig. 15. The western wall of the church. Built, with reused bricks and *tegulae*.

Сл. 15. Западни зид цркве. Зидање са старим опекама и ћеремидом.

#### *The vicus Bolbabria at Cherven breg*

The archaeological research of the basilica and the finds from the ancient site at Cherven breg show the close contacts of its population with that of Germania. Many findings with military character were discovered, among them hobnails from the nailing of military boots, parts of spurs, fibulae of the type AVCISA, fragments of armor. Also found are a lot of fragments of red slip tableware and vessels-strainers for making cheese, some of them also covered with red slip. The found elements of military costumes and equipment show that part of the soldiers of the cohort were probably living in the village together with their families, in immediate proximity to the military camp. We consider that except by the finds, our hypothesis is confirmed by the enormous quantity of fragments of the vessels-strainers for the production of cheese. Such a great quantity on a relatively small surface, point except to a strongly developed cattle-breeding in the village, our hypothesis for settling of military men in it.

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settlement, occupying the whole strategic height of Shishmanovo kale a guarding the pass, has the sight over the whole field of Samokov and the roads across the mountain. It is known that in the *kale*, inhabited by Romanized Thracians and Goths, in Late Antiquity there was a Roman garrison, a separate unit or possibly from the dislocated in Germania *Cohors II Lucensium*.

They used to be provided in the village, since it is well known that every soldier should have in his bag the so-called “iron portion”, consisting of much cheese, rusk and bacon<sup>56</sup>.

The localized villa estates around the ancient village at Cherven breg allow the possibility for settling in them of the Roman veterans<sup>57</sup>. It impresses strongly that in the embankment over the basilica, fallen from the village from the north during farm activities, luxurious tableware<sup>58</sup> was found together with materials showing the presence of military persons, as well as enormous quantity of *amphorae* for oil and wine, related to the period 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>59</sup>. The local pottery is in small quantity and mainly kitchen one.

The found artifacts from the Roman, Late Antique/Early Christian and Medieval periods and the technique of building and decoration show the economic conditions, the objects of everyday life and the military profession of the inhabitants. These are the few architectonic and building materials, wall paintings, imported Roman red slip and grey tableware, local more coarse tableware and kitchen pottery, glass, clay and plumb weights for fisher nets, metal objects for everyday life and in the Roman army, elements of the military costume and many coins.

W. Tomaschek is the first to express the opinion that the ancient Germania should be looked for at the contemporary Sapareva banya<sup>60</sup>. It is accepted that the name Germania comes from the Thracian name Γερμαί (hot spring). Germania in Late Antiquity played an important role, because it was the birthplace of Belisarius, the famous general at the head of the army of Justinianus I and his close friend. But long before that in the 90s of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, as already mentioned *Cohors II Lucensium* was billeting at Germania; and we know this from several inscriptions from Germania (197-198) and the close area. At the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> century Germania is already a town with street net and richly decorated public and private buildings<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> P. Иванов, Marcus Junkelmann, Die Legionen des Augustus. Der Römische Soldat im archäologischen Experiment. Mainz am Rhein, 1986, 313 Seiten 80 Tafeln mit 31 Farb- und 126 Schwarzweißabbildungen (=Kulturgeschichte der antike Welt, Band 13). – *Археология*, 2, 1990, 59.

<sup>57</sup> The ruins of a Roman villa were discovered by us during the terrain research in 2012. It is localized on 700-1000 meters west-northwest from the Early Christian basilica on the surface of several acres (See С. Петрова *et alli*, *Op. cit.*, 2013, 534-536). According to the data of the local inhabitants, in the 90s of last century from the territory of the settlement descend two military diplomas. The first one is discovered at Kraynitsi, about 2.5 km to the east-southeast of the basilica, and the second one in close proximity to the basilica, circa 300 m west of it.

<sup>58</sup> As a percentage the part of the red slip pottery discovered on the terrain of the basilica is dominating over the local production. Among the latter, a major part belongs to the fragments of cups-strainers for the production of cheese.

