

Fadwa El Guindi
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) /
The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization

Tears of Civilizational Identity: Egypt's Emergent Paradigm for Global Cultural Diplomacy

Abstract:

This article primarily concerns the idea that 'civilization' can be a key around which a national identity is woven. I argue that, as in the case of Egypt today, this civilizational identity can be deployed to rebuild a contemporary national identity woven as the basis for development. It is here proposed that an emergent model would serve as alternative to the coalitional model promoted as "Endless War" through "constructive chaos" that characterized US-led international relations since the event of 9/11 in Manhattan, New York in the United States. This analysis lays out this envisioned scenario emerging in today's turbulent world as it invokes a deep civilizational identity weaving itself into a national identity to serve as a core component of a new global cultural diplomacy, thus leading to an emergent global world paradigm for economic and political exchanges, which I label "global ring of mutual alliances".

Keywords: civilization, identity, Egypt, cultural diplomacy, global alliances

This article primarily concerns the idea that civilization which is already inherent to a people's identity, when knit and re-knit together and is continually nourished by a unified dominant worldview held over millennia, as in the case of Egypt, can become a key around which a national identity is woven and deployed to support the rebuilding of a nation's development. It can also serve as the bedrock for an innovative vision for global cultural diplomacy. It is proposed in this article that my analysis reveals an emergent paradigm of a global cultural diplomacy which would serve as alternative to the coalitional model promoted as "Endless War" through "constructive chaos" that characterized international relations since the event of 9/11 in Manhattan, New York, in the United States. This analysis invokes a deep civilizational identity weaving itself into a national identity to serve as a core component of a new global cultural diplomacy underlying economic and political exchanges, which I label "global ring of mutual alliances". It is a paradigm revealed in analysis, rather than officially formulated, that is anchored in civilization as key to a people's identity and the bedrock of a nation. This "ring" stands in contrast to the coalitional path followed by the United States (and its Anglo-Saxon axis) and is also different from the well-articulated vision by China. I will briefly point out the differences but the main focus here is on the unarticulated emergent paradigm out of Egypt seeped in a deep civilizational identity.

Civilization as Identity?

Civilizational identity and the sustainable stability of a nation are almost never discussed together. Instead civilizational topics tend to be relegated to the contexts of history, ancient art, archeology, Egyptology, and so on. In the same vein, progress is almost always envisioned and presented by thought and world leaders as a look to the future, not the past. A polarity is constructed suggesting that the only way for moving forward is not to look backward. But what if the present is intricately tied to the past in a continuous and deep way such that it seamlessly paves a path to a stable future? This is what is being proposed in this article. A systematic observation of events taking place in the past few years in the contemporary country of Egypt supports this view. I begin with a recent event held in Cairo, Egypt which vividly tells the story.

Parade of the Royal Mummies

On April 3, 2021 a remarkably choreographed parade of ancient royal mummies, referred to as the Golden Pharaohs' Parade, took place utilizing technology, art, Egyptological knowledge, and local creativity in full view of the world. The procession consisted of ancient Egypt's royal mummies of 18 kings and 3 queens organized in chronological order of their reign who were transported from the iconic Antiquities museum of Midan al-Tahrir, known locally as *al-Antiqkhana*, where they were housed in crowded and unsafe conditions, to their final resting place 3 miles across Cairo in the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, in which they were re-entombed, as it were, in the new Royal Hall of Mummies¹, their new and eternal "afterworld".

This spectacular event was described in the report by the BBC News in Cairo as a "dazzling parade". Indeed it was – spectacular in its choreography and dramatic in its message. But to proud Egyptians, whether living in Egypt or abroad, who watched the details of the spectacular event moment by moment, this was more than dazzle and joy, and even beyond a feeling of pride. Indeed Egyptians expressed pride in that the whole world is watching their civilizational grandeur, woven by modern technology and professional performance. But what is significant here, I contend, is something that goes beyond these sentiments and which has visibly moved Egyptians at a very deep emotional level to the point of shedding tears. Long after the dramatized spectacle had ended Egyptians were still humming its tunes, particularly that of the Isis lament, and tearing when hearing them over and over, and during their private restreaming of the recorded event. The memory of the procession was enough to bring out emotional responses.

Clearly, the message to the world was the re-affirmation of Egypt's civilizational heritage. To Egyptians, however, the message embodied much more. Their heritage is never lost on them, as they at minimum can see the pyramids on their way to work! The deeper message was to let Egyptians see a continuity of their heritage to this day. It enabled them to situate their modern Egypt, and particularly the one that is now being dramatically overhauled, in a long, homogeneous coherent historical route. It was more about the 'continuity' in Egyptian civilizational identity which has been subjected to doubt in the face of hegemonic episodes and colonialist reformulations. Often it was an interrupted heritage, a

¹ Hussein, 2021.

discontinuous historical line, a fragmented identity. For there was once ancient Egypt, then nothing!²

Observing the response of Egyptians who were proudly and tearfully glued to their television sets, through personal and social media comments, I saw more than a re-affirmation of an identity. I saw what was an unquestionable re-affirmation of the “*continuity* of Egyptian identity”, hence removing any doubt built into how Egyptian history has been portrayed or manipulated in western sources, as a fragmented series in which there was a glorious ancient Egypt and then nothing. Such a dramatized public display in full view of the whole world, and the Egyptian people’s response to it was about a de-fragmentation of imposed identity formulations.

True, historical, political, and intellectual narratives competed over the years as to which is Egypt’s true identity – Arab or Mediterranean or European or African or Islamic or Christian, or one of an ancient past. In general, the Egyptian people themselves, however, did not feel such tensions posed by historians, intellectuals, or politicians. They wove it all seamlessly together. The Parade brought out that coherent self-identity which was un-fragmented and inclusive. To the Egyptian people, it was more of a single fabric of integrated elements and colors and faiths which coherently and consistently make up *their* Egypt, which Egyptians refer to as Um al-Dunya (Mother of the World). They are disturbed when such coherence is violated. The tears shed by viewing Egyptians, I argue, are an expression of a passionately felt civilizational identity, whole, un-fragmented, seamless and continuous, that was being dramatically re-affirmed. Those tears I refer to in the title of this article as the ‘tears of civilizational identity’.

² My favorite encounter was during my first year in the United States as a graduate student to obtain a doctorate in anthropology. At Christmas time, I was invited by American acquaintances who had lived in Egypt, to what was a typical Christmas dinner in Boston. It was 1965. A school boy of about ten gathered the courage to ask me directly as the event was ending, but breathlessly, whether I was truly Egyptian. Unaware of the implications, I said yes of course. Completely breathless by then he stuttered: “Where did they find you?” I was more confused than bemused. It took me a few seconds to realize what Americans are taught in school about Egypt, that ‘there once was, but no more’. Combining this kind of teaching with Hollywood fantasy, the young boy must have thought I was a talking mummy!

A Worldview of Balance

In an earlier publication I discussed in some detail the worldview characterizing Egypt in ancient times, describing it as one “that integrates morality-justice-truth (the feather), with governance (the scepter), with nature-culture-gender-cosmology-animal life (*ankh* = life), in order to attain balance in the human order”³. This Egyptian worldview was consistently, albeit with some variation, represented in the form of the goddess *Maat*, meaning stability, and depicted holding the feather, the scepter, and the *ankh*. In this worldview, the opposite of *Maat* (stability) would be chaos. Egypt with its deep historical formation reveals a trajectory in the formation of its national identity since the time that the north and the south were unified into one state structure, a unity clearly symbolized in the monarch’s crown and defining Egyptian identity to this day.

