

EARTHWATCH FIELD REPORT

Project Title: ROMAN FORT ON THE DANUBE

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Research Site(s): Murighiol, Tulcea county: 29.10 eastern longitudes; 45.01 northern latitudes.

Local Management Status of the Research Site(s): Public land, archaeological reservation, under the protection of the Ministry of Culture and Cults – Commission of Historical Monuments

Key Research Objectives:

- The 2004 campaign at the Halmyris Roman fort aimed at:
- Evidencing which were the key factors in the administration and social organization of the territory under investigation and how the Roman administration managed to continuously and completely integrate the local community life and other foreign populations from outside the Roman borders (specifically communities from the Danube Delta) into the widespread Mediterranean civilization;
 - Studying of the evolution of the environment at that time and the causes of dramatic changes that took place along the centuries at a big scale what made the today geographical area so bare and arid;
 - Identifying, on the basis of auxiliary sciences, such as: archaeozoology, paleobotany, palinology the specific fauna and flora of the area in pre-Roman and Roman times and how these resources were used on a large scale basis to ensure a self sufficient living of the community;
 - Got to know in what way the key economic and strategic position of the fort at the mouth of the Danube and close to the river Delta influenced decisions of the local Roman administration in military tactics and strategy, social organization, development of economy, architecture, daily life;
 - Evidencing the importance of the site as supply base for the human settlement upstream Danube and its opened position towards the Black sea and Mediterranean basin.

Data Collection and Results

- a) Give a concise account of the data you have collected during the past field season.

A considerable amount of new archeological data, together with bone material and seed samples were collected during the past field season. The most significant artifacts remain the pottery that was found in archaeological context. It is an important category of material seen from typological and provenance viewpoints, allowing generous conclusions as to the intensity and length of occupation in different locations within the fort, the character of the buildings and the duration of activities. It highlights the economic and social relations Halmyris had with other regions of the Mediterranean basin during the 1st – 6th centuries.

Animal bones, also collected in a great number and the on site analysis picture a rich fauna of domesticated and wild animals that were an important resource for the

community in the area. New data was obtained on the types of cereals used for cultivation.

Metal artifacts were also found in a significant quantity. Coins (4th-6th centuries), found in a fair quantity are the basic elements for an absolute chronology of the investigated sites within the fort.

The investigation of the public or private buildings was a main achievement of this season. On this basis now we came to know exactly the urban evolution and layout of important areas connected to the main points of the fort: the western and northern gate, the streets, the succession of building activity between Episcopal basilica and the bathhouse, the character of public and/or private buildings.

The data provided by the significant quantity and quality of findings indicate the major importance Halmyris had in the area, as a key point in the global strategy of the Roman Empire at the Lower Danube.

b) What progress have you made towards achieving your original objectives?

Excavations were continued in the barrack blocks area and new sectors were opened, north of the Episcopal basilica. Also, truth grounding and detailed survey has been carried out in the harbor area as a new spot submitted to future investigations. The barrack blocks were researched on a large scale. The excavations provided exceptional new information and data about the date of their building, technique of construction, architectural and functional evolution. The excavations are finished now at three of the barracks and restoration works will begin possibly next year.

The Episcopal palace, north to the basilica revealed many of the unsolved questions from last year as to the layout and chronology. The results bring a fresh look on its position and relation with the barrack blocks in terms of chronological frame and building technique.

c) Please provide a summary of your results (even if they are preliminary).

As main achievements, the 2004 season in the Halmyris fort yielded an almost complete picture of the barrack blocks area, new data about the Episcopal palace closely related to the bishopric basilica and first elements of the layout of the harbor area, as a new complex to be studied in the future.

The barrack blocks show a continued occupation throughout 4th-6th centuries. The barracks are bonded against the 3.40m defense wall. They yielded evidence of a rectangular lay out although they vary in size and interior arrangement. The architectural evolution of this building complex indicates that on the basis of the previous 4th century barrack blocks, also bonded against the defense wall, the massive 6th century reconstruction activity led to the reorganization of the entire area and the building of complete new installations, whose arrangement was maintained with few modifications until the final collapse of the Danubian frontier towards the 20s of the 7th century. The estimations go towards around 24 men that could have been accommodated inside the perimeter, both troop and the NCOs, exarhi, meaning the commanders of four squads of six soldiers each. The research also showed how the layout of the barracks evolved from large spaced installations to smaller roomed buildings, reflecting changes in tactics and ideas of defending particular sectors of the fort wall.

