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THE SOUTHERN GATE OF DIOCLETIANOPOLIS, THRACE

Abstract: The present article explores the possible grounds for the construction of the south gate of Diocletianopolis in Thrace in the last quarter of 4th c. or the beginning of the 5th c. Although the military issue of the gate is accepted as primary and the only in scholarship, the gate can also be interpreted as the *porta triumphalis* of the city. This study reveals that it was part of a huge reconstruction program that was not limited to the city itself but took place across Thrace in the most important urban centres such as Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana. Supported by imperial authorities, Diocletianopolis' southern gate was in fact a material manifestation of the new imperial ideology established by the emperor Theodosius I, which sought to cast him as an emperor who was victorious over the barbarians (Goths) through the blessing of the Christian god. The gate was also meant to be a dynastic monument that presented the establishment of the new dynasty and Theodosius I's heir in the East – Arcadius. At Diocletianopolis and other cities, then, the *porta triumphalis* became one of most essential features of local civic and religious life in Thrace until the end of Late Antiquity.

Key words: Diocletianopolis, Thrace, Late antiquity, dynastic monument, *porta triumphalis*, Theodosian dynasty

The city that was established in the late 3rd c. as Diocletianopolis is located some 42 km north of Philippopolis (fig. 1). The new city seems to have replaced an older settlement with the name of Augustae that was destroyed by barbarians during invasions in the middle of the 3rd century. This was one of five urban centers in newly established in the Late Antique province of Thrace with the administrative reforms of Diocletian. Consequently, the city became the cathedra of Christian bishops, one of whom named Kyriakos is known to have participated in the Council at Ephesus in 431.²

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² V. Beševliev, *Wo lag der Bishopssitz Diocletianopolis in Thrakien*, Linguistique



Fig. 1. The location of Diocletianopolis in Late antique Thrace (the map is after R. Ivanov, Roman cities in Bulgaria, Corpus of ancient and medieval settlements in modern Bulgaria, vol. 1, Sofia, 2012, VII).

Сл. 1. Положај Диоклецијанополиса у позно-античкој Тракији, (карта по R. Ivanov, Roman cities in Bulgaria, Corpus of ancient and medieval settlements in modern Bulgaria, vol. 1, Sofia, 2012, VII).

Local urban tradition immensely impacted the urbanization of the new city. Buildings from the old settlement were reconstructed and incorporated into the new urban fabric while some features of the standard Roman city were not adopted, such as, for example, the installation of an orthogonal street network in the whole city area. Only the eastern half of Diocletianopolis received this treatment (fig. 2). The Roman Empire-wide decline of some features once standard to Roman cities that occurred in the time of Tetrarchy is also visible in the asymmetrical positioning of the city gates based on the military requirements of the epoch. This asymmetry was reflected in Diocletianopolis' street network, particularly in the lack of the typical *decumanus maximus* and *cardo maximus*. Despite this difference, however, the new blocks in the eastern half of the city were built in the classical urban tradition according to an orthogonal network. Unlike the city's eastern half, in the western one buildings are arranged more haphazardly, without following standards such as the *decumanus maximus*. This main street starts from the Eastern gate and ends at a junction with the *cardo maximus*.³ Although it is called the *decumanus maximus* because of its link with the city gate, at 5 m wide it is not among the widest or most lavishly decorated streets in Diocletianopolis. Indeed, the incorporation of older complexes into the limits of the Tetrarchic city contributed to the abandonment of the orthogonal street network around them, and it should also be pointed out that this part of the city is marked by uneven terrain.

The curtain walls of the newly constructed city, which are still preserved, have the shape of an irregular tetragon and encloses an area of 30 ha. The gates

balkanique, 9, No. 1, 1964, 49-54.

