
Alexander Minchev

THE THIRD EARLY BYZANTINE TREASURE FROM ODESSOS (VARNA)

In 1936, several pieces of very fine ancient gold jewellery and some fragments of other ones have been found together in Varna (ancient Odessos). They were discovered by chance during construction works of a new water-conduit at the corner of Debar and Vasil Levski Streets. This area is located outside the fortress wall of the ancient city, but very close to it.

Soon after, fourteen items: nine made of gold with a total weight of 67.76 g as well as three semiprecious stones and a glass inlay were delivered by the construction supervisor to the Varna Museum of Archaeology and entered its ancient art collection (fig. 1). Later on, the semiprecious- and glass stones, which belonged to the find but were delivered by the finders not fixed to any item, appeared to have been originally part of the inlay decoration of two gold brooches.

This fact, as well as that there are some other fragmented jewellery pieces belonging to this find helped to assume, that most probably not all discovered at the time pieces of it have been delivered by the finders and acquired by the museum. On the other hand, according to the museum record, there is no doubt that all items were found together and belong to the same chronological period. Therefore, they represented a hidden ancient treasure or at least a good part of it, deposited in the ground under unknown circumstances nearby the ancient Odessos.

The gold treasure, which entered the museum collection, consists of nine items: a gold torque; two gold disc-shaped brooches once inlaid with precious, semiprecious- and glass stones of which only a few survived; a gold earring with garnet inlays; two finger-rings with red stones; three capsule-shaped appliqués and a gold suspender, part of an unknown jewellery piece.

Regardless of the importance of this gold treasure, which contained some really unique items and the long time since it has been discovered, for different reasons it has not attracted the attention of the Bulgarian scholars yet. This is the reason to have it described, discussed and published in this study, thus show-



Fig. 1. The third Early Byzantine gold treasure from Odessos (Varna), 5th-6th c. AD: general content

Сл. 1. Трећи рановизантијски златни трезор из Одесоса, V-VI в. (Варна) – општи приказ



Fig. 2. Gold torque

Сл. 2. Златна тока

ing the scholarly world an unknown so far and quite interesting group of jewelry.

GOLD TORQUE.

It has been produced of rather thin drawn gold wire. The lower part of the torque is slightly thicker and tapering towards the



Fig. 3a-b. Gold brooch with inlaid semiprecious stones (front and back)

Сл. 3а-б. Златна аграф са инкрустираним полудрагим камењем (лице и налицје)

ends. At one end, it has a hook and a knob for fastening at the other one. Diameter 13.9 x 12.5 cm; height 13.2 cm; 0.2-0.3 cm thick. Weight 20.90 g. Inv. No II-624. (Fig. 2)

GOLD BROOCH WITH DECORATION IN RELIEF AND STONE INLAYS.

It has the shape of a slightly oval disc with out-worded edges and has been made by hammering out of a large circular gold sheet, irregularly cut. Nine openings of three different shapes and various sizes have been cut out on it, deliberately made for fixing inlays of precious or semi-precious stones, each one of certain shape. In the centre, there is a large oval opening, surrounded by eight alternating circular, rectangular- and-acorn-shaped openings. The gold plate of the brooch has also additional decoration of small pearl-shaped dots made and in repoussé (i. e. by hammering-out), while all inlay-cuts have been outlined by filigree wires. There are two circles of pearls surrounding the disc-edge and the large oval cutting in the centre, while between the round- and acorn-shaped openings (bezels) there are additional decorations in relief composed of acorn framing. Some of the bezels have been extra made and additionally soldered to the main plate of the brooch. Inside the out-worded edge of the disc, there are rests of some kind of natural glue, most probably a resinous substance and there are traces of the same substance in all deeper parts of the decoration of the brooch. Two stones of the once lavish decoration survived and have been inserted again in the disc (now still movable): A/ a large ellipsoidal ruby (?) or carnelian stone in the center and B/ an ellipsoidal blue semi-precious stone with opaque upper surface.



Fig. 4a-b. Gold brooch with inlayed semi-precious- and glass stones (front and back)
Сл. 4 а-б. Златна аграфa са инкрустираним полудрагим каменом и стаклом (лице и
наличје)

Diameters 6.1 x 6.0 cm; 0.5 cm thick at the edge; plate ca 1 mm thick. Weight without stones 17.3 g. Inv. Nos: II-980 (the gold plate) and II-633/ b; d (the stones). (Fig. 3a-b)

GOLD BROOCH WITH DECORATION IN RELIEF AND STONE INLAYES.

It has been produced in the same manner and shape except for the openings and the acorns in relief. This brooch is slightly bigger and has been decorated around the central ellipsoidal bezel only by circular- and acorn openings for stone-inlays. Besides, all acorns in relief have been produced in repoussé directly on the gold sheet of this brooch. Two stones have been inserted in the disc again (now movable): A/a large ellipsoidal ruby (?) or carnelian in the center and B/a circular in shape blue faceted glass imitation of a precious- or semiprecious stone. The later one is now mostly covered over by iridescent layer, thus resembling the opaque layer of the blue semi-precious stone inlayed in the previous brooch No 2.

Diameters 6.3 x 6.4 cm; thickness 0.5 cm at the edge, plate ca 1 mm thick. Weight without stones 20.22 g. Inv. No II-981 and II-633/ a; c (the stones). (Fig. 4a-b)

GOLD EARRING INLAYED WITH GARNETS.

It is composed of an irregular tapering hoop, one of its ends hooked and the other one ending in a loop, to which a large and sophisticated pendant has been attached by means of a loop. All sections are made of solid gold hammered-out sheet, by cutting- and soldering together all of their side- and rear walls. The pendant itself consists of several details vertically hanged to an open-work dodecahedral joint. It was once inlayed with garnets of which only one triangular opening (bed) still keeps its garnet inlay. To the joint, a crescent



Fig. 5a-b. Gold earring in cloisonné with inlaid garnets (front and back)

Сл. 5а-б. Златна мињђуша са украсом у језгру, инкрустрирана са гранатима (лице и наличје)

(lunula) has been attached and below it another one palmetto-shaped pendant has been hanged. Both of them are made in cloisonnée, inlaid with specially shaped garnets and attached to each-other by means of wire-decorated loops. One of the smaller sections of the palmetto leaf pendant is missing its garnet inlay and in three sections of the crescent, the garnet inlays are deeper fallen inside now. The rear side of the crescent was decorated by incised short lines divided in uneven sections, while the decoration of the palmetto back is in the shape of leaf-veins, made in the same manner.

Length 7.5 cm; 0.4 thick; maximal width (of the crescent) 2.1 cm; Hoop diameter 1.9 cm; palmetto width 1.7 cm; palmetto height 2.0 cm. Weight with inlays 10.47 g. Inv. No II-620. (Fig.5a-b)

GOLD SIGNET-RING WITH INLAYED INSCRIBED RED STONE

The finger ring is massive, plano-convex in shape and has a high rectangular bezel with rounded corners on top. It was made by casting and polishing (the ring) and hammering-out and soldering (the bezel). Under the bezel, on both sides of the ring there are granulated decorations in the shape of grapes with three larger pearls at the corners. The red precious-or semi-precious stone is oval in shape and extended over the bezel. A negative inscription in Latin has been carved on the long side of the stone



Fig. 6a-c. Gold signet-ring inlaid with red semi-precious stone and negative inscription in Latin: FORNAVI

Сл. 6 а-в. Златан прстен-печат са црвеним полудрагим каменом и натписом у негативу на латинском FORNAVI



Fig. 7a-c. Gold finger-ring inlaid with red semi-precious stone

Сл. 7а-в. Златан прстен са црвеним полудрагим каменом

reading FORNAVI, thus proving this jewellery piece being a signet-ring (used as a seal). The inscription is well composed, the letters being deeply incised and relatively even in height. One side of the bezel has been damaged.