<sup>59</sup> С. Петрова, А. Геренска, *Op.cit.*, 2017, 462-465; С. Петрова, А. Геренска, Ансамбъл от раннохристиянска базилика със средновековна църква „Възнесение Господне“ при с. Червен брег, Община Дупница. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2017 година*, София 2018, 410-412.

<sup>60</sup> W. Tomaschek, *Die alten Thraker* II, Wien 1894, 88.

<sup>61</sup> Т. Иванов, Археологически проучвания при Сапарева баня. – *Известия на*

Around each military camp the canaba is organized. A canaba (pl. canabae) is a Latin term for a hut or hovel. After Hadrian canaba typically meant a collection of huts – canabae legionis, that emerged as a civilian settlement in the vicinity of a roman military fortress (castrum), where such a settlement grew up outside an auxiliary fort; it was called a ‘vicus’<sup>62</sup>. It is situated not far from the camp and in it live the families of the officers and the soldiers. Such a vicus has not been localized in the researched reaches of Djerman at Germania so far. Most probably the settlement at Cherven breg became in this vicus to the military camp of the cohort in Germania at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, later transformed to a strong fortress. The archaeological research reveals that this was a vast Roman settlement, unknown so far. The data from the excavations incited me to the idea that it can be identified with the village Bolbabria, known from an inscription<sup>63</sup>. The scholars localized it namely in the region of Gorno pole in the vicinity of the modern town of Dupnitsa, near to the road Pautalia-Germania. This inscription was found at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the suburbs of the situated near village of Shatrovo and published by V. Dobruski in 1907<sup>64</sup>. It is supposed that the inscription descends from Golemo selo near Shatrovo, where probably was situated the sanctuary of Zeus Sbelurdos<sup>65</sup>.

The analysis of the name Bolbabria should be connected with the red colour of the earth in the modern village Cherven breg or with the embarkment processes of the earth masses, caused by an underground river and the till recently marsh terrain around. On the first glance it seems that the end of the name Bolba-bria<sup>66</sup> is typical for a sea town, but not for the interior one. However „βρια“, for the Thracians had a wider semantic meaning and denoted also settlements alongside rivers. Across the area of the supposed ancient Bolbabria are flowing several rivers, as previously mentioned<sup>67</sup>. The translation of both parts of the name Bolbabria should be a “settlement-town on the littoral of a lake/swamp“. According to I. Duridanov, the name has identical stem with a number of Baltic, local and water names, descending from „marsh, morass, wet land“<sup>68</sup>. It is quite possible and real that in this field at the shirts of the highest in Bulgaria mountain Rila and the next lower one Verila and very rich of rivers, there were also swamps or in the best case morass places. The

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*археологическия институт*, XXI, 1957, 211-232.

<sup>62</sup> P. Franzen, *The Nijmegen Canabae Legionis (71-102/105 AD). Military and civilian life on the frontier.* – *Limes XX, XX Congreso Internacional de estudios sobre la frontera romana*, Madrid 2009, 1271-1284.

<sup>63</sup> Б. Геров, Проучвания върху западнотракийските земи през римско време, *Годишник на Софийския университет*, София 1961, 301 (149).

<sup>64</sup> В. Добруски, Надписи и фигурални паметници по култа на Зевса, Хера, Палада Атина и други божества. – *Археологически известия на Народния музей в София*, ред. В. Добруски, София 1907, 152-154; *IGBulg (IV) 1966*, #2216.

<sup>65</sup> Добруски, Й. Иванов, Геров, И. Вълчев

<sup>66</sup> In the suburbs of the village Golemo selo there is a locality Selymbria. A village with the same name Σηλυμβρία is known from the region too. Виж: Б. Геров, 1961, 301.

<sup>67</sup> See note 2.

<sup>68</sup> И. Дуриданов, *Езикът на траките*, София 1976, 33.

Fig. 16. A gap between plastered south wall and the later built conch. Details.