The Chaos of ‘Endless War’

The view that progress is achieved by looking to the future, and not to the past dominates US policy. Another aspect is the view of international relations based on military coalitions. NATO with Europe, and AUKUS with the Anglo-Saxon axis are cornerstones. The verbalized suggestion by former President Trump addressed to Saudi Arabia that the US would like to see an “Arab NATO” blew off without impact. The Abrahamic Accords are the last attempt by the US to find room for Israel in the Arab world – normalization efforts so far have remained cold and only at the official level.

Egypt is not interested in military coalitions. It has seen the devastations of the scenario of ‘Endless or Infinite War’ which embodied a principle of ‘Constructive Chaos’ of destabilizing nations, forcing regime change, assassinations of Arab leaders, imposing sanctions, arming proxy militias beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan, then Iraq, then Syria violating the sovereignty of nations. There was nothing constructive about the resulting chaos. Its recent chaotic exit from Afghanistan was explained as a change of regional focus, not the coalitionary approach to the world. This is despite recognition that the previously pursued scenario envisioned for the Middle East had failed.

³ El Guindi, 2019.

The ‘Endless War’ paradigm has now fallen out of favor in global politics. With NATO in Europe and AUKUS in the Anglo-Saxon region, the US is shifting focus to China. The relation between the US and Australia is not new. Australians have fought alongside Americans in every major US military action of the last century, including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Arabian-Persian Gulf, Somalia, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. The two countries maintain robust bilateral arrangements⁴. This military coalitionary landscape, encompassing NATO and AUKUS, is set to confront the biggest perceived threat to US power, China.

China and ‘Common Destiny’

I had invoked the article “Xi’s Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies” by Liza Tobin in an earlier work to summarize China’s vision⁵. China builds its primary development project referred to as the “New Silk Road”, but which China calls “Belt and Road Initiative” as fully anchored in an explicitly articulated gradually building and rebuilding of a vision. The initiative is conceptualized as an international development project of a trade network that encompasses three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe, and more than 70 countries. The phrase “community of common destiny”, was used by Xi’s predecessor Hu Jintao with central features in place, but was reaffirmed in 2018 in a book by President Xi (translated in English as ‘community of shared future for mankind’) which placed it in the center to a future international order and key to his diplomacy. Tobin points out how such aspirations were expressed by Chinese leaders since the early days of the People’s Republic and that in 1954, Premier Zhou Enlai proposed “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. This represented a shift from the security concept

⁴ Today, Australia and the US maintain a unique bilateral partnership. While there are many cultural similarities and underlying values, there are also strong formal structures of co-operation across government, particularly in foreign policy, defense and security, intelligence, development, energy, environment, education, law, trade and investment. Central to the relationship are the ANZUS Alliance and the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA). US, Australia and UK unveil new security partnership as China is viewed as expanding its military and economic influence.

⁵ Tobin, 2018, in El Guindi, 2019.

of military alliances to a vision which centers global trade in the context of international relations. Russia figures strong in the picture as a renewed pact demonstrates⁶.

The importance of Russia to China was strongly voiced in the recently published article in the *Counterpunch*: “It should matter little to the Chinese that American diplomats and a handful of their western allies will not be attending the Beijing Winter Olympics in February. What truly matters is that the Russians are coming”⁷. The article states that according to a survey conducted by China’s *Global Times* newspaper, the majority of the Chinese people value their country’s relations with Russia more than that of the EU and certainly more than that of the United States. According to the co-authors the Chinese people support greater integration with Russia – political, economic and geostrategic.

An Undeclared Vision of Stability of Mutual Alliances

Navigating between ‘NATO’ and ‘AUKUS’ at one end, and China’s ambitious vision of a ‘Common Global Destiny’ (now in ‘alliance’ with Russia) at the other, Egypt has been trying to carve a modest but strong space for itself. Amid the bi-polar global power landscape Egypt is re-emerging with a different perspective as a country young in its youthful population, exceeding 100 million, and millennia-old civilization. Although no vision is explicitly articulated, to this author seeds for core principles are revealed through small-scale initiatives and giant national development projects. An emergent paradigm is in formation.

Noteworthy in this regard is the fact that Egypt of today had just come out of being thrust into a violent confrontation in Sinai since 2013 against militias. Acting as a longstanding nation with a strong state Egypt confronted the terror within its border or which threatened its national security. This is at a time when it was recovering from a revolution in two phases that ousted two presidents. Eighteen years after my op-ed had appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*⁸, in which I critiqued former president Mubarak’s rule of Egypt, the Egyptian people led a revolution in two phases (2011–13), shouting *irhal* (Arabic for “depart” or “leave”) from the streets as “millions of Egyptians revolted until they removed first Mubarak, the author of “amoral business,” and a year later Morsi, the author of

⁶ Wright, 2022.

⁷ Baroud & Rubeo, 2022.

⁸ El Guindi, 1993.

“amoral religion” weaponized to destabilize”⁹.

Using the principle of *tafwid*, the people directly called on Abdul Fattah El-Sisi to become their president, thus authorizing authority for governance from the street. The Arabic term *tafwid* was deployed to describe the direct authorization by the people from the street to select their leadership; the word ranges in etymological meanings from “to authorize”, “to empower”, “to delegate”, “to invest with authority”, “to entrust”, all leading to direct investiture with authority by the people¹⁰. With the leadership of their choice in place, Egyptians saw an Egypt that is vigorously moving forward.

An implicit vision was developing in this process countering the global “War on Terror” and strongly protecting the security of the nation from encroaching terror. Central to this position is a strong nation-state which protects the lives of a people who hold strong national identity. Interestingly, the view emerging by Egypt shares with China its Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, namely, mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. A manifesto was formulated that became the basis of the action taken by the Quartet, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the Emirates, isolating Qatar for its role (which Qatar denied) in supporting interference in their internal affairs. This regional move undermined the Gulf Cooperation Council but re-affirmed the right to security of Arab States. Egypt confronted the brunt of proxy militias on its territory and its borders.

An alternative paradigm was emerging from outside the ‘two opposing poles of China and the United States’ that is of different scale and character. I contend that an undeclared vision began to emerge in Egypt consisting of a three-pronged approach of protecting its national security, rebuilding its state institutions and economy, and engaging partnerships around the world on the basis of a “strategic cooperation.” This was being anchored in a strong state and a strong nation.¹¹

In this case a strong nation is linked to a strong national identity by its population. This way, one core element in this paradigm was the reaffirmation of the Egyptian identity, firmly anchoring it in ancient Egyptian history and values, while recognizing the broader sides of Egypt’s identity formed out of its geopolitical centrality. Anchored in its

⁹ El Guindi, 2022. See also El Guindi, 2022, 149-150.

¹⁰ See also El Guindi, 2018.

¹¹ See also El Guindi, 2022, 150.

Egyptian heritage, Egypt had a Mediterranean, African, Arab, Islamic, and Christian multifaceted identity.

No room was left for intolerant ideologies of exclusion which fed the proxy militias of terror trying to de-stabilize Egypt. The feeling of unbroken attachment by Egyptians to Egypt is remarkable. Governance of Egypt can succeed only if it builds on this fact. The Sisi leadership is constantly evoking “Tahya Masr” (Long Live Egypt) in its message.

A question worth pondering is: Can a State build a nation by governance alone? Qatar presents a comparative case worth a brief consideration.