Barrack nr 2 seems to have undergone an enlargement in size and it is suspected to have been the commander's residence from where he managed the defense of the north-western segment of the fort. The barracks also reveal connections with military architecture noticeable in the Near Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. The character and the provenance of the artifacts confirm the straight economic and social relations between these regions and the Halmyris fort. Pottery found in large quantities is an indication of the ethnic and cultural origin of the soldiers. For the

greater part they came from the local social environment. Investigations brought fresh data that the Roman administration also engaged groups of the populace living north of the Danube mouth and in the Danube delta (particularly the Slav communities) that were integrated into the Roman structures and used for specific purposes: work and defense.

The study of collapsed portions of walls or parts of buildings raised the intriguing issue of the frequency of the earthquakes – recorded also in the literary sources- that took place in this seismic region and led to urban modifications. The impact of the earthquakes on the buildings at Halmyris, apart of the literary records, was studied on the basis of several cases noticed within the investigated area.

A large complex of buildings stretches between the northern gate and the Episcopal basilica that is theoretically considered to have been the Episcopal palace and its annexes. The area had already been approached in the 80s of the 20th century through the excavation of some surfaces. The 2004 investigations showed the significant changes in urban area around the basilica, through the building of a new street oriented east-west, once the main north-south artery was blocked and the bathhouse and the Episcopal palace were built by mid 6th century. At least four phases in the evolution of this complex were observed, from a monumental building with portico sided by a large paved street to the partition of the existing area into several other buildings and rooms of private or public interest. The end of the large complex that forms the Episcopal palace could be placed in the early 7th century when the general decay of the site is fully noticeable.

The harbor of the fort, previously submitted to a thorough survey and scanning that was the subject of an important study, revealed structures related to economic activities. Two areas housing big sized kilns used for craftsmanship activities were identified next to the bank of the river. They seem to have been used for iron melting as lumps of iron waste and traces of intense fire were detected. An earthen wall, visible at the surface, was cut perpendicularly by a trench in order to confirm the theory that it served as a dam against the eventual flooding of the Danube, protecting the civil settlement.

Significance/Benefits of Research

a) What is/are the significance/benefits of your research at the following levels?

- local (in the area of the research site)

The past 2003-2004 seasons yielded a considerable amount of information of archaeological material and also environmental data. They refer to both collecting new information of the material and spiritual life of the settlement, be that either of civilian (outside) or military (inside the fort) character, and particular interesting data and the evolution of the environment from ancient times until the present. The site is now better known in detail as to the chronology, evolution of its layout, architecture, and social and economic life. The research added new data on the religious affairs. The significant progress of the research of the site added much to the integration of the area as a specific component within the larger region of the Danube Delta, a complex biotope and natural reservation that today, under the direct UNESCO protection, incorporates an immense potential of tourism and research as well.

The season occasioned significant action on an educational level within the local community. Either directly, as manpower, or as auxiliary personnel the local community was involved all along the season in the research and the diffusion of the results of the investigations. The town school benefited from the progress of the project through the direct participation in the participation of the activities at the fort by the 'Friends of the Halmyris fort' archaeological circle, a school association that was recently born around the idea of understanding archaeology,

protecting the site, and disseminating the inestimable values of such a site. As in the past years, local community (the mayoralty, tourist companies, the Orthodox Church) became more and more important vectors in the protection of the site and setting up a positive attitude towards the project and the significance of its research.

- national

The site is under the protection of the Commission of Historical Monuments, as an institution directly subordinated to the Ministry of Culture and Cults. This governmental body elaborated in 2003 a detailed plan that aims to a complex restoration and preservation of the site. The exceptional discoveries in 2000 and 2001 of the 4th – 6th century Episcopal basilica and the martyrs' crypt prompted the elaboration of a strategy for restoration of the entire archaeological complex that would imply both preservation of the painted fresco, the church itself and the 2004 newly excavated Episcopal palace. During the 2004 season a team of architects shaped the plans, the future timetable and identified the main resources for architectural plans for a large scale restoration of this particular area. Also the barrack blocks were considered as the nearest objective to be approached in the future, once the completion of the research is fulfilled.

On the basis of the 2000-2004 achievements a summer school for students from the University in Bucharest and University of Lower Danube in Galati is planned to start functioning at Halmyris. It aims to introduce the students into the science of archaeology, to work with specific research instruments, to consider environment as a constitutive part of any archaeological approach, to maintain a permanent connection with the ground realities and to maintain the team spirit of work.