Diameter of the ring 2.4 cm. height 2.5 cm; maximal width 0.7 cm; bezel diameters 1.6 x 1.75 cm. Weight with the stone 11.59 g. Inv. No II-631. (Fig. 6a-c)

GOLD FINGERRING WITH INLAYED RED STONE.

It is an almost flat and circular in shape ring having a high and oval bezel inlaid with carnelian in the same shape and lower in height. Beneath the bezel, the ring has been decorated by six granulated pearls soldered in a row.

Diameter 2.15cm; height 2.2 cm; bezel thickness 0.5 cm; bezel diameters 1.8 x 1.6 cm. Weight with the stone 5.75 g. Inv. No II-632. (Fig. 7a-c)

THREE GOLD CAPSULE-SHAPED APPLIQUES INLAYED WITH GARNETS.

They are of similar cylindrical shape with flattened and projected outer edge cut into small sections for better fastening to a textile or leather belt or



Fig. 8a-b. Three circular gold appliques inlaid with garnets (front and back)

Сл. 8. Три кружне златне апликације, инкрустрирана са гранатима (лице и налицје)



Fig. 9a-b. Gold suspender of a pendant-cross or medallion (front and side view)

Сл. 9. Златна вешалка за пандантиф – крст или медаљон (лице и бочни изглед)

dress. The capsules have been made of a ca 1 mm thin rectangular gold sheet by hammering out and cutting (the edge). Two of the capsules still have on their rare sides small circular gold plates soldered to fix the thin cylindrical garnet inlays, while the third one is now missing. On this garnet some remnants of natural glue for better fixing to the plate could be traced.

Total diameter of the capsules 0.9-1.0 cm; diameter of the cylindrical bezels 0.7 cm; height 0.35-0.40 cm; thickness ca 0.1 cm. Inv. No II-972a, b, c. (Fig. 8a-b)

SUSPENDER OF PENDANT-CROSS OR A MEDALLION (?)

This fragment has been produced by hammering-out of a ca 1 mm thin gold sheet, cut in a rhomboidal shape lamella, whose endings are almost round-cut. Through the suspender-endings, a small opening has been bored in, where gold rivet has been placed for hanging the pendant.

Height 1.1 cm; width 0.8 cm; thickness 0.1 cm. Inv. No. II-634. (Fig. 9a-b)

Due to the fact that the treasure has been found by unknown circumstances and consequently has no archaeological context, the only way to date is to compare the items it consists of with the same or similar well dated ones. All jewellery pieces will be discussed in order to find a reliable dating for both the time of their production and the time when the treasure has been deposited in the ground.



Fig. 10. Gold torque from a 5th c. AD grave of a barbarian warrior in Pouan, France (after: *Princes barbares*, 2001, 169, No 27/1)

Сл. 10. Златна торква из гроба варварског војника у Пуану, Француска, V в. (Према: *Princes barbares*, 2001, 169, No 27/1)

THE GOLD TORQUE (No 1) is quite a simple in both shape and work and despite made of gold, it should not be considered an exceptional find. In fact this appeared to be a rather ordinary jewellery piece during the Late Roman – Early Byzantine times.

An almost identical in shape and size torque has been discovered in the rich grave of a barbarian warrior excavated by Pouan (Aube) in France, dated to the third quarter of 5th c. AD (fig. 10).¹ Another one torque, identical to the Varna one in shape and way of fitting has been found by chance at Muslyumovo, Perm Region in South Russia. This piece of jewellery has not been dated for certain but most probably it belongs to the late 4th- 5th c. AD, because it was described in a book on the jewellery of Hunnic period discovered in Russia.²

There are also several torques of similar shape but made of thicker gold wire and having spiral coiled decorations next to their fasteners. Two of them have been discovered in Serbia: one came to light in Stračevo, dated to the second half of 4th c. AD, now kept in the collection of Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna³ and the other one, of first half of 5th c. AD in Markovac, now at the National Museum in Belgrade.⁴ There is another one torque of same shape as the Varna one but made of quite thicker wire, which is distinguished by its simpler fastening. It belongs to the famous and very rich gold treasure found in Pietroasa, Romania, dated to the beginning of 5th century AD.⁵

¹ *L'or des princes barbares, Du Caucase à la Gaule, V^e siècle après J.-C.* (ed. M.-C. Bianchini) Paris, 2001 (= *Princes barbares*), 166, No 27/1.

² И. П. Засецкая, *Золотые украшения гуннской эпохи*, Ленинград (now Санкт Петербург) 1975, 56, № 41

³ R. Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, Wien 1974, 69, No H/1.

⁴ И. Поповић, *Касноантички и рановизантијски накит од злата у Народном музеју у Београду*, Београд 2001, 143, No 74.

⁵ Goldhelm, Schwert und Silberschätze, *Reichtümer aus 6000 Jahren rumänischer Vergangenheit*, Ausstellungskatalog (eds. B. Deppert-Lippitz, W. Meier-Arendt, M. Babeş), Frankfurt am Main 1994 (= *Goldhelm*), 232, No 95/5.

The decoration at the ends of the very similar in shape torque from Markovac has been made by specifically coiled pseudo-twisted gold wires.⁶ Also coiled at the ends but made of more thick wire is the gold torque found in an early 5th c. AD grave nearby Unteresiebenbrunn in Austria.⁷ A similar one piece dated to ca 300 AD with a longer coiled decoration came to light in a barbarian (Vandal?) grave discovered by Ostrovany in Slovakia.⁸

Contemporary in date torques of same shape but made of twisted gold wire have also been produced during the same period probably in the North Pontic region and/or Crimea. Three similar adornments dated to the 5th century AD have been discovered in: Gurzuv in Crimea; Taman peninsula (probably) and at an unknown site in South Russia.⁹

However, this type of jewellery was produced and still used as late as early 7th c. AD. This has been evidenced by a grave-find at Somogy in Hungary, dated to the first half of 7th c. AD.¹⁰ In the early Byzantine Empire, similar in shape torques were also produced of silver wire.

Based on most of the foregoing same or similar in shape parallels to the Varna gold torque discovered mainly in well-dated grave finds, this simple neck-decoration must be dated to the 5th c. AD.

Several, if not most of the torques I have mentioned above are known as having been worn by rich barbarians, both male and female. These finds penetrated all around Europe, from the North- and Eastern Black Sea coast up to France. It is believed that this type of jewellery has been invented by some ethnic groups outside the Late Roman Empire: either by Goths, Huns, or the so-called Later Sarmatians. Soon after, when the torque was adopted by the multi-ethnic- and traditionally multi-cultural population of the Early Byzantine Empire, goldsmiths in its all four corners started to produce a large number of this adornment. The same goes for the other two types of torques used in 4th-6th centuries' AD: the hollow tube-type and the massive ones with widened (butt) ends, which have been welcomed by people of various origins.¹¹

This is the reason why we have to admit that torques were not adornments typical or significant only for rich persons and nobles of barbarian origin. There is no doubt that similar jewellery pieces were appreciated also at the Royal court in Constantinople and by other members of the Early Byzantine high society around the empire. This has been proved by some survived paintings of the time. For instance, the use of torques by Early Byzantine nobles is evidenced

⁶ И. Поповић, *op. cit.*, 143-144, № 74.