³ К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, том 1. Топографија, укрепителна система, градоустройство и архитектура, София, 1993, 97.

are set on two perpendicular axes as expected, but only the northern gate is positioned in the middle of a wall. The eastern gate was set in the southern half of the eastern wall, the western in the northern half of the western wall, and the southern in the western half of the southern wall, very close to the SW corner of the fortification circuit. All the gates belong to the one-passage type gate with the eastern and northern reinforced by two towers on both sides; the rest rely on the towers located nearby on the curtain walls.⁴ The south gate was obviously located on the road from Philippopolis and gave the visitor immediate access to the city's administrative center, from which the amphitheater and possibly the praetorium have been discovered so far. This part of the city is also where thermal mineral springs – nearly 22 in total in the whole valley – are concentrated. These springs and Diocletianopolis' strategic location on the important road between Philippopolis and Oescus, which connected the *via egnatia* to the Carpathians to the north, were key motivators for the city's specific urban development.

It is assumed that the fortification circuit saw extensive reconstruction in the last quarter of the 4th c., which included a new south gate. Some 30 m of the curtain walls and a tower were completely dismantled for the gate. It belongs to the one-arched passage type that is flanked by two rectangular towers; on its exterior, the gate has the appearance of a large arch on two massive pillars with niches (fig. 3). The passage of the arch is 11 m high and 12 m wide and is constructed entirely in *opus testaceum*. On its interior, the gate is flanked on both sides by mas-

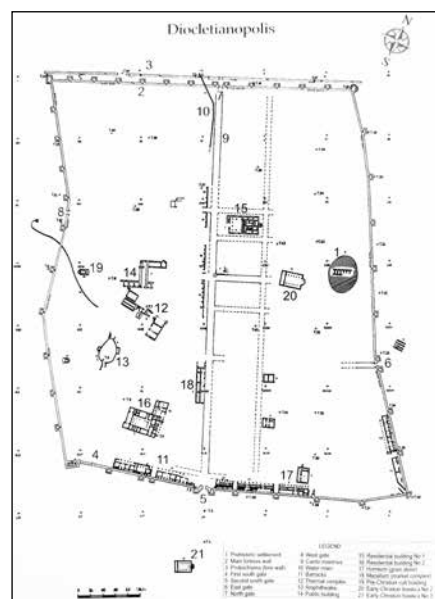


Fig. 2. General plan of Diocletianopolis (after M. Madzharov, Diocletianopolis – in: R. Ivanov, Roman cities in Bulgaria, Corpus of ancient and medieval settlements in modern Bulgaria, vol. 1, Sofia, 2012, 446, fig. 1).

Сл. 2. Генерални план Диоклецијанополиса (по: М. Madzharov, Diocletianopolis – in: R. Ivanov, Roman cities in Bulgaria, Corpus of ancient and medieval settlements in modern Bulgaria, vol. 1, Sofia, 2012, 446, fig. 1).

⁴ On the fortification of Diocletianople – see Б. Филов, *Хисарската крепост в Пловдивско и нейната базилика*, Известия на българското археологическо дружество 2, 1911, 105-119; Д. Цончев, *Хисарските бани. Географски, исторически и археологически очерк*, Годишник на Пловдивската Народна библиотека и музей за 1935-1936 г., Пловдив, 91-128; Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови данни за Хисарските стени*, Известия на Археологическия институт, 30, 1967, 101-111; К. Маджаров, *Нови разкопки и проучвания на Хисарската крепост*, Известия на Археологическия институт 30, 1967, 113-141; Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град при Хисар*, Известия на секцията за теория и история на градоустройството и архитектурата, 24, 1972, 165-191; К. Маджаров, *Северната порта на Хисарската крепост*, Археология, 1, 1974, 60-63; К. Маджаров, *Казармените постройки на Диоклецианопол*, Известия на музеите в южна България, 8, 1982, 77-96; К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 23-95; М. Маджаров, *Към въпроса за крепостните стени на Diocletianopolis*, Годишник на Регионалния археологически музей – Пловдив, 12, 2014, 134-145; М. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 445-454.



Fig. 3. The exterior of the new south gate (photo: Ivo Topalilov).

Сл. 3. Спољни изглед нове јужне капије (фото: Иво Топалилов).



Fig. 4. The interior of the new south gate (photo: David Hendrix).