The Case of Qatar

This question was on my mind throughout my immersive stay in Qatar, living and working for close to a decade¹². Living in Qatar, a prosperous country with a small local population and immense reserves of oil and gas, allowed me to observe first hand its struggle to create a unified national identity among its citizens who enjoyed a life of prosperity. Its small population consists of 3 ethnic groups: Arabians who are organized tribally by kinship gradually settled in urbanized environment, Iranians and Indians who settled early on and established businesses. The tribally organized Arabians belong to tribes who crossed Arabian borders from Kuwait, to Bahrain, to Saudi Arabia, to the Emirates. Primary loyalty was to their tribes. As citizens, they served the state of Qatar. Qatar housed them in urban setting divided by tribe. On Qatar’s newly established National Day influential tribes celebrated in their own tribal tents financed by the State. A national parade of military and security forces was held on the Corniche in the presence of the Emir. The State was challenged to create a bond that brings together all the tribes as a nation. The stronger the kinship ties among tribal members the bigger challenge for the State to enfold them. Slogans of origin and poetic oratory were deployed on billboards and state media in an effort to build a shared identity. Can tribe and state become a unitary formation adequate for governance of a modern state? A strong affiliation with and loyalty to one’s original kinship group whose roots and branches extend beyond the

¹² In 2006, I was invited by Qatar University to join the faculty as Distinguished Professor and later as Head of Department, with the purpose of building a modern Social Science department around a project of Sustainability in the Social Sciences. This was part of an overall reform project undertaken by the university. I lived in Qatar from 2006 until 2015.

Qatari border, often is in friction with a national identity bounded by border and sovereignty¹³. I had described in an earlier publication how such friction can turn into a confrontation in stressful situations¹⁴.

Efforts toward building a national identity pose a challenge of a particular kind in this case. The world is divided today into nation-states, and a global institution such as the United Nations is formed of nation-states as its members. Despite overarching globalization processes, as the global pandemic has clearly demonstrated vital health and medical information, coordination of services and outreach to local populations can only be effective through centralized nation-states. The more such States are unified the more effective the reach. The decentralized sharing of authority and governance among States in the United States was ineffective and divisive. During the peak of the pandemic it was most confusing and resulted in much damage. Any new world order cannot ignore the sovereignty and value of nations.

As pointed out in my recent publication there was “the rise of terror groups like ISIS, secured by proxy and mercenary threats, brought about violence and an influx of “refugees” escaping war and poverty and seeking livelihoods in Europe and the United States. The world saw growing global instability and human insecurity”¹⁵. I contended that “the nation-state reemerged as the most effective mode for reaching local communities, protecting human security, and providing safety from terror and the spread of the pandemic infection. It was the channel through which measures proposed by the WHO of the United Nations were carried out on the ground.”¹⁶ Nations have been searching for ways to integrate competing structures, such as tribal groups, within their state structures. Arabian tribes are kinship, not ethnic, groups. Qatar is facing such a challenge. Egypt presents a different model.

Civilizational Identity as National Identity

Unifying these aspects of identity, already integral to the Egyptian deep historical/cultural formation, reaffirms how Egyptians already view themselves – more as one fabric than in quantified terms as

¹³ On tribal life in Qatar as it gradually develops into a State, see Ferdinand, 1993.

¹⁴ El Guindi, 2021. See the report *Gulf News Report*, 2017 with the headline “Qatari tribe accuses authorities of systematic repression”, in which Al Ghofran lineage of the al-Murra tribe urged the UN rights body to urgently intervene.

¹⁵ El Guindi, 2022, p. 150.

¹⁶ El Guindi, 2022, p. 150.

majority/minority, for example. This in turn worked to catalyze their response to the state's emergency management of the pandemic crisis¹⁷.

Contrary to the approach that separates past from present and future, or military coalitions Egypt has in fact integrated its civilizational identity into a national identity, and has given us a new paradigm of leadership/governance building a “global ring of mutual alliances”, exchanging services of mutual benefit, rather than serving its self-interest, as the path for moving forward into a sustainable future.

¹⁷ El Guindi, 2022, p. 151.

References:

- Baroud R. & Rubeo, R., 2022. "The Russians Are Coming: Are Beijing and Moscow at the Cusp of a Formal Alliance?" *Counterpunch*, February 4, 2022. <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/02/04/the-russians-are-coming-are-beijing-and-moscow-at-the-cusp-of-a-formal-alliance/>
- El Guindi, F., 1993. "Mubarak Should Call an Election and Step Aside." *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1993.
- El Guindi, F., 2018. "Revisiting 'The Arab Spring'." *Eruditio: e-Journal of the World Academy of Art & Science* 2(5). <http://worldacademy.org/eruditio/volume-2/issue-5/article/revisiting-arab-spring>
- El Guindi, F., 2019. "Toward a New Paradigm of World Governance", *Cadmus* 3(6). <http://cadmusjournal.org/node/720>
- El Guindi, F., 2021. "Can Lack of Leadership Become Transformative?" *Eruditio - e-Journal of the World Academy of Art & Science* 3(1). <http://eruditio.worldacademy.org/volume-3/issue-1/article/can-lack-of-leadership-become-transformative>
- El Guindi, F., 2022. "Turning the world on its head: The virus that disrupted 'business as usual'." *Economic Anthropology* 9(1): 149-154. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12237>
- Gulf News Report, 2017. "Qatari tribe accuses authorities of systematic repression." *Gulf News Report*, September 18, 2017. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/qatar/qatari-tribe-accuses-authorities-of-systematic-repression-1.2092012>
- Ferdinand, K., 1993. *Bedouins of Qatar*. New York, N.Y., Copenhagen, Thames and Hudson, Rhodos International Science and Art Publishers.
- Hussein, W., 2021. "Egypt mummies pass through Cairo in ancient rulers' parade." *BBC News, Cairo*, April 3, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56508475>
- Tobin, L., 2018. "Xi's Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies." *Texas National Security Review* 2(1): 154-166. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/863>
- Wright, R. 2022., "Russia and China Unveil a Pact Against America and the West." *The New Yorker*, February 7, 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/russia-and-china-unveil-a-pact-against-america-and-the-west>

Select Bibliography

- El Guindi, F., *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*. Oxford & New York: Berg Publishers, 2003 [1999].
- El Guindi, F., *Visual Anthropology: Essential Method and Theory*. Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press, 2004.
- El Guindi, F., *By Noon Prayer: The Rhythm of Islam*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2008.
- El Guindi, F., *Suckling: Kinship More Fluid*. London: Routledge, 2020.

James Gelvin
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Becoming Saudi Arabia

Abstract:

This paper introduces the reader in the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from its inception to modern times. It highlights the interplay of religious fervor and tribal affiliation that led to the formation of the Kingdom but also the power politics and changing of alliances between the elites that managed to sustain the ruling dynasty. The paper also discusses how the discovery of oil has changed the relationship between citizens and the state.

Keywords: House of Sa'ud, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ikhwan, Wahhabism, OPEC, Vision 2030

Saudi Arabia is one of only two states in the contemporary world that derives its name from that of the ruling dynasty—the Al Saud, or “House of Saud” (the other state that borrows its name from the ruling dynasty is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, commonly called just Jordan). That the names of the ruling dynasty and the state overlap is not trivial. It points to the centrality of the dynasty in Saudi history. The kingdom was created by a member of the Al Saud, and his descendants—in fact, his sons—have ruled it ever since, holding as close to absolute power as is possible in the modern world.