⁷ Princes barbares, 112-113, No 9/1.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 92, No 4/1.

⁹ I. Gürçay Damm, *Goldschmiedearbeiten der Völkerwanderungszeit aus dem nördlichen Schwarzmeergebiet*, Catalog der Sammlung Dietgardt, 2. – Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und frühgeschichte, 21, 1988 (= Damm), 129-130, Nos. 40-42.

¹⁰ Byzanz – Pracht und Alltag, Ausstellungskatalog, Bonn 2010, 249, No 241/1.

¹¹ Ал. Минчев, *Късноантично златно съкровище с торква от Одесос*, in: *Съкровище и сакрална топография*, (ред. Ив. Маразов). София 2008 (= МИФ, 13), 182-183..



Fig. 11. Gold brooch No 1 from Mangup, Crimea (front and back), 4th-5th c. AD (photo: courtesy of Al. Gertsen)

Сл. 11. Златна аграфа № 1 из Мангупа, Крим, (лице и наличје), IV-V в. (фотографија Ал. Герцен).



Fig. 12. Gold brooch No 2 from Mangup, Crimea (front and back), 4th-5th c. AD (photo: courtesy of Al. Gertsen)

Сл. 12. Златна аграфа № 2 из Мангупа, Крим (лице и наличје), IV-V в. (фотографија Ал. Герцен)

very well on the icon of St. St. Sergios and Bacchus from Sinai in Egypt dated to the 6th-7th c. AD, where each of the two brothers-saints is represented wearing a solid gold torque.¹²

Therefore, it is difficult to precise if the torque found in Varna did belong to a native citizen originating from the Balkans or to a rich member of barbarian origin of the 5th c. AD city's society. In both cases it seems clear that this quite simple to be produced adornment was made by a local goldsmith in the city and most probably for a native person.

THE TWO GOLD BROOCHES on the other hand are very rare finds. As a matter of fact, up to now they are one of a kind in Bulgaria. Before starting to discuss them, I must make clear that I use the term "brooches" for the two gold discs from Varna in a general way, because they lack now their rear sides (back plates), which do not permit to identify their exact function.

However, the best parallels in both shape and decoration to the discs from Varna are indeed a pair of gold brooches with inlaid semiprecious stones.¹³ They have attached bronze plates on their rear sides along with one survived

¹² А. В. Банк, *Византийское искусство*, Ленинград (Санкт Петербург) 1966, 110, № 113.

¹³ А. Г. Герцен, *Мангуп: город в Крымском Поднебесье*, Симферопол 2007, 10, обр. 8.



Fig. 13. Bronze fibula-fastener of gold brooch No 2 from Mangup, Crimea, 4th-5th c. AD (photo: courtesy of Al. Gertsen)

Сл. 13. Бронзана копчалица-фибула на златном аграфу № 2 от Мангуп, Крим, IV-V в. (фотографија на Ал. Герцен)

fibula-shaped pin, originally soldered on one of them. The brooches came to light in a grave of the barbarian cemetery of Early Byzantine period located at Almalyk-dere by Mangup, Crimea. The cemetery and the grave have been dated to the second half of 4th – first half of 5th c. AD (figs. 11-13).¹⁴

A single gold brooch of similar design but decorated by garnet-and amber inlays has been found in another Crimean necropolis in Kerch. It has been dated also to the second half of 4th- early first half of 5th c. AD.¹⁵ Another one, decorated with a big carnelian stone in the center and smaller garnets around was dated to the 5th-6th c. AD. It came to light in North Crimea in a grave where it is believed a person of nomadic tribe has been buried.¹⁶

Similar finds are known also from North Caucasus. Several gold discs-called by the publisher brooches have been discovered in the Late Antique cemetery at Verkhnyaya Rutha. They were dated (based on other finds in the cemetery) approximately to the late 4th c. AD. However, as far as there are no detailed descriptions of the pieces in the publication and only drawings of their front sides have been shown in the plates, it is not absolutely sure that they were brooches indeed.¹⁷

Therefore, all mentioned above brooches or gold discs proved the existence of similar jewellery in the North-Eastern part of the Early Byzantine Empire and mostly around the Black Sea coast. The difference between the Varna pair of discs and the Crimean- or North Caucasus brooches is that the

¹⁴ A. Gercen, M. Maćzynska, *Ein frühvölkerwanderungszeitliches Kammergrab aus der Gräberfeld Almalyk-dere in bei Mangup auf der Krim*, – In: **Die spätromische Kaiserzeit und die frühe Völkerwanderungszeit in Mittel- und Osteuropa** (eds. M. Maczinska, J. Grabarczik), Łódź 2000, 532-533, Abb. 9/3-4.

¹⁵ И. П. Засецкая, *Материалы Боспорского некрополя второй половины IV – первой половины V вв н. э.*, – МАИЭТ, 3, 1994, 78, табл. 50/ 246.

¹⁶ А. В. Гаврилов, *Погребение коченика на античном поселении Восточного Крыма*, – МАИЭТ, III, 1993, 112, обр. 2/7.

¹⁷ М. П. Абрамова, *Ранние аланы Северного Кавказа*, Москва 1994, 76-79, табл. 32/1; 57/4-5; A. Gercen, M. Maćzhińska, *op. cit.*, 536-537, Abb.12/1-4.

later ones have been decorated not only by well made semi-precious stones and glass inlays but also by triangular, rectangular or irregular in shape garnets, carnelians and pieces of amber.

I must note though, that there are examples of similar designed inlayed gold discs, which served another function too. For instance, such type of gold disc has been used as upper decoration of a 5th c. AD pair of long bronze needles, found probably in South Russia.¹⁸ Their diameter is slightly smaller but the decoration of both needles resembles very much that of the discs from Varna. A protruded version of the same type of inlayed gold disc has been used also as top decoration of a 4th c. AD sword handle.¹⁹

The discussed above jewellery pieces differ in date and partially in decoration. Never the less, having in mind the closest in shape and general design gold finds from Crimea and North Caucasus, I believe that the gold discs from Varna treasure were brooches indeed and they should be dated to the 5th century AD, maybe in its first half. Another prove of their function is the fact, that they are a pair, as are most of the Crimean and North Caucasus grave finds. They have been used to fasten male as well as female dresses just below both shoulders.

The circular decorated by inlays gold brooch seems to have appeared as a new type of jewellery ca late 3rd-early 4th century AD. A similar in shape and general design gold disc but having an inlay-decoration of glass paste has been dated to the 3rd-4th c. AD. It is of unknown provenance but a probable origin somewhere in the region of Crimean Bosphorus has been suggested for the piece. The disc has been produced in the same way and has the same general design like brooch No 3 from Varna.²⁰ The Varna, Crimean and North Caucasus finds demonstrated the development of these dress ornaments during next ca two hundred years.

This type of dress- fastener and at the same time attractive decoration seems to have become quite popular among various ethnic groups within the Early Byzantine world and beyond. Their popularity on the market desired another, more composite versions. Two gold brooches, unfortunately of unknown origin offer a good evidence for the development of the type in the Eastern part of the Early Byzantine Empire. They have been made in a sophisticated open-work. One of them is in the collection of British Museum in London and the other one at the Benaki Museum in Athens.