Сл. 4. Унутрашњи изглед нове јужне капије (фото: Дејвид Хендрикс).

sive pillars that may be meant to imitate the pylons of a triumphal arch (fig. 4). The gate differs from the rest in the city not only in its dimensions but also in its plastic decoration. Decorative niches are placed on the both sides of the fore-arch, and they once held life-sized statues of emperors.⁵ The entire interior façade over the arch was surmounted by a brick triangular gable. An open area was formed on the gate's interior, *intra moenia*.

Both the date of the new south gate and the reasons for its construction remain in question. Two dates are proposed for the gate's construction: the late

⁵ It is hardly likely that the statues were of deities as suggested – see Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 179; М. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 447, given the date of the construction of the gate in the last quarter of 4th c. at earliest.

3rd c., based on the presumption that the fortifications were first built at the beginning of the same century,⁶ and an almost a century later at the time of Theodoisus I⁷ or the end of the 4th century⁸ in the early years of Arcadius' reign. It was at this time that military barracks were built on the interior of the curtain walls. The earlier date seems unlikely as it is now accepted that the city's first fortifications were built at the end of the 3rd century. Nonetheless, in both cases the new gate's construction is related to military turmoil in Thrace either in the middle to third quarter of the 3rd c., which culminated in the siege and capture of Philippopolis in 250, or in the 80s of the 4th c. during the so-called "Gothic wars" that resulted in the catastrophic defeat of Roman forces near Hadrianopolis in 376. Unsurprisingly, such military turmoil is used to explain the dismantling of Diocletianopolis' curtain walls. St. Boyadzhiev believes that barbarians demolished a substantial part of the walls and so prompted the fortifications' reconstruction and the installation of the new gate.⁹ K. Madzharov hesitates between assigning the fortifications' destruction to the Gothic wars in 376-378¹⁰ and positing a deliberate dismantling as a part of a program to better the city's defenses.¹¹ M. Madzharov supports the latter possibility.¹² In all cases it is assumed that the new gate was built to strength Diocletianopolis' defenses,¹³ and unsurprisingly the gate is often said to possess "*the typical features of a defensive building from Late antiquity*" that ensured better protection for one of the weakest points in the Diocletianople's defense. It is also commonly written of the gate that "the larger outer arch ... shows that the construction of the southern gate at this location relates to the period when in offence techniques new types of siege machines, capable of penetrating the defenses, were introduced." The increasing frequencies of invasions forced the Romans to develop more complex defensive plans.¹⁴ The new gate with its top arch provides "excellent protection against enemy soldiers, who, armed with a 'hand ram', can safely break the gate. Of course, this is even more true for siege engines such as the so-called rams, whose cover protects the soldiers operating in them."¹⁵

Without denying the new gate's defensive capacities, which are obvious and further supported by the outer arch's resemblance of a *propugnaculum*, it seems that the nature of the structure is more complicated than previously

⁶ Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 189.

⁷ К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 62.

⁸ М. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 453.

⁹ Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 188.

¹⁰ К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 61-62.

¹¹ К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 44.

¹² М. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 453.

¹³ Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 172; К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 47; М. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 447, 453.

¹⁴ Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 172-179; К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 47; М. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 447.

¹⁵ Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 172; К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 47.