Сл. 16. Малтерна fuga између јужног зида и касније дозидане конхе, детаљ.



existence of such rich water sources should really create the allusion of a littoral for the situated near Bolbabria. Already V. Dobruski, and recently also S. Yanakieva are inclined to accept that the name of this settlement “is formed by one of the most typical ending for the Thracian settlement formations - βρια. It remains the question if these names are connected with the Ancient Greek appellation Βολβός – „onion<sup>69</sup>“. In my opinion the latter is quite possible, because it is often the toponym for water sources and settlements to be formed by plant names<sup>70</sup>. According to V. Dobruski, the Greek Βολβός reminds of the Latin *bulbus* – a kind of a red onion<sup>71</sup>. It is possible that this red colour of the onion was compared with the colour of the earth at the embankments, which has given the name to the present village Cherven breg (Red shore), in English Red bank.

#### *The medieval church and its village*

Probably already in 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c. the village whose population has moved from Bolbabria to the forests of the mountain Verila at the time of Zeno<sup>72</sup>, climbed down again to the field and created the medieval village over the ruins of the *vicus* and east of it. A small one-aisled and one-apse rectangular church was built over the Early Christian basilica, by that giving a new life to the settlement<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> A special kind of red onion; known in the Latin language. See V. Dobruski, Dobruski, *Op.cit.*, 153.

<sup>70</sup> С. Яакиева, *Тракийската хидронимия*. София 2009, 190.

<sup>71</sup> В. Добруски, *Op. cit.*, 1907, 153.

<sup>72</sup> See notes 36-37.

<sup>73</sup> In the region this is not the only church built over the ruins of an Early Christian building. The same is situation with the church of the close village Chukovets, locality Bioro; village of Pchelintsi; Beliova church in the vicinity of Samokov.

*The First Medieval church / the first building period:*

It is not the classical small medieval church known everywhere for one main reason – it was re-using part of the *stylobate* and the building materials of the Early Christian basilica, and as result the plan and the outlines became unusual, incorrect and coarse. As already mentioned when describing the Early Christian basilica, the medieval church has no own dug foundations, but re-used granite blocks of the basilica's *stylobate* and walls erected over these blocks too (fig. 12). That has led to the necessity of strengthening the walls from the north and the south by two huge embankments (fig. 13). As a result the building has sunken, and in order to enter the church, a new step leading downward has been made of a big rectangular granite block, identical to the blocks of the “foundations”.

The medieval church is placed in the naos / the middle aisle of the Early Christian basilica and today is known among the local population as the ‘Ascension Day of the God’ or ‘St. Spas’. The outer dimensions of the naos together with the apse are 6.80x4.20 m, the inner ones 3.80x3 m. The thickness of the walls varies from 0.80 m to more than 1 m at the beginning of the apse at the “east wall”, which is glued to the joint. In fact the “east wall” does not exist in the sense of building it, because it is created by the thickness of the apse and of the north and south church walls<sup>74</sup>. The apse is enormously withdrawn to the east (fig. 14).

The church is built by re-used stones, bricks and *tegulae* from the Early Christian basilica. This way of building can be seen most obviously on the west wall of the church, which is most opened and not so much covered with embankment. The “foundations” of the western wall consists of two granite blocks from the north and the south<sup>75</sup>. An opening for a door wide 1.40 m is left between them (fig. 15). The walls are erected over these granite blocks-foundations. The builders of the church have come upon first to the *tegulae* of the roof when going deep into the layers and namely the *tegulae* have been put directly on the granite blocks plastered with white mortar. After that the builders have re-used as building material the bricks and have erected a wall 1m high. Next they have come upon two more blocks, which they put from both sides of the entrance<sup>76</sup>, over the not solid wall of *tegulae* and bricks. The rest of the wall in height is made of crumbled stones and Roman bricks, plastered by white mortar. Most probably the same is the situation with the north and south walls of the church. The level of the “foundations” is at the same time the floor level of the church and of the Early Christian basilica.