The one in London is smaller (3.1 cm in diameter) and decorated by a rosette composed of seven almond-shaped garnet leafs and a central semi-spherical one on a pierced-work background.²¹ The brooch has been dated lately to the 5th c. AD.²²

¹⁸ I. G. Damm. *op. cit.*, 1988, 109-110, No 129, figs. 1/1-2 and 49.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 179-180, No 102, figs. 187-188.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 138-139, No 53, fig. 104-105

²¹ F. H. Marshall, *Catalogue of Jewellery, Greek, Etruscan and Roman, in the Departments of Antiquities*, British Museum, Oxford 1969, 351,, No 2946, pl. LX

²² A. Yeroulanou, Diatrita, *Gold pierced-work jewellery from 3rd to the 7th century*, Athens 1999, 232, N 163.

The gold brooch at the Benaki Museum is bigger (4 cm in diameter) is also a sophisticated pierced work disc but instead of garnets, its decoration consist of eight green circular glass-inlays surrounding a larger yellowish central one of the same shape. This brooch, maybe from Syria has been dated also to the 5th c. AD²³ as well as a quite similar one in design found in Syria, decorated with red stones.²⁴

In Bonn (Germany), a gold brooch has been discovered in the local cemetery of 6th-7th c. AD. It has a bronze back plate with fibula-shaped pin and decoration of six globular and six triangular glass inlays, designed in two circles.²⁵ A recent grave-find in Munich dated ca AD 500 presented another development of the type, produced maybe especially for the ethnic groups or tribes of German origin in Western Europe. It is a pair of gold brooches with bronze back-plates and pins, which demonstrated a very sophisticated decoration in cloisonné with garnet, malachite and pearls inlays.²⁶

In the later period, brooches of flat gold plaques of the same type and design as the Varna and Crimean ones were produced by, or for the Langobardian nobles in Italy as well. However, they were much more lavishly decorated by filigree and semi-precious stones, which received evidence by a find at Nocera Umbra, dated to the 6th-7th c. AD.²⁷

The gold brooches from Varna are the first finds of a kind on the territory of the Balkan Peninsula, thus showing their diffusion among the local population in 5th c. AD. It is hard to decide whether they were made in a Crimean jewellery-workshop and imported to the city or – what seems to me more adequate, they have been produced in Odessos by a local goldsmith. In this case, they were made either after an imported original article or after the special desire of a person of foreign (Gothic?) origin.

THE GOLD EARRING is by no doubts the most attractive and sophisticated in design jewellery piece in this treasure. I could not find any exact parallel to it.

After the Late Hellenistic period, the trend of producing longer earrings with suspending pendants re-appeared again in Late Antiquity and continued to be fashionable during the Early Byzantine period. Despite of that, there are not so many pieces of the kind preserved in the world museums and collections.

A pair of earrings from Bulgaria shows a very simple version of the type. The earrings consist of a loop and chain, decorated by attached cylindrical and rosette-shaped beads inlaid with garnet- and malachite stones, and three pearls at the end. The earrings are part of a Late Antique gold treasure discovered during excavation of the Lower Danube limes fort by Archar (ancient Ratiaria) in North Bulgaria. They, as well as the whole treasure have been dated to the

²³ *Ibidem*, 232, No 161.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 232, No 159.

²⁵ *Spätantike und frühes Mittelalter, Ausgewählte Denkmäler im Rheinischen Landesmuseum Bonn*, (eds. J. Engemann, C. B. Rüger), Köln 1991, 199, No 140.

²⁶ *Karfunkel und Seide, Neue Schätze aus Bayerns Frühzeit* (eds. A. Rettner, T. Nerini). Regensburg 2010, 158-160, No 39, fig. 39a.

²⁷ G. Becatti, *Orificerie antiche dalle minoiche alle barbariche*, Roma 1955, No 581, 222, No 581, pl. CLXVII.



Fig. 14. Gold earring from Maluk Preslavets, Bulgaria, 6th c. AD (after: Димова, 1973, 18, обр. 1/2)

Сл. 14. Златна минђуше из Малог Преславеца, Бугарска, VI в. (према: Dimova, 1973, 18, obr. 1/2)



Fig. 15. Gold earrings from Domagnano. San Marino, 6th c. AD (after: Karfunkelstein und Seide, 2010, 72, fig. 11)

Сл. 15. Златни минђуше из Домањано, Сан Марино, VI в. (према: Karfunkelstein und Seide, 2010, 72, fig. 11)

4th-5th c. AD.²⁸ A similar 6.5 cm long gold earring from another Late Antique treasure, discovered at an unknown site in Pleven Region, North Bulgaria has been dated to the late 4th – first half of 5th c. AD.²⁹

Two earrings in the Brooklyn Museum, New York dated to the 6th century AD present the same type, consisting of a loop and longer chain with a pearl pendant at the lower end.³⁰ Probably, a later development of this type is evidenced a pair of earrings of 6th-7th c. AD kept in the same collection, which has a pearl at the beginning of the chain and several pearls hung in a row at the tag.³¹

²⁸ *Treasures of Christian Arts in Bulgaria*, (ed. V. Pace), Sofia 2000, 130, No 27/2

²⁹ N. Markov, E. Peeva, *A Gold Adornment Treasure from the Pleven Region in Northern Bulgaria Dated to the First Half of 5th Century*, – *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, VII, 3, 2003, 36, fig. 8.

³⁰ P. F. Davidson, A. Oliver, Jr. *Ancient Greek and Roman Jewelry in the Brooklyn Museum*, New York 1984, 183, Nos. 264-265.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 181, No. 261

Fig. 16. Gold earrings from Djurga-oba, Crimea, 5th-6th c. AD (after: Ермолин 2009, 180, табл. IV/1-2)

Сл. 16. Златни минђуше из Цурга-оба, Крим, V-VI в. (према: Ermolin 2009, 180, tabl. IV/1-2)



Regardless of the closeness of the general idea it is obvious that the earring from Varna treasure is quite different in both shape and decoration from all adornments mentioned above. Its exclusive design could be compared to only a few earrings found in Bulgaria and abroad, not a single one of them being absolutely the same.

There are several earrings decorated by a crescent and hanging of it smaller pendants of various shapes, which are rather similar in shape and more or less in decoration the earring from Varna (but not in details!). They have been found in various parts of the Early Byzantine Empire and beyond dated generally in 5th-6th c. AD.

One of them is a gold earring, which has a hoop decorated by hanged crescent and suspended from it small chains with pearls. The crescent has beds for a triangular inlay in the center and two horn-shaped ones aside, all of them now missing but they may well have been either garnets or enamel ones (fig. 14). The earring belongs to a jewellery treasure discovered in an Early Byzantine fortress located by Maluk Preslavets, Region of Ruse (ancient Candidiana), on the Lower Danube River limes. The treasure came to light during excavation of a house burnt to ashes in late 6th century AD.³²

To the first half of 6th century AD has been dated a pair of earrings from a find at Domagnano, Republic of San Marino (fig. 15). They have a suspended from the hoop triangular lower part and richly decorated by garnet inlays pendants attached to it. These earrings resemble to some extent the decoration of the one from Odessos.³³

³² В. Димова, *Ранновизантийско съкровище*, – МПК, 4, 1973, 18-19, обр. 1/2.