Besides the occasional push back from one or another faction in the royal court, there is one other constraint on the king’s power. Since the adoption (by royal decree, of course) of the Basic Law in 1992, the political system specifies that the king “shall rule the nation according to the sharia.” Sharia refers to the broad principles according to which Muslim clerics believe Muslims should live their lives. Those clerics derive sharia from two sources. The first is the Quran, which they believe to be an emanation of Allah. The second is the hadith, which are collections of the sayings and acts of the prophet Muhammad and his companions.

This is straightforward enough, but interpretations of these two sources differ, and some are more restrictive than others. Those that guide governance and behavior in Saudi Arabia represent a strict interpretation of the sources. It is known as Wahhabism, a current within Islam named after Muhammed Abd al-Wahhab and borne of the eighteenth century. The espousal of Wahhabi Islam as official doctrine marks a second defining characteristic of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia stands out for a third reason as well: it sits atop the second largest proven pool of oil in the world (the first is Venezuela, although the two may switch positions in the future). Just as it is impossible to understand Saudi Arabia without understanding the Al Saud and Wahhabism, it is impossible to understand Saudi Arabia without understanding the role played by oil, both in terms of Saudi society and Saudi Arabia’s position in the world. Oil revenues have come to define the rights and benefits of citizenship in Saudi Arabia, and have shaped the labor market and worsened social and economic inequities in the country. The shift in the control and pricing of oil that began in the 1960s and culminated in the “Oil Revolution” of 1973 also enabled a moderately sized member of the Global South to play an outsized role on the world stage.

Let’s look at these in turn.

Muhammad ibn Saud and the Wahhabi Mission in Arabia

The Najd is a barren and inhospitable region of north-central Arabia. During the eighteenth century, it was sparsely populated, mainly by bedouin and townspeople who lived in oases-settlements. This is the environment into which Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab was born in 1703.

Although the Najd was hardly a center of Islamic learning like Cairo or Damascus, Abd al-Wahhab belonged to a family of Muslim clerics. He studied the religious sciences in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and, according to some, elsewhere as well. Somewhere along the way, he began a mission to restore Islam to what he took to be its original, pure form.

Revivalist movements are not uncommon in Islam, or, indeed, in many religious traditions (think about Martin Luther's campaign to purify the Catholic faith). Abd al-Wahhab believed that time was ripe for such a revival because, according to him, Muslims had, over the course of their history, abandoned the foundational beliefs and practices that the prophet Muhammad had exhorted in the seventh century. Some looked to soothsayers, sorcerers, and amulets in an attempt to manipulate supernatural forces. Others appealed to holy men, saints, and spirits of the dead to intercede for them with Allah. Still others were lax in performing their religious obligations and adopted foreign innovations. In sum, Abd al-Wahhab believed his contemporaries lived as their ancestors had lived before the advent of Islam; that is, in ignorance. It was the goal of his mission to change that.

For Abd al-Wahhab, the tenets of a purified faith were clear. True Muslims were not those who merely recited, "There is no God but God"; true Muslims were those who forthrightly renounced any other object of worship but Allah, including those objects of veneration that stood between the believer and Allah. They were to shun encounters with non-Muslims and those who did not practice Islam as Abd al-Wahhab taught. And they were to spread the true faith through proselytizing. Muslims who did not accept Abd al-Wahhab's mission were "idolaters," and true Muslims would be justified pronouncing them apostates and warring on them. Needless to say, this did little to endear Abd al-Wahhab to those who believed otherwise.

Abd al-Wahhab's mission would have passed unnoticed, as have the missions of hundreds of others before and after him, but for his fortuitous encounter with a local chief in the oasis town of Diriyya, Muhammad ibn Saud. They struck a deal. Abd al-Wahhab asked ibn Saud

to undertake jihad to spread the true faith. In return, he received the patronage of an ambitious warlord. For his part, ibn Saud got religious sanction for his battles of conquest, not to mention the spoils of war he and his fighters could make off with. Those battles continued after the deaths of the two founders, and leadership of al-Saud's forces passed on to his descendants.

The conquests of the Al Saud began in the Najd. They soon spread beyond the territory's borders. In 1800, the forces of Al Saud raided the city of Karbala, in present day Iraq, killing thousands of Shii Muslims (members of a different branch of Islam that Wahhabis consider heretical), destroying the dome on the tomb of a grandson of Muhammad venerated by Shiis (Wahhabis believed domes mark the sites of idolatrous behavior), and making off with offerings of gold and carpets that had been left there. After Karbala, they turned their sights west, first to the city of Taif, where they slaughtered the men and sold the women and children into slavery, then to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Although the Al Saud took measures to prohibit such "un-Islamic" behavior as smoking in public in the holy cities, and destroyed the domes over the tombs of the prophet Muhammad's descendants, their army did not engage in the same bloodlust that had marked the sacking of Karbala and Taif. Nevertheless, their conquest of Mecca and Medina was enough to force the hand of the "Guardian of the Two Holy Cities," the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul. The sultan called upon his vassal, the governor of Egypt, to mount an invasion of Arabia to repulse the occupiers. The Egyptian army did so, chased the army of the Al Saud back to Diriyya, expelled the population of the town, razed all its structures, and cut down the trees of the oasis.

This marked the end of what historians call the "First Saudi State," but, of course, this is not the end of our story. As we shall see, a new Saudi state would emerge on the Arabian Peninsula in the twentieth century, ruled by the same dynasty partnered again with Wahhabi clerics. Many of those clerics are descendants of Abd al-Wahhab. Although Wahhabism is hardly the only school of Islam in Saudi Arabia, it has official sanction, and therefore colors much of the life there.

The Wahhabi establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia controls education, law, religious life, and morality. It dominates the court system, which applies the Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law and imposes penalties (amputation of hands of thieves, beheading for a number of crimes) jurists derive from the Quran and hadith. It deploys the so-called "religious police"—the "Committee for Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong"—to ensure compliance with mandatory business

closures during prayer, segregation of men and women who are not close relatives, “proper” dress for women, and rules forbidding alcohol and regulating smoking. Under the “male guardianship system,” a woman requires the permission of a male “guardian”—usually a girl’s father, then a woman’s husband—to marry, work or start certain types of businesses, apply for a passport or travel or study abroad, leave prison and even shelters for abused women. The Wahhabi interpretation of sharia governs inheritance, divorce, and child custody. Polygamy is permitted, albeit only up to four wives.

The domain of jurisdiction the Wahhabi establishment managed to carve out is immense but not all encompassing, however. According to Wahhabi jurists, Islamic law recognizes the right of rulers to issue decrees and regulate those areas about which the sharia is silent, such as economic development and commercial law. And for all the influence the Wahhabi establishment might wield in other areas, the dynasty has held on firmly to such portfolios as foreign affairs and defense, which, in an earlier age, might have been handled through religious prescription. This came to pass at the behest of Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, a descendant of Muhammad al-Saud and founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is to his legacy that we now turn.

From the Wahhabi Mission to the Saudi State

Descendants of Muhammad ibn Saud managed to carve out a second state in 1824. At its zenith, it stretched from central Arabia to the Persian Gulf. Although the state lasted almost seventy years, bickering among family members weakened it, and it ultimately fell to a rival tribe. The fact that it lasted so long was more a consequence of the fact that its nucleus lay in the Najd—territory that even the once expansive Ottoman Empire eschewed—than a testament to its vitality.

While the Al Saud’s second attempt to found a state ultimately failed, the third time was a charm. In 1902, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud (as Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud is more commonly known) retook control of Riyadh, the capital of the former Saudi states, and drove out competing tribes from the region.