<sup>74</sup> Similar east wall have also other churches from the First Bulgarian State, for instance the churches No 4 and 6 in Pliska. See Н. Чанева-Дечевска, *Църковната архитектура на Първата българска държава*, София 1984, фиг. 32 и 33; also many medieval churches in the Upperstream of Struma. See: Д. Митова-Джонова, *Археологически паметници в Пернишки окръг*, София 1983, 76-77; 125-126; 133; 138; 140 and cit. lit.

<sup>75</sup> The dimensions of the granite blocks are 1.40x0.70x0.70 m.

<sup>76</sup> The block at the north side of the entrance is in fact a door-sill, with a hollow for installing of the door of the basilica. There is also another hollow for installing from the first building of the pagan temple. The granite blocks from it are twice more re-used: for building the Early Christian church and of the medieval church. See below in the text.

Unfortunately, because of the piled earth over the walls it cannot be followed in details the way the apse is integrated in the east wall however one can see that the wall is with double thickness in comparison to the others. Our research revealed so far that the apse of the medieval church has been included in the original apse of the Early Christian basilica, but slightly narrowed at the ends. Also repeated is the place of the altar. The apse is too big for the dimensions of the church: the inner ones are 1.63 m wide and deep 1.68 m, and the outer ones are 3x2.60 m. Its form is near to the horseshoe. A narrow and high small window is cut in the arc of the apse. A rectangular and vaulted proscomidian (Προσκομιδή) niche is on the east wall, north of the apse. Another smaller rectangular niche is built on the north wall, near the northeastern corner. The interior of the church was covered with wall paintings. Because of the embankments and the penetrating of the wet from the north, the wall paintings have almost entirely fallen down.

The ceiling is a half cylinder in length of the church, made entirely by vertically put thin stone plates, plastered by white mortar. The cornice is made between the end of the wall and the beginning of the vault with the help of thin stone plates in two lines, while the vault is covered with a ridge-roof of stone roofing slabs<sup>77</sup>.

*The wall paintings from the First period of the church:*

During the ages, the wall paintings from the First church suffered from moisture. The next building period also attributed to the bad state of these wall paintings from the first church. The proofs for our supposition are the “buried” fragments in several places around the church – north, west and south of it, without traces of a specially made pit for them, from both paintings of the church. However, these “buried” fragments belong not only to the first, but also to the second building period in 1595, because as a result of the running from the north water and because of the moisture, the wall paintings from the same wall have almost entirely fallen, except some small fragments *in situ*. In fact, the bad stage of the wall paintings most probably caused constant repairs during the first and the second period of the church.

In our assumption to the first period belong the wall paintings in the technique al fresco, made on a thin plaster over the granite blocks, also the originals predominantly on the south wall and the south part of the apse. The granite blocks have stopped the moisture and the paintings have been preserved in this way. Here we see curtains in ochre<sup>78</sup>, shown in two ways. In the first of them the curtains are painted on the straight walls-“foundations” of the north and south

<sup>77</sup> The stone plates – stone roofing slabs are covered with tiles in the 80-s of last century as to prevent the building from the water streams and the wetness.

<sup>78</sup> They are a typical motif in the socles of the churches from the Second Bulgarian State of 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century and can be seen mainly in the churches of Trapezitsa in Turnovo. See A. Рошковская, Л. Мавродинова, Стенописен орнамент, София 1985, 44-45, 53; Л. Мавродинова, Към въпроса за съществуването на Търновската живописна школа – стенописите при Трапезица. – Известия на института по изкуствознание, 14, 1970, 85-116.



Fig. 17 a-c. Image of St. Constantine and St. Helena; of St. Nicholas and Archdeacon Stefan; of Simeon Stylites.

Сл. 17 а-с. Представа св. Константина и Јелене; Св. Никола и архиђакон Стефан; св. Симеон Столпник.

walls and in the apse, the folds being represented by black colour. The band on the lower part of the curtain is drawn by the same colour. The upper part of it imitates a cornice with the hanging curtain. There is a difference in the colour and the details in the curtains of the second period, on which we shall stop our attention below.