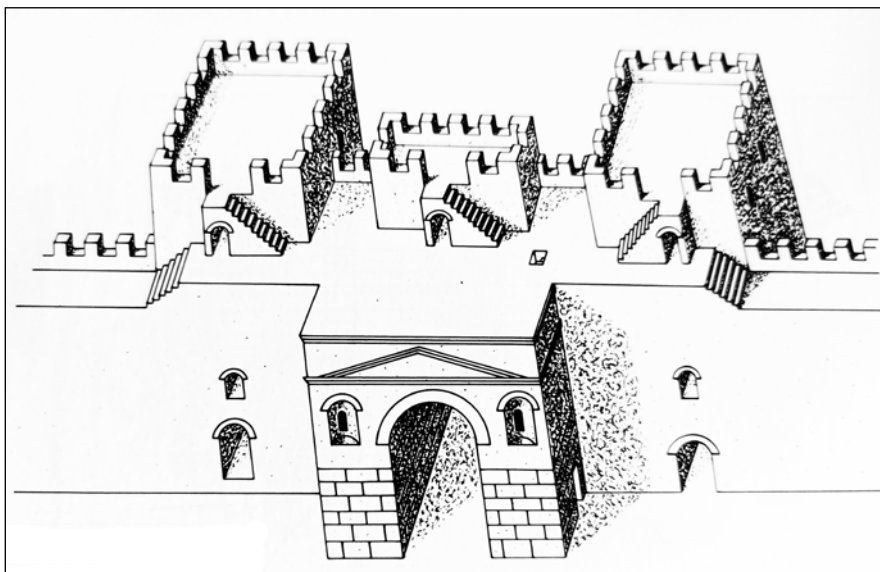


Fig. 5. The reconstructed inner façade of the new south gate (after K. Маджаров, Диоклецианопол, 86, fig. 59).

Сл. 5. Реконструисана унутрашња фасада нове јужне капије (по: К. Маджаров, Диоклецианопол, 86, сл. 59).

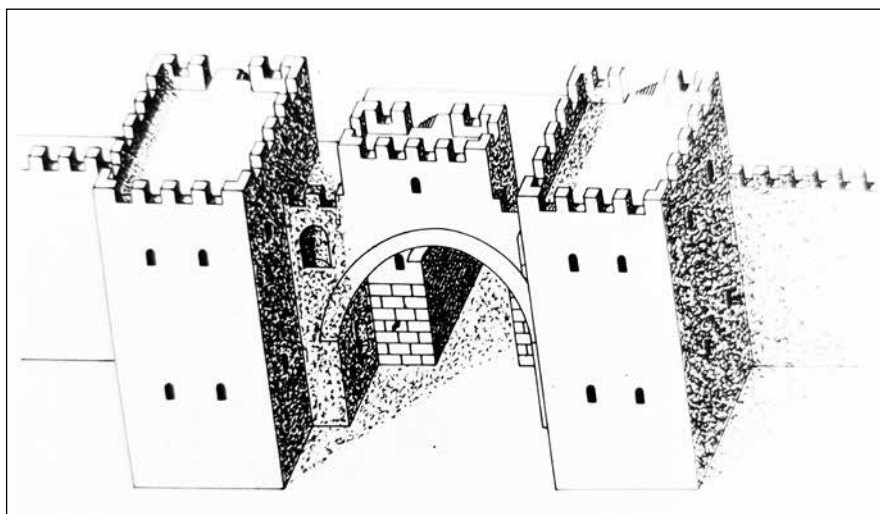


Fig. 6. The reconstructed outer façade of the new south gate (after K. Маджаров, Диоклецианопол, 86, fig. 58).

Сл. 6. Реконструисана спољашња фасада нове јужне капије (по: К. Маджаров, Диоклецианопол, 86, сл. 58).

thought. Indeed, the new gate appears better suited to 5th c. military challenges to Diocletianopolis and Thrace, but it seems that its construction was a part of

a bigger building program in the city that concerned not only its fortifications but also its urbanization more broadly. I do not believe that Goths in the 80s of the 4th c. would have been able to demolish the city's curtain walls since the written sources are clear that they were "in peace with the curtain walls" and so seemingly unskilled in siege tactics. Indeed, none of Thrace's cities are noted as having been captured. The Goths are instead noted as having destroyed the extramural imperial infrastructure, with their leader Fritigern advising them "to attack and devastate the rich and fruitful parts of the country, which were still without protectors and could be pillaged without any danger."¹⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus further notes that "without distinction of age or sex all places were ablazed with slaughter and great fires."¹⁷ The barbarians "in disorder, wherever each man found no opposition, pressed on to set all in confusion; and unhindered they spread devastation over all the wide plains of Thrace... with a most foul confusion of robbery, murder, bloodshed, fires, and shameful violation of the bodies of freemen."¹⁸ The Goths are moreover noted as having "ruined the fertile fields which extend far and wide, killing or capturing those who dwelt there."¹⁹ Religious buildings in Thrace were damaged as well, despite the fact that the Goths were Christians.²⁰ Written sources thus strongly suggest that Thrace's cities remained intact and that only their surroundings suffered damage in some cases.²¹