³³ Karfunkelstein und Seide, *Neue Schätze aus Bayerns Frühzeit. Ausstellungskata-*



Fig. 17. Gold finger-ring from Archar, Bulgaria, 4th-5th c. AD (after: Treasures of Christian Art 2000, 131, No 27)

Сл. 17. Златан прстен из Арчара, Бугарска, IV-V в. (према: Treasures of Christian Art 2000, 131, No 27)

Very close in both shape and decoration to the Varna earring is actually a pair of earrings discovered in a family tomb in Crimea, in the necropolis of Djurga-oba on the Kerch Peninsula (fig. 16). According to some other jewellery and everyday-life objects discovered in the same grave, they have been dated to the second half of 5th-6th century AD. The earrings and the entire grave-find are considered as belonging to a family of Gothic (Germanic) origin, of which both female and male persons have been buried in the tomb.³⁴

In conjunction with the earring from Varna treasure, I have to mention that crescent-shaped details of decoration have been used only occasionally in “barbarian” style adornments of the Early Byzantine period. An example about this trend in jewellery production of late 4th-7th c. AD is a crescent appliqué decorated with garnets from the former collection of A. Merle de Massonneau. It has been dated to the first half of 5th c. AD and belongs now to the Römisch-germanisches Museum in Cologne, Germany.³⁵ The collection of Merle de Massonneau consisted of various finds acquired in 19th century in South Russia – i. e. in almost the entire region of North- and Northeastern Black Sea coast, where during 5th-6th c. AD the Gothic population seems to have prevailed, especially in Crimea.³⁶

The closest parallels of the Varna earring mentioned above – those from Mangup are indication about the possible Gothic origin of its original owner.

log, München 2010, 72, fig. 11.

³⁴ А. Ермолин (=A. Ermolin), *Исследование некрополя Джурга-Оба на Керченском полуострове Крыма* – В: Северное и Западное Причерноморье в античную эпоху и средневековье (ред. С. Бочаров, В. Кожокару). Симферополь 2009, 180, табл. IV/ 1-2.

³⁵ I. G. Damm, *op. cit.*, 108, No 17, figs. 42-43.

³⁶ A. A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, Cambridge 1936, 57-69; А. Ермолин, *op. cit.*, 178.

THE GOLD SIGNED FINGERRING WITH RED STONE has a typical for the Late Antiquity shape and decoration. Its use as a seal-ring is obvious due to the fact that the incised inscription is quite deep and was written in negative.

This type of fingerings was very popular since the Late Roman period³⁷ and continued to be in use later in the Early Byzantine times. The rings with raised square bezel with precious- or semiprecious stone inlays became very popular since 4th c. AD onwards.³⁸ A similar finger ring with azure stone is part of the Late Antique gold treasure discovered in Archar (ancient Ratiaria) on the Danube in North Bulgaria (fig. 17). The treasure was dated to the 4th-5th century AD.³⁹ Another one gold finger ring with rectangular bezel its stone setting missing now, belongs to the mentioned above gold treasure from in Pleven Region, North Bulgaria, dated to the late 4th- early 5th centuries AD.⁴⁰ Thus, the shape helps to some extent for the dating of the Varna seal-ring in late 4th-5th c. AD. I must note that judging by the traces on the ring it was worn for a long period.

The inscription FORNAVI engraved on its stone does not offer more data about its dating but on the other hand is quite intriguing. The word FORNAVI has no meaning in Latin. It is no acclamation or a dedicatory one for sure and its ending points out to be in fact a name. Most probably, it seems that this is a personal name written in Genitive: i. e. it should be read as follows:

[This finger-ring belongs to] FORNAVI [US].

Surprisingly, it appeared to be an unknown so far Latin name not only in Bulgaria⁴¹ but also in the Early Byzantine world.⁴² Most probably, it derived from the well-known Latin name FURNIUS having received the typical for the Late Latin language change of U to O. Another possibility is that this name was a Latinized barbarian name, for instance a Gothic (Germanic) one, as far as among the ethnic tribes of German (in general) origin of the time there exist personal names having a similar structure and endings.

Signed rings are not rare in Late Antiquity- and Early Byzantine period and sometimes apart from inscription they may bear also some Christian symbol or representation.⁴³

The enigmatic name FORNAVI [US] looks even odder because Latin language was scarcely used by the traditionally Greek-speaking population of

³⁷ T. Hackens, *Ancient Jewelry from the Museum's Collection*, Selection VI, Museum of Fine Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island (= Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design, VI), Providence 1976, 134.

³⁸ B. Deppert-Lippitz, *Goldschmuck der Römerzeit Römisch-germanisches Zentralmuseum*, Bonn 1983, 32-33, Nos. 147-151.

³⁹ *Treasures of Christian Art in Bulgaria*, 2000, 131, No 27.

⁴⁰ N. Markov, E. Peeva, *op. cit.*, 36, fig. 9.

⁴¹ V. Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien*, Berlin 1964, 189-194.

⁴² For this and following discussion on the inscription I am very much indebted to the help of dr N. Sharankov, lecturer at the Faculty of Classical Philology at Sofia University, Bulgaria, whom I want to express my gratitude here too.

⁴³ C. M. Kaufmann *Handbuch der christlichen Archäologie*. Paderborn, 1913, 629-630.



Fig. 18. Gold appliqués from Apahida, Romania, 5th c. AD (after: Goldhelm 1994, 174, No 34)

Сл. 18. Златне апликације из Апахида, Румунија, V в. (према: Goldhelm 1994, 174, No 34)

Odessos. Its appearance in Latin on a finger-ring is very unusual in the city, where from over 80 inscriptions of Early Byzantine period (4th-6th centuries AD) made for various purposes, the overall are in Greek and only a few in Latin.⁴⁴

The signed ring from the Varna treasure has been made in late 4th-5th c. AD and was used to seal the outgoing correspondence and other private- or official documents by its owner Fornavius in Odessos.

THE SECOND GOLD FINGER RING (No 8) in this treasure has no distinctive features apart from the additional granulated decoration, which is also very typical for the Late Antique – Early Byzantine period. A gold finger-ring from Vishnitsa (ancient Octavium) in Serbia dated to the 6th-7th centuries AD shows a decoration of three small gold pearls beneath the bezel.⁴⁵

The second gold finger-ring from Varna treasure may be of the same date as the signet-ring No 7 or slightly later – i. e 5th or early 6th c. AD.

THE THREE GOLD- AND GARNET CAPSULE-APPLIQUES of the Varna treasure, astonishingly, are relatively rare finds among the Late Antique – Early Byzantine adornments. Similar pieces are considered to have been applied to leather or textile but also to some other materials, including thin metal sheets. The way these capsule-appliqués were originally applied to various materials is rather unusual and quite interesting as workmanship.

Cylindrical appliqués decorated with garnets but applied to the belt by means of a small loop have been found in the second rich grave discovered by

⁴⁴ В. Бешевлиев, *Старохристиянските надписи от Одесос като исторически извор*, – ИНМВ, 18 (33), 1983, 19-34.

⁴⁵ И. Поповић, *op. cit.*, 122, No 30.