The representations of curtains in the socle in the medieval wall painting can be observed from the end of 11<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century. The best preserved example is on the apse of the Bachkovo charnel house<sup>79</sup>.

*The second church / the second building period:*

The inscription over the door<sup>80</sup> of the church shows that it has been rebuilt in 1595, also seen from the new painting decoration and the new plan. Today very little has remained from this inscription (**fig. 12 at the top right**). In 1909 the teacher H. Toshev in Dupnitsa, later a priest, copied the inscription over the door to the church: „Благочестивихъ християноми селомъ червено-

<sup>79</sup> А. Грабар, Материали по средновековому искуству в Болгарии. – Годишник на Народния музей за 1920 година, I, 143–144; А. Грабар, Болгарские церкви-гробницы. – Известия на Българския археологически институт I, 1921–1922, с. 103–135; Е. Бакалова, Бачковската костница, София 1977; А. Василиев, Изкуството в българските земи по време на Византийското робство. – *История на българското изобразително изкуство*, 1, София 1976, 158, обр. 163. The churches of Trapezitsa are the brightest examples for the development of the wall painting in 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century, with a socle imitating marble incrustation with geometric figures (*opus alexandrinum*) or a folded drapery with ornamental motives. See М. Бичев, Живописата през XIII в. в Търново. – *История на българското изобразително изкуство*, 1, София 1976, 212, А. Grabar, La peinture religieuse en Bulgarie, Paris, Paul Geuthner 1928, 110 ff.

<sup>80</sup> А. Меджидиев, *Дупница и бележити дупничани през епохата на Възраждането*. Дупница 1940, 15.



Fig. 18. Image of the curtains on the northern conch with cuffic-letters.

Сл. 18. Декорација завесе у северној конхи са куфским словима.

брегуи всиоу братю і кто приложувъ (here the inscription cannot be read) въ лето 7103 (written with Old Bulgarian letters, denoting 1595 г.) помени... (further also unreadable) „

During this period at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century, the plan of the church was changed. As many one-aisled churches in the region<sup>81</sup>, the space was prolonged to the west by building a long narthex. For this purpose, new lath-and-plaster walls of stones, linked by clay, were added to the north and the south walls. They were reaching to the west the excavated west wall of the narthex of the Early Christian basilica, and now, after the second building period of the medieval church, the central entrance of the basilica, became the entrance of the narthex of the church<sup>82</sup> (**fig. 13**).

Another change has been also made in the plan of the naos of the church. At the centers of its long walls from the north and the south, conchs were built<sup>83</sup>, and in this way from one-aisled, the church was transformed to a church with cylindrical vault and pseudo-conches. The north conch is shallower, narrower and formed more carelessly. The south conch is lower but very carefully vaulted. The conchs in the interior do not reach the heel of the vault, ending much lower. But from the exterior, differently to similar in plan churches from the end of 16<sup>th</sup> –beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century, where the conchs from outside are

<sup>81</sup> А.Меджидиев, *Дупница и бележити дупничани през епохата на Възраждането*. Дупница 1940, 15.

<sup>82</sup> Except the granite blocks, reused in the south side of the door was also another granite fragment, part of an ancient frieze-architrave.

<sup>83</sup> This plan is not an exception for the churches in the region, related to the end of 16<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century. Similar are the churches in Pchelintsi, Berende, Dolna Dikanya, Pastuh, Razhdavitsa.

covered with *tegulae*; in our case the vaulting of the conchs<sup>84</sup> ends at the heel of the vault of the ceiling and from the outside the half-cylinder touch the cornice, touch immediately under the beginning of the ceiling. Looking at the church from the outside, the analogy for it is the church „St. Joan Baptist“ on the shore of Pchelina dam (region of Radomir, described also by K. Irechek)<sup>85</sup>. The apse there has an independent covering and the conchs were built to the eaves and are included in the mutual ridge-roof of the church, similarly to the medieval church in Cherven breg. Also the proskomidian niche and the wash-hand-stand are on the same place as in Cherven breg.