- International

The past years work teams (except the EW volunteers) were of international composition. Students or ex students, in the present teachers or assistants came from Romania and the neighboring Republic Moldavia. If, in 1996, a first symposium dedicated to the Roman Lower Danube frontier took place at Halmyris, in 2005 another international conference is scheduled occasioned by the completion of 25 years of research at the site. The results of the research were included in papers presented on several occasions at international Congresses or Conferences (see below)., Visitors from different European countries and United States, either as guests or tourists added in 2004 new positive image to this already internationally known site.

The 2004 collaboration of the Halmyris staff with 'Tyche Foundation' led to the establishment of new partnership with the University of Arkansas. The representative of the University, Christine Markussen, carried out new research in GPS in the harbor area and in some spots within the fort adding new knowledge to the general layout of not yet investigated surfaces.

b) How do your findings contribute to issues of sustainability?

Halmyris area has a long tradition in maintaining a close relationship between social, economic and natural systems and processes. The long term plans of tourism development in the region have the excellent advantage of a positive impact on local society particularly because any industrial structure is far from being implemented. The involvement of people from the town, meetings repeatedly held with young students and adults in the town created an atmosphere of collaboration and understanding between the staff and locals that not only does not compromise the needs of the present but also open a large field of collaboration with the future generations meet their own needs. The significant quantity of artifacts and animal bones that was discovered by both the volunteers and workers contributed to the understanding of changing process of the skills and arts, or of the climate. In 2004, as well as in past years, it was fully understood that only safeguarding and maintaining a balanced and propitious natural environment could ensure an equation

between environmental requirements and development needs. At Halmyris, the almost 13 centuries of continuity of life on the very spot of the present day site show how the maintenance of the environment met the requirements of the maintenance of life. The area of research is on public land under the protection of Romanian Heritage laws. The preservation and protection of the area, as part of the large biotope of the Danube Delta is directly connected with the cooperation of local authorities to keep the place free from pollution, accumulation of chemical waste, industrial installations, production of carbon-dioxide or other pollutants, while the grazing of domesticated stock appears to be less or not at all harmful for the preservation of the environment. As a matter of fact, the sheep especially, keep the uncontrolled growth of weeds to a minimum.

Dissemination of Results

a) Have you provided details of results from your research to or within:

- Scientific papers
 - Please provide full references
 - <Architecture and History: the Baslica Episcopalis from Halmyris> (paper given in the Conference 'Christian Architecture in the Black sea Basin IV-VII cent. A.D.' Poznan, Poland, planned in October).
 - < Changing Strategies and Tactics: the Modification of Purpose and Layout of the Late Roman Barrack Blocks in a Fort: the Halmyris Case> (paper given at the Xth International Conference of the European Association of Archaeologists, Lyon September 2004.
 - <The Episcopal Basilica and the Martyrs' Crypt at Halmyris: A Contribution to the Progress of Early Christianity in the Roman Empire in the 4th -6th century> (forthcoming in the Academic Periodical "West and East" Journal, at De Brill Academic Publishers).
 - <The Evolution of the Urbanism in Later Roman provinces: Halmyris in the 4th -6th century A. D.> (Il Mar Nero, Journal of Classical Studies in Rome) (November-January)
- Management plans and reports
 - By whom, for whom, and used by which agencies
 - A Ph. D. dissertation on the management of the site is the subject of the doctoral thesis of the co-PI, Myrna K. Phelps, who is in a process of gathering data and produce a first draft of the subject.
- Presentations (given or planned)
 - Who was the audience? How many people attended?
 - <Halmyris: A Roman Fort on the Danube> at the town club in Murighiol on July 17: 45 people; audience: town people
 - <The Early Christian Martyrs on the Danube: the Crypt from Halmyris> at the Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest, on April 24: 26 people; audience: archaeologists, historians and philologists
 - < Some problems concerning the restoration of the painted fresco in the Halmyris crypt> at the National Museum of History and Archaeology in Constanta, on March 3; 28 people; audience: specialists and city authorities.
- Popular articles or films
 - Concert of classical and religious music, given by professional artists at the northern gate on September 18.
- Books, chapters, illustrations

<The history of a Later Roman Province: Scythia Minor (284-681 A.D.),
forthcoming book at J. De Brill Publishing House (the Netherlands).