Fig. 19. Gold appliqués from Blučino-Cezavij Czech Republic, 5th c. AD (after: *Princes barbares* 2001, 169, No 197, No 33.5/2)

Сл. 19. Златне апликације из Блучино–Цезави, Чешка, V в. (према: *Princes barbares*, 2001, 169, No 197, No 33.5/2)

Apahida in Romania dated to the second half of 5th c. AD, where they have been described as “belt-buttons” (i. e. belt-appliqués?).⁴⁶ In the same grave there were found also six another appliqués with garnet inlays but star-shaped (fig. 18).⁴⁷

Similar gold appliqués with garnets and filigree-borders belong to the treasure found by Szeged-Nagyszekso, Hungary, which has been dated to the second half of 5th c. AD. It was suggested by the publisher, that they and some rectangular gold-and garnet appliqués of the same treasure are part of the decoration of a metal sheet of unknown purpose.⁴⁸

Circular appliqués of same form and decoration, discovered in a male grave at Blučino-Cezavy, Region of Brno in Czech Republic were interpreted (along with some other gold-and garnet appliqués) as belonging to the decoration of a dagger-scabbard (fig. 19). The grave-find was dated to the third quarter of 5th c. AD.⁴⁹

Capsule-shaped silver appliqués like the gold ones from Varna but without inlays have been discovered also at Zaragij, Nalchik Region in North Caucasus, Russia. The grave, dated to the second half of 5th c. AD belonged to an warrior of barbarian origin.⁵⁰

All appliqués made of gold, which are similar in shape and decoration to these from the Varna treasure together with the silver ones, which resemble them in shape, secure their dating to the second half of 5th c. AD. The actual purpose of the Varna appliqués remains unclear although I suppose that quite probably they may have decorated a fine leather belt, sword-strap or a textile band. The possibility that they have decorated the leather coverage of a wooden scabbard should not be excluded too.

THE GOLD SUSPENDER is a fragment of a pendant-adornment: either a gold medallion or of a small cross. Similar suspenders (sometimes having a central rib over) appeared often by such types of Early Byzantine gold jewellery,

⁴⁶ Goldhelm 1994, 243, No 101/21; *Princes barbares* 2000, 174, Nos 29; 33.

⁴⁷ Goldhelm 1994, 243, No 101/20; *Princes barbares* 2000, 174, No 34.

⁴⁸ *Princes barbares* 2000, 142, No 19.6.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 197, No 33.5/2.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 162, No 26/12.



Fig. 20. Gold pendant-cross of unknown provenance, 5th-7th c. AD, (after: *Die Welt von Byzanz* 2004, 310, No 530)

Обр. 20. Златан крст-пандантиф, непознато место проналажења, V-VII в. (по: *Die Welt von Byzanz* 2004, 310, No 530)

worn on chest. A little gold pectoral-cross with Greek inscription from Bezhanovo, Pleven District in North Bulgaria dated to the 6th c. AD shows the later version of a similar suspender.⁵¹

Another two gold pendant-crosses with same type of suspenders like the Bezhanovo one have been found also in Histria, Romania, another ancient city on the Western Black Sea coast. They were dated to the 6th c. AD.⁵²

In a German private collection, there is a small gold cross with a pearl-pendant, whose suspender resembles very much the one from Varna treasure (fig. 20). It was given a general date in the 5th-7th c. AD but unfortunately its origin is unknown.⁵³

Little pendant-crosses made either of gold, silver or even bronze have been produced not only in the capital Constantinople and the Eastern provinces of the empire but also in the Northeastern part of Balkan Peninsula and Transylvania (Romania). This has been proved by two finds of stone moulds for their production discovered in Olteni and Botoșana, respectively in South- and Northwest Romania.⁵⁴

Based on these evidences and all the available knowledge about gold jewellery production in Odessos in the Early Byzantine period, it is quite possible that the gold pendant to which the suspender from Varna belonged has been made in the city.

Due to its fragmentary preservation and different dating of the pendant-crosses mentioned above, the suspender from Varna desires an wider dating: namely in 5th-6th c. AD.

Considering all data included in the foregoing discussion of the Late Antique – Early Byzantine gold jewellery in Bulgaria and abroad I suggest a 5th century AD date

⁵¹ *Treasures of Christian Arts in Bulgaria*, 128, No 24.

⁵² I. Barnea, *Christian Art in Romania*, Bucharest 1979, 228, pl. 96.

⁵³ *Die Welt von Byzanz – Europas östliches Erbe. Glanz, Krisen und Fortleben einer tausendjährigen Kultur*, München 2004, 310-311, No 530.

⁵⁴ I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, 258, pl. 111/1-2.

of production of most of the gold jewellery listed in the third Varna treasure. However, some of them like the finger-rings and the suspender for instance might be of a later date: ca early 6th century AD. There is no doubt that some of the items of the treasure have been collected or acquired during a longer period and maybe they have changed their owners several times. This is a reason to suggest the 6th century AD, maybe its first half (?) as the time when probably this treasure has been deposited in the ground nearby the fortress wall of Odessos.

The question why it was deposited there is quite intriguing. There are several possibilities, which of I shall point out to the main three. The first one and most probable one is that it was part of a looted possession of a rich citizen of Odessos, which was divided by the thieves in portions. One portion has been hidden not far from the city wall by a member of the gang who was likely killed later. This was the most reasonable version why the gold jewellery has never been recovered by its new owner.

Another possibility is that the real owner – no matter a citizen of Odessos or a foreigner, deposited a portion or all his wealth composite of gold adornments outside the city-wall and for some tragic reasons never got the opportunity to collect them again.

There is also one more possibility: namely that the gold jewellery was part of a larger tribute paid by the city- or church authorities of Odessos to a leading member of a barbarian tribe, in exchange of captured native citizens, who became slaves. The ransom-gold was later divided among the barbarians and one of them deposited part of it nearby the city. His doom was obviously like that of the previous possible new owners.

This practice of paying ransom was widely applied during Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine period, especially in the Balkan provinces of the empire, where in 4th-6th c. AD there were again and again foreign invasions and many local inhabitants faced the fate of slavery. This was also the case in Odessos, which we can judge about by some side-looking ancient records.

According to Novel No 65, issued by Justinian in AD 544, Martin, Bishop of the city at the time, received by the emperor a special permission to sell real estates, farming lands and other properties, which belonged to the church in the city but were not in use. The money earned had to be used in order to fulfill financial needs of the church for traditional charity.⁵⁵ The charity of this most important institution included usually apart from feeding the poor citizens, orphans and lonely elderly people also (and quite often too!) the ransom of prisoners of war or of civilians captured during invasion, who have become slaves.⁵⁶

The Early Byzantine treasure in discussion has been found at the crossroad of Debar and former Vasil Levski (now Dr Zamenhof) streets in Varna. As stated before, this site is located outside of the Early Byzantine Odessos but very close to the southwest section of its fortress wall. As a matter of fact it is

⁵⁵ Nov. Just. 120, 4 of AD 544, issued especially for the Church authorities of Odessos; Al. Mintshev. Das frühe Christentum in Odessos –In: Die bulgarische Schwarzmeerküste im Altertum (= Xenia 16. Konstanzer althistorische Vorträge und Forschungen, herausgeben von W. Schuller), 52 and bibl.

⁵⁶ Nov. Just. 65, 1 of AD 538.



Fig. 21. The first Early Byzantine gold treasure from Odessos (Varna), 6th c. AD

Обр. 21. Први рановизантијски златни трезор из Одесоса (Варна), VI в.

not far from the western gate of the fortress, next to which, on both sides of the road to Marcianopolis its western necropolis was situated – i. e. that was not an empty area but covered by gravestones and larger burial monuments.