The masters have worked very carefully when building the conchs, having in mind the covered by the embankments north and south walls, erecting them gradually and several times. The conchs were sticking at a gap to the wall from outside, very obviously seen on the preserved mortar on the south wall (**fig. 16**), and, also plastered as the whole church. The walls of the conchs are thinner than the walls of the church.

*The wall paintings from the second building period of the church:*

The new paintings from the second building period were made because of two reasons. First, as in the case with the paintings from the First church / First building period, the previous decoration has partly fallen or ruined because of the coming from the north subterranean waters<sup>86</sup>. Second, the new plan of the church additionally destroyed or completely took away other parts of the decoration. All this caused the new painting in 1595.

The preserved fragments of paintings from this period<sup>87</sup> can be observed on the south and the east walls and in the apse. Several letters from the mentioned building inscription of 1595 still can be seen over the entrance. From the lower register on the south wall there can be observed the full-length representations of St. Constantine and St. Helena on a blue-green background and in dark-brown frame (**fig. 17-a**). Usually they are represented on the west wall. However in our case their place is unusual, on the south wall and next to the entrance. The face of St. Constantine is preserved with the beginning of the crown over (?), while that of St. Helena is missing and only lower parts of the veil, also with rich decoration, remained. The dresses of both of them are richly decorated with pearls.

After the conch, in one panel with frame are represented St. Nicholas and the archdeacon Stephen with censer and reliquary in his hands; also unusual is the place of the latter representation (**fig. 17-b**). A saint in a tower, probably

<sup>84</sup> This kind of vaulting in architecture is known as *arcosolia*. In the medieval church architecture the *arcosolia* is mainly a shallow niche for burial.

<sup>85</sup> К. Иречек, *Пътувания по България*, София 1974, 588.

<sup>86</sup> The wall paintings on the north wall are entirely lost, as well as on the north side of the door of the west wall. The western one is preserved partly. Only the wall paintings on the south wall are preserved, exception of the south conch. They are also missing on the east wall; only the fragments inside the apse are preserved, mainly in its south part.

<sup>87</sup> The analysis of the wall paintings will be published in a separate article, in print.

Simeon Stylites, is placed on the east wall at the right. In the image the blue colour and its shades are predominant: the pillar is blue and the background is blue-greenish (**fig. 17-c**). The robe is bright and the face is surrounded by an ochre/golden nimbus. The fragments on the upper register are badly preserved, and it can be observed only some medallions with representations in square fields with dark-red frames. Also partly are preserved the representations in the south part of the apse, with the usual for this place Melismos. Unfortunately no readable scenes and representations can be found on the north wall.

The drapery in the conchs is treated differently to the drapery from the first period. Although the orange ochre is used again as in the straight walls and the apse, the folds and the decorative band are not painted black, but in brown colour. Over the curtains there are painted brown three-leaf lilies and letters (so call. cuffic-letters - **fig. 18**). They are absent from the curtains in the first period. These differences in the colour and the appearance of the letters reveal that some parts, namely the walls in the north part of the church (but without the socle) – in the entire height of the north and the south conch, have been painted for the second time at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. The motif of the curtain with drapery from the first painting period is continued also in the conchs during the second period, thus connecting the whole socle, but in the new dark-brown colour and with the new letters-signs. The described differences prove that there existed two different periods of wall painting the church.

#### *The technique of the wall paintings*

The studies of the preserved fragments show that there are two plasters and two layers with paints<sup>88</sup>, although in a bad state. The wall paintings can be dated on the base of the iconography and style from the 12<sup>th</sup> till 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to the structure, the decorative scheme and the colours the paintings have: building plaster, plaster, key coarse plaster, thick 0.3-1,5cm, as well as fine lime plaster (intonacco), with polychromy. The analyses of the material reveal the partial usage of the classical *al fresco*, additionally worked as *al secco*. The technology of the wall painting has been performed in succeeding stages. During the first of them the *graffiae* have been incised, marking / outlining the images and applying the fresco technique for preparatory colour groundings. The end of the wall painting was including the laying of the paints with the addition of binder. The pigments have natural character. The paints have a very fine structure and dense brush. The colours are in white, ochre and orange ochre, dark blue, dark brick-red, red, dark green, brown etc.