In 1913, ibn Saud’s forces took al-Hasa, roughly the territory of the present-day Eastern Province. That province, home to the largest population of Saudi Shiis, is also the site of Saudi Arabia’s largest concentration of oil fields. Then, like the original Al Saud, ibn Saud turned his attention westward to the Red Sea coast and the Hejaz, the territory in which Mecca and Medina lie. With the incorporation of the

Hejaz into his realm in 1924-25, ibn Saud's state became known as the Kingdom of Najd and Hejaz, and then, in 1932, as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Ibn Saud owed much of his military success to a group of fighters known as the *ikhwan* (brothers). The *ikhwan* were bedouin whom Wahhabi missionaries had persuaded to abandon their "idolatrous" beliefs and raiding lifestyle and spearhead a Wahhabi-inspired jihad. The missionaries settled them in agricultural hamlets and sent their sheikhs (headmen) to Riyadh for religious instruction. It soon became apparent that the *ikhwan* took all too well to their new dispensation.

As the Al Saud came to learn, it is one thing to steer a mission but quite another to build a state that can fit in with the modern state system. Fitting in means playing by the rules of the game. Those rules include respect for the borders of other states, non-interference in their internal affairs (unless you are strong enough to get away with it), forswearing aggressive behavior against them, and participating in international councils and diplomacy to prevent or resolve conflict.

The *ikhwan* were unwilling to abide by the rules of the game. For example, the *ikhwan*, like ISIS of today, refused to recognize the integrity of national borders. They insisted on continuing their jihad across the Saudi border, raiding into British-administered Iraq. The British would have none of that and responded by unleashing the Royal Air Force against them. If the *ikhwan* did not learn a lesson from this, ibn Saud certainly did.

Failing to persuade the *ikhwan* of the error of their ways, he confronted them. At the Battle of Sabila, ibn Saud's forces, armed with the latest munitions and transport the *ikhwan* considered to be heretical innovation, decimated their opponents. They killed most and drove the remainder into exile. Those with whom ibn Saud could reconcile, he recruited as the nucleus of what became the Saudi National Guard.

Ibn Saud always had an instinct for dynastic survival, which his ancestors lacked. This both served him well and ensured the continuity of his line and the state it dominated. He not only avoided confrontation with the British "infidel," he ignored the admonition of Wahhabi clerics and placed his embryonic domain under British protection during World War I. In return, the British sent munitions and advisors and continued to subsidize him after the war. British subsidies paid for the loyalty of tribes who pledged the Al Saud their allegiance.

The manner by which ibn Saud integrated new territory into what would become the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also testifies to his survival instinct. Rather than treating the Shii population of al-Hasa and the non-

Wahhabi population of the Hejaz as idolators to be persecuted, he recognized that the success of his state-building project—and the collection of revenue from the ports and oases (and later oil) of al-Hasa and from pilgrims to Mecca and Medina—necessitated their compliance. On the other hand, he could not just write off the concerns of the Wahhabi establishment when it came to asserting the needs of the dynasty over the need to maintain religious purity. His solution was to deal with the two territories with a lighter touch (ibn Saud appointed a local Hejazi to oversee the religious police there, for example), and he permitted non-Wahhabis to follow their religious preferences, so long as they did so discreetly.

At first, ibn Saud's kingdom lived off the British dole and religious tithes, custom duties on goods shipped through ports on the Red Sea and Gulf, and taxes on pilgrims. These sources were barely enough to allow ibn Saud's kingdom to scrape by, much less take on all the administrative attributes of a modern state. And things went from bad to worse during the Great Depression, when fewer and fewer pilgrims could afford to make the long trek to the holy cities. But in 1933 ibn Saud had granted an oil concession to an American firm, Standard Oil of California (SOCAL), in the process taking another swipe at the Wahhabi establishment, which had urged him to enjoin the presence of foreigners in his kingdom. In 1938, SOCAL struck oil. At one stroke, money ceased to be a problem for the kingdom.

1973: The “Oil Revolution” Revolutionizes the Desert Kingdom

When ibn Saud granted an oil concession to SOCAL to “explore, prospect, drill for, extract, treat, manufacture, transport, deal with, carry away, and export” petroleum and petroleum products, the oil business was very different than it is today. Besides those enumerated rights ibn Saud awarded to the company, SOCAL and the rest of the “Seven Sister” oil companies that dominated the global industry decided both the quantity of a nation's oil that would make it to market and its price. That changed in the 1970s.

A group of oil exporters had set up the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960 to represent their common interests. When the 1973 October War broke out between Israel, on one side, and Egypt and Syria, on the other, what turned out to be the last round of negotiations about prices between OPEC and the major oil companies had just collapsed. OPEC seized the moment. For the first time in history,

OPEC set the price of oil without any input from the companies.

Then OPEC members made sure that price stuck. Proclaiming their solidarity with the two Arab belligerents, Arab members of OPEC, with Saudi Arabia in the lead, temporarily decreased production. This limited supplies and buoyed the posted price. The price of oil jumped 380 percent and wealth flowed back into the region from the industrialized, petroleum-importing world. In 1972, Saudi revenues had been \$32.9 billion, the most to date in Saudi history; in 1974, they were \$180.6 billion.

The influx of “petrodollars” into oil producers’ coffers had profound and, in a number of ways, unanticipated effects wherever it took place. That certainly was the case in Saudi Arabia. The influx enabled the government take on many of the fiscal responsibilities associated with the social democracies of northern Europe—without, of course, having to offer the same political and social amenities as did the social democracies.

Currently, the Saudi state employs about two-thirds of the Saudis who work and it pays pensions and monthly stipends to the poor, the elderly, and orphans. The influx of petrodollars enabled the government to subsidize gasoline, electricity, and the water it desalinates. Petrodollars enabled the government to provide free healthcare and education to its citizens, and to underwrite university students studying abroad. It enabled the government to give interest-free loans to expand agricultural production. Parched Saudi Arabia currently exports more food than any other country in the Arab world. And unlike the citizens of the social democracies of northern Europe, Saudi citizens pay no direct taxes.

In return for bestowing financial benefits on its citizens, the government expects their loyalty, or at least compliance. This tacit benefits-for-compliance bargain was rendered less tacit during the wave of uprisings that washed over the Arab world in 2010-11. To ensure that the small protests for human rights and government accountability that broke out in Riyadh in March 2011 did not broaden and deepen, the Saudi government, which had taken in \$214 billion in oil revenue the year before, loosened its purse strings. It showered its citizens with \$130 billion in gifts, including 60,000 new public sector jobs, an extra two-months’ salary for state employees, a half million new units of low-income housing, and rent supports and debt relief. The package also included money to reward the Wahhabi establishment, including the religious police, on whose support the future of the regime depended.

The effects of the influx of petrodollars have, on the other hand, created or exacerbated cleavages in Saudi society. Petrodollar-induced urbanization has fostered the spread of slums woven into the urban

fabric. Twenty percent of the population lives in poverty. The 15 percent of the population that is Shii faces discrimination and is less likely to share in the nation's bounty. And Saudi Arabia ranks among the top ten countries in the world when it comes to income inequality.

Adding to these disparities is the fact that 30 percent of the inhabitants of Saudi Arabia do not enjoy the privileges and benefits accorded citizens. They are guest workers, mainly from South Asia, who work at unskilled and semi-skilled jobs few citizens are willing to take. Guest workers are subject to abuse, live in poor conditions, receive low or inadequate wages, and have few protections under law. Nevertheless, their labor remains essential for the Saudi economy to function.