All this is an argument against the destruction of Diocletianopolis' curtain wall by the Goths, who were unskilled in siege warfare and lacked the required equipment. We should therefore assume that the partial dismantling of the curtain walls was an initiative undertaken by the Romans themselves and under the directives of imperial authorities at Constantinople as the only ones that possess such prerogatives. It is worth noting that this was the only gate that was rebuilt at that time. The rest of the city's fortifications remained intact, including the original south gate that stayed in use at their SW corner. This casts doubt on assigning only a military rationale to the new south gate's construction. If this were the case, one would expect reinforcement of the other city gates as well.

Moreover, the new south gate was not an isolated building project. In fact, around the same time as the gate's construction between the final two decades of the 4th and first half of the 5th c., urban life at Diocletianopolis expanded

¹⁶ Amm. Marcell. 31.6.4: Tunc Fritigernus frustra cum tot cladibus conluctari, homines ignaros obsidendi contemplans, relicta ibi manu sufficiente, abire negotio imperfecto suasit, pacem sibi esse cum parietibus memorans, suadensque ut populandas opimas regiones et uberes, absque discrimine ullo, vacuus praesidiis etiam tum adorarentur.

¹⁷ Amm. Marc. 31.6.7.

¹⁸ Amm. Marc. 31.8.6.

¹⁹ Amm. Marc. 31.16.3.

²⁰ See the instance the case studied in I. Topalilov, *The end of the pagan sanctuary near the modern village of Dragoyново*, Parvomai district, and the Goths in Thrace, *Annales Balcanici*, 2, 2021, 35-49.

²¹ I. Topalilov, *The Barbarians and the city: A case study on the impact of the barbarian invasion from AD 376-378 and AD 442-447 on the urbanism of Philippopolis*, Thrace, in: D. Dzino and K. Parry (eds) *Byzantium and Neighbors and its Cultures*, *Byzantina Australiensia* 20, 2014, 223-244.

beyond the curtain walls to the east, south, and north.²² Archaeological excavations have thus revealed that the new gates' construction was in fact part of an extensive building program that saw the urbanization of the city, which included a new street grid in the eastern half of the city.

Whether the whole street-grid was replaced remains unclear, but what is clear is that the city's widest and so most important street arteries, such as that which begin at the south gate and the one that leads to the so-called "Early Christian Basilica No. 2," appeared at this time (fig. 2). These new two streets (the *cardo* and *decumanus*), whose junction was at the middle of the city, were more than double the size of their predecessors and other contemporary streets at 12 m wide. It seems that the main destination for the *decumanus* was a huge public building of the 4th c. that was replaced by a Christian basilica in the first half of the 5th c.²³

It is unclear if the construction of the new basilica was also part of the new urbanization program, but the basilica's location and the monumental road that preceded it, which is only comparable in size to that at the south gate, suggest the possibility that this may be Diocletianopolis' episcopal basilica. In further support of this possibility is the basilica's clear connection with the city's main gate which was a main feature of the siting for episcopal basilicas as sites like Philippopolis. As in Diocletianopolis, in the provincial capital such a connection between the episcopal basilica and main city gate came about through major construction works that affected the entire eastern part of the city.²⁴ It is therefore quite plausible that the same process happened in both Philippopolis and Diocletianopolis, namely the rearrangement of the street-grid and the establishment of a new one that allowed for a Christianized urban landscape. The new south gate in Diocletianopolis provides an argument for this scenario as well.

It has been already noted that the new south gate is very different from the others. Although it is better fortified than the earlier south gate and so was updated to take into account common late 4th – early 5th c. defensive techniques, it is hardly likely that imperial authorities would have completely dismantled a significant part of Diocletianopolis' fortifications only to build a new gate. The new gate's decorative scheme – decorative niches for statues on both sides of the fore-arch – supports this contention. Given the epoch, it is unlikely that the statues in the gate would have been of deities as has been proposed.²⁵ Instead, statues of emperors are more likely, particularly of Theodosius I and Arcadius

²² This expansion is dated to 5-6th c. К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 22.