#### *The burials and the found medieval and post-medieval coins and related material*

Two medieval burials were excavated in front of the apse. The first of them (No 12) was 1.5 m deep from the contemporary terrain. It was with inhu-

<sup>88</sup> Protocol: for researching the wall paintings, from the medieval church at the village of Cherven breg. September 2014. Made by Ilia Borisov, restorer in the Regional historical museum in Blagoevgrad.

mation in a tomb, formed by sides of boards. The buried person is covered with earth and parts of the debris of the Early Christian basilica. The second tomb, No 13, was only 0.70 m under the contemporary level, and immediately close to the north of the previous tomb. During its opening it impressed that the his ankles were too near, even clinging each other, as if the legs have been tied up in this position by force. The head was missing. This fact, the position of the legs and the swallow burial in the terrain is a sign for a quick and probably secret burial, which can be connected with some extraordinary events in the region at the end of the 60s in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At that time the Patriarchate of Peć, to whose *patrimonium* belonged the area of Dupnitsa, was canceled, and instead it was united to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This caused a riot in the area of the Dupnitsa field led by the local priests. That's the reason to suppose that the decapitated corpse belonged to the local priest-martyr of the medieval village at Cherven breg, perished during the revolt and buried rapidly.

Several Turkish coins (akçe) from the time of sultan Murad III (1574-1595) and his heir Mechmed III (1574-1595) were found. Also, a few copper Turkish coins (mangur), dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, were also found, as well as one silver coin of Sultan Mehmed VI (1918-1922), which was mint in 1918. A few of the coins were punctured and probably came from necklaces. It is possible for those necklaces to have been made decades if not centuries after they were mint and to have been used as family valuables for decades. They have been probably dropped and lost by their owners while walking to the church and before entering it, because they were unearthed near to the contemporary level in front of the entrance to the medieval church.

Also two ship tokens, mint in Germania between 1800 and 1850 were found around the church. This rare kind of numismatic material is used instead of money in the trade in the Danubian area predominantly<sup>89</sup>. The token was equal according to the sign on its averse to a definite amount of money. Both ship token illustrate that somebody from the region of Cherven breg and Dupnitsa, a local person, merchant or itinerant one from the Danubian regions had definite trade activity in this region of Dupnitsa in the end of 18<sup>th</sup> – first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This unknown so far evidence is met for the first time in the Upper current of Strymon and is an interesting evidence for a far trade activity<sup>90</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> Named also like “ship money”. They were in circulation in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main function of the tokens was mainly accounting. There are also “payment tokens”. They appear with the establishment of the so called German “mark system”. They were exchanged for supplies and products from the side the traders with whom the manufacturer of the tokens has a contract but are also used in their own shops of the company. With them could be used certain privileges and discounts, to account for amounts between partners and others. It is considered also that they were used by sailors as currency for gambling during long journeys. The tokens had a secondary function after they went out of use, out of use as a payment method, for necklaces and decorations. One of the discovered tokens was punctured – part of a necklace.

<sup>90</sup> A large amount of “ship tokens” (part of a coin treasure from the 18<sup>th</sup> century) were discovered in the church of St. Petka in Gabrovo. See: X. Харитонов, П. Тоцев и Р. Йосифов, Съкровището на църквата „Св. Петка” в Габрово. – *Сб. Народната култура на Балканджите*, т. 8, 2010, 15-32; two other tokens are stored in the naval museum in Varna, one is from Arbanasi and the second one again in Gabrovo.