Inequities aside, will it be possible to sustain a social and political order built on the extraction and sale of petroleum in an age of covid, climate change, competition for energy markets, and free market capitalism? In Spring 2016, Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Muhammad bin Salman, unveiled a plan titled "Vision 2030." "Vision 2030" provided a blueprint for weaning the Saudi economy from its addiction to oil and turning Saudi Arabia into a free market, knowledge-based economy that is globally competitive. It also envisioned turning Saudi citizens into aggressive entrepreneurs in a mere fourteen years.

The plan called for privatizing government assets, including education and 5 percent of Saudi Aramco, the national oil company; reducing and targeting subsidies on oil, electricity, and water; introducing an income tax; boosting female participation in the workforce; and creating 450,000 new private sector jobs. Many of those jobs will be located in the four new cities that are also included in the blueprint plan.

The results so far have been mixed, and the Saudi state has already backed off from some parts of the plan and had to alter others. This is partially the result of the fact that the Saudi economy shrank close to 7 percent as a result of the global pandemic. But there are other reasons as well. Not only was the idea of an income tax wildly unpopular, the government felt compelled to disburse monthly payments to government workers to offset higher prices sparked by increased taxes and reduced subsidies. Disbursing \$13 billion in handouts to government workers is hardly the path to a free market.

The Saudi state faces a conundrum. Global imperatives compel change, but transforming an economy to current global standards necessitates deep social change as well. It means changing attitudes toward work in a country in which women's participation in the workforce, despite recent gains, still lags behind global norms and foreigners literally do all the heavy lifting. It means unilaterally redefining the link that

connects the Saudi population with its government. Finally, it means discarding the most effective tool the government has to gain the consent of its population—buying it.

References:
Select Bibliography

- Helms, C. M., 2015. *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia: Evolution of Political Identity*. London, Routledge.
- Kostiner, J., 1993. *The Making of Saudi Arabia 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Lippman, T. W., 2019. *Crude Oil, Crude Money: Aristotle Onassis, Saudi Arabia, and the CIA*. Praeger.
- Mandaville, P. (ed.), 2022. *Wahhabism and the World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's global influence on Islam*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Mouline, N., 2014. *The Clerics of Islam: Religious Authority and Political Power in Saudi Arabia*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Samin, N., 2015. *Of Sand Or Soil: Genealogy and Tribal Belonging in Saudi Arabia*. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.
- Thompson, M. C., Quilliam, N. (eds.), 2022. *Governance and Domestic Policymaking in Saudi Arabia: Transforming Society, Economics, Politics and Culture*. London, New York, I.B. Tauris.
- Troeller, G., 2013. *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa'ud*. London, Routledge.
- Vassiliev, A., 2013. *The History of Saudi Arabia*. London, Saqi Books.

Nur Köprülü
Near East University Nicosia

Parsing the reflections of the 2011 Uprisings on democracy and identity in the Arab Middle East: A Retrospective

Abstract:

Ten years have passed since the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings. Kicking off first in Tunisia following the self-immolation of a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, the public demonstrations swept throughout the Arab Middle East from early 2011. As noted by Gregory Gause III, most academics were astonished by the Arab Spring, especially the downfall of the two long-standing rulers in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011. What makes the Arab Spring or Revolts or Uprisings an extremely significant series of events is not solely related to the regional power shifts it caused; instead, it was the nascent idea of ‘democracy as a panacea’ embedded in the people’s demands that resonated.

The key objective of this article is to parse the reflections of these popular protests on notions of democracy and identity in the Arab Middle East today. To that end, this work will first shed light on the demands of the demonstrators during and after the Arab revolts, and as the corollary of this, the changing perceptions of the effectiveness of democracy in the region amid mounting economic challenges will also be addressed. In the second part of the article, new regime-survival mechanisms enacted to stimulate new forms of nationalism(s) in Egypt and Jordan will be explored.

Keywords: Arab Spring, democracy, Egypt, Jordan, Middle East, nationalism, revolt, uprising

The notion of democracy in the Arab world before and after the Arab Spring

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has conventionally been considered as a region with a democracy deficit or authoritarian persistence¹. It has been argued that there exist four main sources of this authoritarian stability or of undemocratic rule in the region. A group of academics highlighted particularities of Arab or Islamic culture, citing a purported incompatibility between democracy and the patriarchal and religious features of Arab societal structures². The second perspective has to do with rentier economies and the political economy of oil commodities. For instance, according to Beblawi and Luciani, the notion of the rentier state – wherein oil rents are directly accrued to the state, and in turn the state's sole function becomes to allocate this artificial money to the citizens – led to demands for “no taxation without representation”³. Thirdly, it is argued that the repercussions of the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the intra-state wars in the region hinder democratization, leaving the states too fragile to take action towards meaningful democratic reformation⁴. Last but not the least, some also have embraced the idea that “interconnected factors” related to state formation in the Arab Middle East “drastically limit state's capacity for social control”⁵; according to this framing, the Arab state is rather weak but rules its economy, and in so doing “manipulates the social groups”⁶.

Putting these together, some also have attributed the stability of the authoritarian type of government among Arab regimes in the region to “two common factors: the military-security complex and state control over the economy”⁷. In the context of unpacking the Arab Spring, the 2011 popular protests can thus be framed as a new source of opposition, with the large-scale public demonstrations bringing about the end of both Mubarak's rule in Egypt after 30 years, and Bin Ali's in Tunisia after 24 years.

Despite the fact that the root causes of the Arab Spring stemmed

¹ Bellin, 2004; Hinnebusch, 2006; Heydemann, 2016.

² Kedourie, 1992; Sadowski, 1993; Tessler, 2002; Lewis, 2003.

³ Beblawi & Luciani, 1987, p. 53.

⁴ Sayigh & Shlaim, 1997.

⁵ Kuran, 1998, p. 113.

⁶ Ayubi, 1995.

⁷ Gause III, 2011, p. 83.

primarily from economic problems and increased unemployment among the Arab young generation, from the protest movements promptly emerged the question 'Is democracy a panacea' for the problems of the Arab citizens? In other words, while the public protests had been motivated by economic concerns, they awakened far-ranging demands from the masses, resulting in the people's call not only for 'bread' but also for 'freedom'.

One of the most remarkable upshots of the Arab Spring was its *falsification* – to some extent – of the idea that Arabs do not want democracy. Public surveys have explicitly shown that Arabs do ask for democracy, as well as political and civil rights. In accordance with the results of the Arab Barometer survey conducted in 2011, 26.3 percent of the respondents in Tunisia said 'not at all' to the question: 'To what extent do you feel that you are being treated equally to other citizens in your country?' Meanwhile, Jordanians with 15 percent, Egyptians with 20 percent and Yemenis with 11 percent replied 'to a great extent'⁸. To the prompt 'A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other systems', 53.4 percent of Lebanese participants, 20.5 percent of Jordanians, 19.3 percent of Palestinians and 16.4 percent of Algerian respondents replied 'strongly agree'. In total, 26.2 percent of respondents in the Arab Middle East said 'strongly agree' and 46.6 percent stated 'I agree'. With regard to the question about the 'state of democracy and human rights in your country today', overall 5.6 percent of participants stated 'very good' and 33.8 percent of them said 'neither good nor bad'. The highest scores were recorded in Jordan and Yemen, with 9.2 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively. The lowest numbers, however, came from Lebanon, Algeria and Tunisia⁹.