²³ On the basilica – see К. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 128-130; Н. Чанева-Дечевска, *Раннохристиянската архитектура в България IV-VI в.*, София, 1999, 264-265.

²⁴ See on this in I. Topalilov, The impact of the religious policy of Theodosius the Great on the urbanization of Philippopolis, Thrace (Preliminary notes). In: O. Brandt and V. Flocchi Nicolai (eds) *Costantino e i Costantinidi: l'innovazione costantiniana, le sue radici e i suoi sviluppi*, Acta XVI Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae, Roma, 22-28.09.2013 (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana), 1853-1862.

²⁵ M. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 447.

since they were reigning when the gate was constructed. It also seems more likely that these statues were placed in the niches in the gate's interior façade, the triangular gable of which makes this inner side resemble a triumphal arch.²⁶

Thus, the inner façade of the south gate should be reconstructed as a single vaulted passage with a lower half (one large socle?) built in *opus quadratum* and separated from the upper half by a brick cornice and with an upper brick-built half holding the triangular gable and two niches on both sides of the passage (fig. 5). It is unclear if the western niche was a window for the gate's upper story as has been proposed,²⁷ but if so, it would have held the only statue of the emperor that decorated the gate. It is clear, however, that the gable provides relief decoration for the gate and that an open space was formed around the inner façade, *intra moenia*.

So, the outer façade of the new gate afforded the best possible defenses of the time with a certain type of *propugnaculum* included (fig. 6), and the inner façade constituted the most lavishly decorated gate in the city. This gate was on the same axis as the north gate and was located near the so-called Christian basilica No 3, the construction of which is dated to the second half of 4th c. and was most probably dedicated to St. Stephan, as the reliquary found in its ruins reveals.²⁸ The basilica is located some 120 m *extra muros*, and since it can be accepted that it was dedicated to a martyr, it would have provided divine protection to the new gate (fig. 2). It should be mentioned that with the reconstruction of buildings across Diocletianopolis after the devastating 40s of the 5th c., a polygonal apse replaced the previous semi-circular one in the basilica, which implies direct architectural influence from Constantinople. The latter structural change may also be linked to the specifics of the cult to St Stephan and its close connection with the imperial court and ceremonial imperial life at Constantinople.²⁹ It is without any doubt that this place with the basilica and the south gate quickly become the new focal point with the basilica No. 2, i.e. the episcopal basilica, in Diocletianopolis, especially given the fact that the road from Philippopolis, and therefore Constantinople, reached the city at this point.

The late 4th c. construction of a new gate that resembles a triumphal arch and an urbanization program that provides direct access from the gate to the Episcopal basilica both find a close contemporary parallels in developments at the provincial capital Philippopolis. In the last quarter of the 4th c., a Hadrianic honorary arch at Philippopolis was incorporated into the city's fortifications as the East gate. For this, part of the original wall and main city gate were dismantled and a new paved street 24 m wide that disregarded the existing street network was extended to the Metropolitan basilica, which significantly altered the form of the eastern half of the city. It has been proposed that the inspiration for this reconstruction came from the recent transformation of the Theodosian

²⁶ See for this M. Madzharov, *Diocletianopolis*, 453.

²⁷ Ст. Бояджиев, *Нови проучвания върху портите на римския град*, 178.

²⁸ On the basilica – see K. Маджаров, *Диоклецианопол*, 130-132; Н. Чанева-Дечевска, *Раннохристиянската архитектура в България IV-VI в.*, 265-266.