### Conclusion

The settlement at Cherven breg had a very long life in Antiquity, Medieval and Post-Medieval times, with relatively short interruptions. The first significant evidences for it can be traced at the period of the old Thracian, pre-Roman settlement with the probable name Bolbabria. Its enormous area supposes that it was a *vicus* and that was the reason the village to be chosen at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> century as the soldier *vicus* (or κώμη) of the military camp of *Cohors II Lucensium*, dislocated in the closely situated Germania. The inhabitants of Bolbabria have venerated the cult of Zeus Sbelurdos witnessed by the votive inscription. Other known cults were those of Dionysos and Hermes, with found votive steles in their sanctuary on the very territory of Bolbabria.

The location of this village in the vast field, crossroad in all directions, makes possible that near to it, most probably southwest of Bolbabria, existed a *mansio*. Here the road north-south (to Serdica to the north and to the Aegean sea to the south) was crossing the road east-west (to Dyrrachium to the west, passing through Pautalia and Stobi, and to Philippopolis to the east). This dense road net around the *vicus* also helped very much for its development and enlargement. However, it had to pass through serious destructions during the Goth invasions in the middle – third quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and revived only after Claudius II Gothic and Aurelian. In the second quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century an Early Christian basilica had been erected denoting the new political state of the Constantine I in official support to the Christian religion. Most probably the basilica was not the only one in Bolbabria, having in mind its significant number of population and the vast area of the settlement. In this aspect, another basilica or church should also exist in the village.

The next third period after the invasions at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup>-beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century when Bolbabria was again ruined, relates to the 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century and to the revival of the settlement. A medieval church has been built over the Early Christian one, reusing part of its walls, the floor and even some building materials. The result is unusual medieval church and this can explain the non-canonical location of some representations of the wall paintings, generally dated to the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the fourth period began, connected with the rebuilding partly of the church and with a partial new painting, replacing the fallen parts of the decoration. It may be supposed that this replacing of the old and fallen parts have occurred not only once, but several times during the ages in dependence of the state of the wall paintings.

In 1766-1767 after the revolt the village has been again abandoned and its population settled lower at the right bank of the river Djubrena, near its contemporary bed. It is considered that the inhabitants were forced to serve and work in the numerous Turkish estates/chifliks. According to different data, these estates were about 17 on the territory of the contemporary villages Yahinovo, Cherven breg and Kraynitsi.

This long, fascinating and complex history in continuation of two thousand years of the settlement at Cherven breg is still full of many surprises awaiting the next researchers of the site and the region.

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АНТИЧКО И СРЕДЊЕВЕКОВНО НАСЕЉЕ КОД СЕЛА ЦРВЕНИ БРЕГ, ОПШТИНА  
ДУПНИЦА, БУГАРСКА (прелиминарни извештај)

Античко и средњовековна насеља смештени су на површини од око 350 хектара. Локализована су 2012. године приликом рекогносцирања терена. Античко село, коме припада базилика, указује на изузетну економску моћ; препознато под именом Болбабрија. Пронађени налази могу се упућују на оближњи војни камп у Германији, могуће је да је село логорских војника и њихових породица. Село је развијало и на великом простору крајем 2 века (197-198) када је *Cohors II Lucensium* био смештен у Германији.

Ранохришћанска базилика има скраћени наос. Базилика је изграђена између 330. и средине 4. века. План је тробродан, једна апсида; са припратом и пастофорија у јужном делу припрате. Због тога је улаз у јужни брод смештен на југу. Постоји неколико фаза изградње, а 80-их година 2. века формирана је пастофорија. Каснохришћанска сахрана у апсиди цркве указује на покоп њеног свештеника или сеоског епископа (друга половина 4. века). Базилика је уништена крајем 5. века, заједно са селом, као резултат готских освајања под вођством цара Зена.

У средњем веку оживио је живот овог места. На средњем броду базилике, од старог грађевинског материјала са ранокришћанске базилике, саграђена је црква - једнобродна са полукружном апсидом, али без темеља, на гранитном стилобату базилике. Познато је да је 1595. године поправљена и преобликована. Тренутно су сачуване занимљиве фреске с краја 16. века. Евидентне су извесне иконографске неуобичајености у распореду насликаних композиција. Оба споменика чине јединствени комплекс кришћанског архитектонског наслеђа.