These figures therefore illustrate that the region had embraced the potential for a new area of politics, one that brought the question of shifting state-society relations to the fore. With the onset of the Arab Uprisings, some countries witnessed power alternations, such as in Egypt and Tunisia; some of them descended into civil wars, as in the cases of Syria, Yemen and Libya; and finally, Kingdoms like Morocco and Jordan rather enacted reforms in response to sporadic public protests. Both Morocco and Jordan have been considered, since 2011, models of stability in the region, exemplifying *resilient* regime-survival. In accordance with more recent Arab Barometer public surveys, 23.4 percent of respondents 'strongly agreed' and 48.6 percent 'agreed' with the prompt: 'democratic

⁸ Arab Barometer, 2011.

⁹ Arab Barometer, 2011.

systems may have problems, yet they are better than other systems'¹⁰.

Having said that, a drastic change has lately been noticed in peoples' perspectives on the effectiveness of democracy in finding answers to their problems. In accordance with the Arab Barometer records of July 2022, there has been an increase in the perception that 'democracy is ineffective at maintaining stability', drastically increasing from 23 percent in 2011 to 70 percent in 2022¹¹. Similarly, the perception of the respondents regarding 'the ability of democracy to maintain order' dramatically increased from 17 percent to 66 percent in ten years¹².

Increased Youth activism

As observed by Asaf Bayat, "the youthful claims are articulated mostly at the cultural level and in the form of claims over lifestyle"¹³. Bayat postulates that youth both engage in cultural politics and assert wider political contentions, and as a result serve as 'transformative agents'. He goes on to say that during the Arab Uprisings, the Arab youth ultimately performed a leading role in "opening a new chapter in the history of the Middle East"¹⁴. So, why have the Arab youth become the centre of attention in the post-2011 era in Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia and elsewhere?

According to UNICEF's records, it is expected that several MENA countries – specifically Iraq, Sudan and the State of Palestine – will be "experiencing approximately a doubling of their population in the 35 years between 2015 and 2050"¹⁵.

The recent Child Poverty in the Arab States report took into account 78 per cent of the under-18 population in the relevant countries (approximately 118 million). Of those 118 million under-18-year-olds, approximately 53 million (nearly half) experience moderate poverty, while 29.3 million (1 in 4 on average) experience acute poverty.

A POMPES Report on Youth Activism in MENA countries also indicated that almost 60 percent of people fall under the age of 30, half of whom are aged between 15 and 29. Moreover, unemployment among working-age youth surpasses the overall jobless rate in the entire region¹⁶.

¹⁰ *Arab Barometer*, 2018.

¹¹ *Arab Barometer*. 2022, p. 6.

¹² *Arab Barometer*. 2022, p. 6.

¹³ Bayat, 2017, p. 22.

¹⁴ Bayat, 2017, p. 22.

¹⁵ UNICEF, 2019.

¹⁶ Yom *et al.*, 2019, p. 3.

The overall unemployment rate in 2021 reached 10.5 percent in the region at large, in accordance with the World Bank Group's data. The highest unemployment rate is recorded in Djibouti, at 28.4 percent, followed by the West Bank and Gaza at 24.9, Libya at 19.6, Jordan at 19.3, Tunisia at 16.8, and Lebanon at 14.5 percent¹⁷.

These figures in fact reveal the unavoidable outcome of the Arab Spring: that, while the protests are over, the people's demands for democracy and the right to a livelihood continue¹⁸.

Do the people still support democracy in the Arab world?

The Arab Uprisings have opened a new era of articulating collective demands and calling for a change in the MENA region. Having said that, a huge number of refugees fled Syria for different parts of the world in the first couple of years after the uprisings turned into civil war in that country. The number of Syrian refugees exceeds 6.6 million, mainly hosted in neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan¹⁹. Moreover, the military coup against the Muhammad Morsi-led government in Egypt turned back the clock on democratic transformation with the rise of Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi and the military-led government. In addition, the escalation of the civil wars in Yemen and Libya, and Kais Saied's decision to dissolve the government and suspend the legislature, allowed him "to seize wide-ranging powers", which also led opponents to call this move as "a coup against the only democratic system to have emerged from the Arab Spring revolts"²⁰.

Various scholarly works have described early works on the Arab Spring or Uprisings as inadequate, and have moved towards unpacking the key motivations behind the popular uprisings²¹. For Kılavuz and Sumaktoyo, in the post-2011 era, support for democracy has actually decreased in those countries that experienced the downfall of dictators, as compared to those that experienced no regime change²². Some argue that only in Tunisia did the mass protests pave the way for "a process of democratization"²³, and "no transition away from autocracy occurred,

¹⁷ International Labour Organisation, 2022.

¹⁸ *Washington Post*, 2022.

¹⁹ UNHCR, 2022.

²⁰ *France 24*, 2022.

²¹ Valbjørn & Volpi, 2014.

²² Kılavuz & Sumaktoyo, 2020, p. 855.

²³ Heydemann, 2016, p. 193.

with the possible exception of Tunisia”²⁴. For instance, Heydemann argues that despite the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt exemplifies a case of “authoritarian reassertion”²⁵. Following the Arab Spring, Heydemann added that “the future of authoritarianism will be darker, more repressive, more sectarian and even more deeply resistant to democratization than in the past”²⁶. One reason behind Heydemann’s point relates to incumbents’ responses in containing the growing opposition and their demands; namely, through instruments of co-optation and social control.

Although the uprisings revealed hopes for democratization, with the exception of Tunisia – the aforementioned only case for democratic transition, albeit with certain challenges that became apparent with the 2022 referendum expanding President Kais Saied’s powers – the region’s countries face “a higher degree of repression today than they did in 2010”²⁷. One of the mechanisms put in place by incumbents to contain the social movements and increased youth activism has led to the emergence of new forms of nationalism.

Revisiting the notion of Identity – Various *forms* of nationalism and identity

It is imperative to underscore that the popular demands for democracy have not been grappled with in the MENA region yet; these demands retain their salience, and “the role of elections as a mechanism of legitimacy and co-optation may no longer function as they once had”²⁸. In light of this, this part of the article aims to illustrate, despite the existing calls for democracy and social justice, that these exigencies are still alive among the Arab citizenry, and that incumbents have attempted to develop ‘new’ devices and tactics in encountering growing opposition. However, these new tools for sustaining their rule, accompanied by the paradox of legitimacy, represent new motivation behind a Second Wave of the Arab Uprisings, such as during the protests in Jordan, Algeria, Lebanon and Iraq during 2018 and 2019.

²⁴ Stacher, 2015, p. 259.

²⁵ Heydemann, 2016, p. 193.

²⁶ Heydemann, 2013, p. 72.

²⁷ Josua & Edel, 2021, p. 587.

²⁸ Köprülü, 2022.

The emergence of ‘new’ forms of nationalism

The variation among Arab autocracies has lately begun to dominate post-Arab Spring literature²⁹. Precisely, the formidable effects of authoritarian legacies such as “the effect of the various actors’ identities – including sectarian, tribal, class, urban–rural and geographic – and how these intersect with and complicate efforts to establish stable, legitimate forms of government”³⁰ are central in illustrating the new devices and mechanisms used by the incumbents to maintain regime stability. Most of the regimes in MENA attempted to instrumentalize identity cleavages or divisions with the aim to either exploit them – through the policy of divide and rule – or constrain their capacity to mobilize³¹. These new mechanisms bring us the question of, as Lisa Anderson postulated, “how we understand historical moments”³². In saying that, it is imperative to indicate that the higher legitimacy enjoyed by some monarchies such as Morocco and Jordan in the region made “protesters more likely to demand reform instead of the revolutionary fall of a regime”³³. Having acknowledged that, the popular protests also revitalized “the political space”, and so “empowered new political actors”³⁴ to demand that the government act effectively in policy-making, as well as to be transparent in their decision-making.