The way the published here gold treasure was deposited resembles very much the fact of finding of another Early Byzantine treasure in Varna. It was discovered in 1961 during construction works at the corner of Knyaz Boris- and Macedonia Streets. The site is situated also outside the ancient city, some 300 m northeast of its Late Antique/ Early Byzantine fortress wall and next to the ancient road leading north of the city: from Odessos to Dionysopolis (Balchik), another ancient town on the Western Black Sea coast.

The treasure consisted of gold jewellery of various types and all items discovered weighting in total 417 g were delivered to the Varna Museum of Archaeology. The treasure consisted of a diadem, a necklace and two bracelets decorated by semi-precious stones, pearls and enamel, a large cross and two belt-segments made in cloisonné, etc.). Some of the jewellery-pieces were intact, while of other ones there were only fragments preserved (fig. 21).

Several of them were produced in the Early Byzantine tradition of gold-work⁵⁷ but other adornments (including the cross) have been made in the so-

⁵⁷ K. R. Brown, *The Mosaics of San Vitale: Evidence for the attribution of some Early Byzantine Jewelry to Court Workshops*, – *Gesta*. International Center for Medieval Art, XVIII/1, 1979, 60-61 and the discussion there.

Fig. 22. The second
Early Byzantine
gold treasure from
Odessos (Varna), 5th
c. AD

Обр. 22. Други
рановизантијски
златни трезор из
Одесоса (Варна),
V в.



Fig. 23. Gold head-ornaments *kulones* inlaid with garnets from Odessos (Varna), 4th-5th c. AD (after: Trésors romains – Trésors barbares, 1979, 116, No 27)

Обр. 23. Златни украси за главу – кулони из Одесоса (Варна), IV-V в. (по: Trésors romains – Trésors barbares, 1979, 116, No 27)

called barbarian style: in cloisonné technique with inlays of garnets and malachite. The treasure has been dated to the 6th century AD and is one of the most attractive and valuable ones discovered in the Early Byzantine Empire so far.⁵⁸

In 1962, another one Early Byzantine gold treasure of total weight of 1.332 kg has been discovered in Varna again by chance and entered the museum collection. It came to light during construction works at the corner of Graf Ignatiev- and Knyaz Dondukov Streets. This site is very close to the large Roman thermae of Odessos, within the central area of the ancient city. The treasure, which belonged most probably to a local goldsmith, consists of a solid gold torque with widened ends (weighting 1.050 kg) and three oval shaped gold bars of rather crude casting (fig. 22).

There are no Byzantine imperial stamps or other signs on the gold bars, which means that they have been produced in a city-workshop for the needs of

⁵⁸ Д. Ил. Димитров, *Ранновизантијско съкровище от Варна*, – Археология, V, 2, 1963, 35-40; Al. Minchev, *The Varna treasure*, in: Treasures of Christian Art in Bulgaria, 2000, 132-135.

a native goldsmith. This gold treasure was dated to the 5th century AD and is a proof about production in Odessos of the Early Byzantine of gold jewellery, made according to the barbarian trend and fashion of the time.⁵⁹

I must point out, that there is another one, although uncertain evidence about local production of barbarian-type jewellery in Odessos. This is a pair of large and sophisticated gold head-ornaments: the so-called kulones dated to the late 4th- early 5th century AD (fig. 23). The peculiar adornments of almost identical decoration were discovered in Varna under unknown circumstances in 1911 (maybe in a grave?) and have been later acquired by the Römisch-germanisches Museum in Cologne.⁶⁰

The kulones are considered as very rare female head-ornaments of unusual form. They are decorated in granulation and have an abundant decoration of garnets and sometimes of red glass settings. Only three more similar jewellery pairs have been discovered so far: in South Russia, Ukraine and Romania, all of them coming from a barbarian “environment”.⁶¹

The kulones found in Varna belonged by no doubt to a rich lady of barbarian origin who for some reasons settled down in the city: alone or with her family. They may have been her personal possession before she immigrated in Odessos. On the other hand, the two exotic gold ornaments may well have been produced also by a city-goldsmith after a special request from a barbarian person and maybe after an existing in the family original example.

To avoid a possible misunderstanding in future publications, the three Early Byzantine gold treasures from Varna (Odessos) should be classified. The best way to do it is according to the time when they have been published. Thus, the first one should be the treasure discovered in 1961 (with the diadem and cross) published by D. Il. Dimitrov in 1963; the second one will be that discovered in 1962 (with the torque and gold bars) published by Al. Minchev in 2008 and the third is the one published here.

A good part of the jewellery, included in all three Early Byzantine treasures found in- and around Odessos as well as the pair of koulones and some other occasional finds in Varna mentioned already have a real barbarian look. The abundance and variety of such finds helps to assume that during 5th- and 6th centuries AD there was a wide range and large number of gold jewellery, produced in barbarian style in the city.

Part of this production must have been acquired by local citizens, not necessarily of barbarian origin as far as the fashion of wearing such adornments was already accepted and even welcomed by the nobles in the capital of Constantinople.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ал. Минчев, *Късноантично златно съкровище с торква от Одесос*,– В: МИФ, 16. Съкровище и сакрална топография (ред. Ив Маразов). София 2008, 171-190.

⁶⁰ Trésors romains, trésors barbares. Industrie d’art à la fin de l’Antiquité et au début du Moyen Age (ed. H. Hellemkemper). Bruxelles, 1979, 116-117, No 27 and bibl.

⁶¹ И. П. Засецкая, *Золотые украшения гуннской эпохи*, Ленинград 1975, 16-17.

⁶² M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vol. 1. Washington DC, 1962, 298-299.

An important reason about why the goldsmiths of Odessos extended their business in such direction was the presence of a large groups (or tribes) of ethnic Goths whom in the second half of 5th century AD was given permission by the Byzantine emperor to settle down in the depopulated region north of the Balkan Mountain. One of these locations, which have been mentioned in ancient written records as inhabited by Goths, is Marcianopolis (now Devnya). This large Roman- and Early Byzantine city is situated some 30 km west from Odessos, which is not far even by the ancient standards of communication.

The former glorious provincial capital of Moesia Secunda was devastated and burnt to ashes by the Huns in AD 447 and twenty years later the abandoned ruins of the city gave shelter to a large group of Goths. Ancient historians stated that the newcomers were part of the Goths led by Theodorich, son of Tiudamer, who have settled down and lived in the ruins of Marcianopolis during the years AD 477-488.⁶³

Their presence in this city has been proved by the discovery of about half a dozen circular dwellings dug-out in the ruins of Late-Antique buildings, which were covered inside by smaller chopped stones, as well as by some crude hand-made pottery fragments found around the centered fireplace.⁶⁴ We have to admit that during the two decades of their presence in Marcianopolis, the Goths must have established contacts of various types with the citizens of Odessos, maybe not always in positive direction.

Another important settlement/ town of Goths, allegedly their Episcopal center was situated some 90 km west from Odessos, by the present-day Village of Khan Krum, Region of Shumen. It existed in late 4th – late 5th c. AD and several rich graves of same period with typical gold and silver dress-ornaments in barbarian style have been discovered by excavation near one of the churches there.⁶⁵ Hence, the existence of a numerous Gothic population in the closer and deeper hinterland of Odessos is beyond any doubts.

The Goths who inhabited Marcianopolis and other settlements in the areas around Odessos needed of course appropriate adornments made accordingly to their taste for luxury. Their needs were fulfilled welcomed by the goldsmiths in the city and they started or enlarged the existing already gold industry in favor of the new and rich clients.