²⁹ On the importance of the cult to St Stephan – see I. Kalavrezou, *Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cults of Relics at the Byzantine Court*, in: H. Maguire, *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Washington, DC, 1997, 57-67.

triumphal arch into city-gate and eventually the *porta aurea* in Constantinople. The new gate at Philippopolis therefore would have been the city's *porta triumphalis*. It was the place where not only an imperial *adventus* (if any) would have been celebrated but also the *adventus* of the provincial governor, various imperial agents, military commanders, and even the Christian bishop. The new gate and the conch martyrium newly built nearby became one of most important locations in the city for Christians and an significant place for various processions, including those of the stationary liturgy.³⁰

The similarities between the two cases have already been noted in previous scholarship. The details of each contemporary construction project reveal the direct involvement of imperial authorities in both, so they were significant aspects of a larger construction initiative in Thrace that was monitored by Constantinople.³¹ With the construction of a proper *porta triumphalis* in its new south gate, Diocletianopolis thus joined a group of cities such as Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana, Thessaloniki, and possibly others that received their *porta triumphalis* (in some case *ex novo*) at the time of Theodosius I and Arcadius as a part of a larger propaganda program. Given the examples now known, it seems that this program was carried out in lands that were most affected by the 'Gothic wars' of the 80s of the 4th c., the Northern Balkans and Thrace, as well as the two most significant imperial urban centers in those areas – Constantinople and Thessaloniki. This implies that the nature of this program was to glorify the emperor's victory over the Goths, which was celebrated in triumphal processions at Constantinople on November 24, 380 and October 12, 386.

As on the latter occasion, the new Theodosian triumphal arch played an important role as the place where the imperial procession was welcomed by the Constantinopolitan elite, as is revealed by the Arcadian arch's reliefs. It is thus plausible that this procession provides a *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the aforementioned construction program in Thrace. With the construction of the martirial basilicas the victorious emperor celebrated his triumph over internal and external enemies under the blessings of the Christian God. This became the basis for the imperial ideology that was established by Theodosius

³⁰ See for all this in I. Topalilov, *The importance of the so-called 'Eastern Gate' complex for the Christians and Christianity in LA Philippopolis*, in: M. Rakocija (ed) *Cities and Citizens in Byzantine World*. Niš and Byzantium 14, Niš, 265-274; I. Topalilov, *The impact of the religious policy of Theodosius the Great on the urbanization of Philippopolis*, Thrace, 1853-1862; I. Topalilov, *On Some Issues Related to the Christianisation of the Topography of Late Antique Philippopolis*, Thrace, *Annales Balcanici*, vol. 1, 2021, 135-136. For the Early Christianity in Plovdiv see also Д. Мирчев, *Пловдивската епархия през раннохристиянската епоха (IV – VII в.)*. – В: *Поклонъ прѣдъ писанъимъ словесъ-мъ. Сборник в чест на 70-годишнината на проф. д-р Пеньо Ст. Пенев, Пловдив, 2017*, 590-596; Д. Мирчев, *Храмовото строителство в Пловдив като фактор за съхранение на православното самосъзнание и израз на националната идентичност през вековете, Пловдив, 2019*.

³¹ И. Топалилов, *Porta triumphalis в късноантична Тракия. Владетел, държава и църква на Балканите през Средновековието*, in: Н. Кънев (ред.). *Сборник в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. д-р Пламен Павлов*, 1, Велико Търново, 2020, 304-324; I. Topalilov, *On Some Issues Related to the Christianisation*, 136-137.

I and developed by his successors Arcadius and Theodosius II, especially with the establishment of the *harmony* between the State and Church (aka between Heaven and Earth) that was proclaimed in the time of Arcadius.

There are also additional reasons for such a construction program to be carried out in Thrace. It is clear that the Empire lost its eastern emperor and two-thirds of its eastern army in the battle near Hadrianopolis on August 9, 378. Thrace was then left in the hands of the barbarians for the next couple of years. The region was thus shut off from the rest of the empire and left on its own. This situation would have affected local life in various ways; the relics of Christian saints would have risen in importance as points of petition for those who sought the Christian god's protection of their cities and Thrace and.³² It is also clear, however, that local populations or at least a substantial part of them helped the barbarians against the Empire. The contemporary Ammianus Marcellinus notes that the local populations of Thrace assisted the barbarians and led them to "rich villages, especially those in which it was said that abundant supplies of food were to be found."³³