This means that the treasure could have been deposited in the ground either by a citizen of Odessos or by a foreigner. Either of them might have been of Byzantine (i. e. native) or barbarian origin, because there are finds in the Early Byzantine necropolis of the city, which definitely belonged to a female person of barbarian origin.⁶⁶

⁶³ В. Велков, *Градът в Тракия и Дакия през късната античност (IV-VI в.)*, София 1959, 41-42 and bibl.

⁶⁴ Al. Minchev, *The "House of Antiope" – a Late Roman Residential House with Mosaics at Marcianopolis*, –В. Римският и късноантичен град (ред. Л. Русева-Слокоска, Р. Иванов, В. Динчев), София 2002, 251.

⁶⁵ Т. Балабанов, *Отново за готите и епископския център от IV-V в. до с. Хан Крум, Шуменско*, in: Вленикотърновският университет „Св. Св. Кирил и Методий“ и българската археология. Велико Търново 2010, 349-362, обр. 5-8.

⁶⁶ А. Хараламбиева, *Две готски фибули от западния некропол на Одесос*, –

I have to remind also, that during the Early Byzantine period a lot of gold (including gold jewellery) was supplied as tribute to various barbarian chieftains, kings and their armies threatening the empire or temporary settled in. It has been calculated recently that to secure its safety of the empire, only in the course of 5th century AD, the ruling then Byzantine Emperors submitted to Barbarians approximately 50 000 kg of gold. Such large payouts continued well into the 6th century AD, when the Persian kings alone received from the imperial treasury 33 000 kg of gold.⁶⁷

Some of this gold jewellery given as tribute to barbarians should have been made in a typical design desired by them. Presumably, most of the jewellery has been produced at the imperial goldsmith-workshops of Constantinople but it is close to mind that some portions were made also in other major craft-and trade centers around the Empire. The finds from Odessos speak in favor of this city as being one of them.⁶⁸

Therefore, the several gold treasures and other finds of exquisite Barbarian jewellery in Odessos should not be considered as a surprise. On the contrary: they did prove the continuity of ancient traditions of gold-working and fine jewellery production in the city and its extension during Early Byzantine period (4th-early 7th centuries AD). Unfortunately, the later devastation of the city by the joint Avar- and Slav armies in AD 614 put an end not only to the production of a lot and very fine jewellery but also to the existence of Odessos at all. Only the archaeological finds discovered during the last one hundred years reminded the former glory of the ancient city and its tragic fate.⁶⁹

ABBREVIATIONS:

ИНМВ = Известия на Народния музей – Варна (Varna, Bulgaria)

МАИЭТ = Материалы по истории, археологии и этнографии Таврики. (Simpheropol', Ukraine)

МИФ = Митология, история и филология (Sofia, Bulgaria)

ИНМВ, 24 (43), 1992, 137-143, табл. I-II..

⁶⁷ B. Deppert-Lippitz, *Late Roman and Early Byzantine Jewelry*, in: From Attila to Charlemagne, Arts of the Early Medieval Period in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Eds. K. Reynolds Brown, D. Kidd, C. T. Little). New York 2002, 58-59.

⁶⁸ Ал. Минчев, *Одесос през късната античност (IV- началото на VII в.)*, В: 10 книги за Варна /2006 (ред. П. Тодоров) Варна 2007, 97.

⁶⁹ Photos Nos.: 1-9; 21-23 – courtesy of Varna Museum of Archaeology, Photographer: Rumyana Kostadinova

Александар Минчев
ТРЕЋИ РАНОВИЗАНТИЈСКИ ЗЛАТНИ
ТРЕЗОР ИЗ ОДЕСОСА (ВАРНА)

У раду се по први пут публикује текст о златном накиту из једног рановизантијског трезора, који је део збирке Археолошког музеја у Варни. Оно је откривено случајно 1936 г., током извођења грађевинских радова на простору Варне (антички Одесос), ван тврђаве, али ипак веома близу зида касноантичког утврђења. Састоји се од осам златних предмета накита – целих и у деловима, укупне тежине 67,76 гр., у већини случајева опточених гранатима и другим полудрагим камењем (сл. 1). У музеју се налазе следећи предмети пронађени у трезору, за које се предпоставља да су само део онога што је некада откривено.

1. Златна тока, израђена од танке жице, која се причвршћује петљицом и кукицом (сл. 2).

2. Златна округла аграф са лежиштима за инкрустацију (задња плочица и копча недостају), израђена ковањем и резањем танке златне плоче. Сачувана су два од инкрустираних полудрагих камена и то: црвени централни и плави, један од оних који су кружно опточевали централни. (сл. 3а-б).

3. Златна округла аграф као предходна (недостаје такође задња плочица), са очуваном инкрустацијом од једног централног црвеног камена и једним бочним од тамноплавог стакла (сл. 4а-б).

4. Велика златна минђуша са висуљком-привеском украшеним у језгру инкрустацијом од граната, (сл. 5 а-б).

5. Масиван златни прстен-печат са тамноцрвеним полудрагим каменом и натписом у негативу преко њега на латинском FORNAVI – генитив од досада непознатог касноримског имена Fornavi[us] = Форнавиус (сл. 6а-в).

6. Масиван златни прстен са црвеним полудрагим каменом (сл. 7а-в).

7. Три мале округле златне апликације за кожу или текстил, инкрустиране гранатима, украси на једној недостају (сл. 8а-б).

На основу оваквих истих или сличних примерака накита од IV-VI в., откривених у Бугарској или некој од регија рановизантијске империје, тако и ван њених територија – у такозваном варварском свету (сл. 10-20), аутор овог текста трезор датира у крај V односно почетак VI в., са примедбом да већина предмета вероватно припада V в.

Како је велики део откривених златних украса направљен (као форма и украс) у стилу карактеристичном за варварске народе, може се предпоставити, да су исти били израђивани по наруџбини клијената готског порекла. Постоје јасни археолошки подаци о готима – житељима Одесоса у периоду V-VI в., а историјски експлицитни извори говоре и о насељавању велике групе остгота у ближој околини града. Вођени Теодорихом, сином Тиудамера, током 477-488 г. они настањују рушевине мало раније разореног од стране хуна античког града Марцианопола (Девнија). Током свог боравка тамо, чланови ове готске енклаве су сасвим сигурно за потребе свакодневног живота користили услуге занатлија из Одесоса, укључујући и златаре.

Највероватније да је део накита из овог трезора (ако не и сав накит) био израђен у градским златарским радионицама. Важан доказ ове предпоставке представљају раније публикована друга два трезора златног накита (обр. 21-22). Једном од њих припадају и грубо изливени златни кључићи који су очигледно били израђени од стране локалног златара.

Предпоставља се да је трећи златни трезор публикован овим радом припадао локалном становнику града, али није искључено да је власник био и странац. Такође се предпоставља да представља део лићног богатства, сакривено из непознатих разлога, или пак је представљало део откупа који је дат варварима за откуп заробљеника из редова локалног становништва. Откуп је представљао део традиционалног добрчинства градске хришћанске црквене власти.

Три трезора, као и други златни украси у варварском стилу, откривени у границама античког града или у његовој некрополи (обр. 23), пружају могућност да Одесос добије епитет једног од најзначајнијих златарских центара Балканског полуострва током IV-VI в.