Thrace's temporary isolation from the rest of the Empire also placed responsibility for the continued prosperity of its urban and rural communities squarely in local hands, a reality that would have heightened dissatisfaction with the initial failure of the new emperor. This attitude, with the unprecedented apocalyptic psychosis that prevailed in neighboring regions,³⁴ fueled triumphal celebrations over the Goths at Constantinople and elsewhere³⁵ that were intended to regain popular support for imperial authority and to place this support squarely behind the new emperor. The construction of triumphal monuments in Thrace that were connected with the new emperor and his victories over the Goths would have been another way to achieve this dual purpose. Without a doubt, these were the places where the *adventus* of the emperor, his agent, and military commander were celebrated. All major urban events, including those of cities' Christian communities, would have been held near the new emperor's triumphal monuments, which in turn would have quickly become essential features of public life.

The new *porta triumphalis* in the provinces, however, might have held yet further significance. Since the new Spanish emperor Theodosius I could only boast military experience, he needed to expand his base of allies who could assist him in governing the Eastern part of the empire. Constantinople's elites were quite suitable for this task, and not surprisingly after the triumphs over the Goths, the city became also the *dynastic* city. The triumph on October 12, 386 gave Theodosius the opportunity to advance support for his dynasty since he shared the event with his son and future emperor of the eastern part of the

³² See for this – I. Topalilov, *The Impact of the Gothic Wars (376-379) on Thrace* (in print).

³³ Amm. Marc. 31.6.5: *vices uberes ostendentibus, eos praecipue, ubi alimentorum reperiri satias dicebatur.*

³⁴ See for this N. Lenski, *Initium mali Romano imperio: Contemporary Reactions to the Battle of Adrianople. Transactions of the American Philological Association* 127, 1997, 129-168.

³⁵ On these celebrations – see M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West*, Cambridge, 1990, 41-44.

empire Arcadius.³⁶ It is therefore very tempting to suggest that the new *porta triumphalis* in Thrace was also meant to be seen as a dynastic monument, interaction with which allowed the Empire's subjects to express their loyalty to both the emperor and his dynasty.

I therefore suggest that the main reason for the construction of the new southern gate in Diocletianopolis was not new military requirements for the time but to promote a new emperor, new imperial ideology, and new imperial dynasty at Thrace's urban centers. I would not be surprised if the life-sized statues that were set up on both sides of the southern gate's passage were of Theodisius I and his son and heir in the East Arcadius. Although some specifics of the complex such as the small square *intra moenia* may suggest architectural influences from Philippopolis, the southern gate project's close link with Constantinople is beyond any doubt. It is quite visible in the case of the Christian basilica that was an essential element of the complex, the apse of which was "modernized" according to a polygonal model established at Constantinople and the cult of which (that of St Stephan) was of great importance for imperial power in the East. Through the construction of this new gate and its use for *adventus* and various other celebrations, the people of Diocletianopolis – elite and non-elite and Christian and pagan alike – as well as numerous guests who arrived in the town for its mineral springs would have expressed their loyalty to the emperor and his dynasty. In this way, the new *porta triumphalis* became one of the most powerful imperial and dynastic monument of the Theodosian dynasty in Thrace and other provinces in the hinterland of Constantinople.

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ЈУЖНА КАПИЈА ДИОКЛЕЦИЈАНОПОЛИСА, ТРАКИЈА

У последњој четвртини IV и почетком V века Диклецијанополис је добио нову јужну капију која је по свим приликама *porta triumphalis* града. Капија је део програма реконструкције који се догодио у Филиполису, Диоклецијанополису и Августа Трајана. Ову иницијативу су подржале царске власти и везана је за царску идеологију Теодосија I. У Диоклецијанополису и другим градовима *porta triumphalis* је постала један од важних елемената религиозног живота Тракије до краја касне антике.

³⁶ Chron. Marcell. 386, 1: Invasam princeps Theodosius ab hostibus Thraciam vindicavit victorque cum Arcadio filio suo urbem ingressus est.