While the 2011 Arab protests engulfed most of the Arab states – mainly the republican regimes such as those of Tunisia, Syria, Egypt and Libya – Jordan and Morocco coped with the effects of the popular protests by bringing reform-oriented policies onto the agenda. The Kingdom of Jordan has also enacted regime-survival strategies to co-opt the growing opposition and contain the key Islamist movement in the country – *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood) and its political wing IAF (Islamic Action Front) – through the *Jordanization* of the Brotherhood. In Jordan, protestors suddenly took to the streets a second time in 2018; this came to be known as the ‘June protests’, and was very alarming to the Kingdom. What is relatively new about this phase of

²⁹ Josua & Edel, 2021; Valbjørn & Hinnebusch, 2019.

³⁰ Heydemann, 2016, p. 195.

³¹ Valbjørn & Hinnebusch, 2019, p. 16.

³² Anderson, 2018, p. 478.

³³ Josua & Edel, 2021, p. 7.

³⁴ Heydemann, 2016, p. 202.

Jordan's Spring is its newly grown domestic opposition – and as a corollary of this, the regime's attempts to quell public anger in order to sustain its rule.

Jordan has traditionally acquired its popular support from the East Bank tribes – the Bedouins – who reside in the southern part of the country³⁵. Meanwhile, the Kingdom's stability has been susceptible to the ups and downs of the decades-old struggle for Palestinian national liberation. This ongoing conflict has resulted in a demographic imbalance in the Kingdom – wherein the Palestinian population of Jordan outnumbers that of native Jordanians (East Bankers) – has become a defining component of the Kingdom's identity politics with respect to its legitimacy. Accordingly, Scott Greenwood argued that in maintaining budget as well as regime security, the Kingdom has manipulated both the electoral law and economic reforms in the country³⁶. One of the long-standing regime-survival strategies of the Hashemite Kingdom has been the gerrymandering of electoral constituencies³⁷. This has helped the regime to acquire legitimacy from native Jordanians (East Bankers); it has also launched neoliberal policies in line with King Abdullah II's desire to curb the established patronage nexus between the monarchy and the East Bank tribes.

Additionally, the Kingdom has often played the 'identity card' to curb the opposition, particularly the growing influence of Islamist activism and Palestinian identity in the country. In doing this, King Abdullah II, for instance, initiated a campaign called 'Jordan First' in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa intifada, with the aim of shifting public attention away from the Palestinian issue. As a matter of fact, when the Kingdom uses the rhetoric of 'Jordan First', it is also meant to be 'Arabs Second', which allows the regime to bring more public attention to Jordanians' problems. According to Yazan Doughan, the state's response to these developments was to nationalize politics by shifting it away from the transnational concerns of pan-Arabist politics that had dominated the political scene until then, and focusing instead on the nation-state and on national interests³⁸. Furthermore, "the public protests in the Jordanian streets have been claimed by the regime as sprouting from Jordanian-Palestinian divisions. This response reveals the re-contextualization of

³⁵ Brand, 1995.

³⁶ Greenwood, 2003.

³⁷ Lucas, 2005, p. 30.

³⁸ Doughan, 2020, p. 3.

Ikhwan-throne relations”³⁹.

A new nationalist discourse and practice has been underway in the Kingdom since then, which culminated in the establishment of a ‘new’ Jordanian *Ikhwan* whose main goal was to secure its registry by distancing itself from Egypt’s *Ikhwan*.

In the case of Egypt, the downfall of the Mubarak regime and the ascendancy of the Muslim Brotherhood after an electoral victory in 2012 were major sources of alarm for secular groups in the country. *Ikhwan*’s victory, with Mohammad Morsi as the first popularly elected president of Egypt, swiftly transformed into a secular-Islamist cleavage, as well as a source of internal friction between the old regime and the *Ikhwan*, in addition to its regional implications⁴⁰. Having said that, the newly drafted constitution kept the article from the previous constitution, stipulating that “the principles of Islamic law are a main source of legislation”, which was not opposed by any opposition leader. A new article has, however, been added to the new constitution, which “defines those principles as the established schools of Sunni Muslim scholarship”. Accordingly, for Hamdeen Sabahi, a leftist and former presidential candidate, “This is a constitution that lacks the most important prerequisite for a constitution: consensus ... This means we can’t build our future based on this text at all”⁴¹.

In light of this, a quotation by al-Sisi immediately after the *coup* on July 4th, 2013 explicitly reveals the fear that Egypt’s old regime still retains its anti-*Ikhwan* character. Al-Sisi stated that “We will build an Egyptian society that is strong and stable; that will not exclude any of its sons”⁴².

In the post-Arab Spring era, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s portrayal of *Ikhwan* “as an existential threat to their own ruling regimes” required it to be stopped, and as a matter of the two Gulf countries having rewarded al-Sisi financially. So, de-Brotherhoodization in Egypt has also had regional repercussions, which in turn stimulated internal cleavage between the established secular civilian-military bureaucracy and religious conservatives. The postulation/presumption of the Brotherhood as an existential threat to Egypt’s stability is then reflected in al-Sisi’s and the regime’s nationalist discourses. For instance, Fattah al-Sisi positioned counter-terrorism missions at the forefront of the Egyptian agenda, and

³⁹ Köprülü, 2014, p. 124.

⁴⁰ Rutherford, 2018.

⁴¹ Kirkpatrick & El Sheikh, 2012.

⁴² *The Guardian*, 2013.

often emphasized the wording ‘counter-terror strategy’⁴³. For Michele Dunne, the fall from power of the Morsi-led *Ikhwan* government in Egypt stimulated a “specific brand of nationalism – militaristic, populist, anti-foreign – that evoked the Nasserism of the 1950s and 1960s, in contrast to the more inclusive strains of nationalism articulated during the 2011 uprising against Mubarak”⁴⁴.

Is the Arab Spring an ‘Arab matter’?

The onset of the Arab Uprisings not only prompted scholarly debate with regard to democratization, but also underpinned a new discussion on whether Arab identity still matters. The effects of the Arab Spring or Uprisings are still being felt in various countries in the MENA region – precisely Algeria, Iraq, Sudan and also Lebanon with the 2019 riots. Such experiences have come to be labelled as the Second Wave of the Arab Uprisings, and also had a regional and an Arab component. In other words, the Arab Spring has been an ‘Arab matter’ regardless of its divergent trajectories of state re-building in the post-2011 era. Nevertheless, some countries have moved towards reforming their rules, as in the cases of Morocco and Jordan, and some others have upgraded their authoritarian character since the uprisings, as in Egypt. Having said that, the Arab Uprisings were to a great extent particular to the Arab geography, and the protesters more or less demanded similar reforms. In this regard, the data provided by the *Arab Opinion Index* of 2013 depicted that “79% of the Arab public believes in the integrity of a single Arab nation, or that the various Arab peoples comprise one nation, notwithstanding the possible differences between Arab peoples”⁴⁵.

In line with this discussion, Youssef Sawani argues that “The Arab Spring reflects a pan-Arab revolutionary spirit – to the dismay of those who proclaimed that Arabism was dead”⁴⁶. Sawani refers primarily to the widely-known Fouad Ajami’s article entitled ‘End of Pan-Arabism’, published in 1978. Ajami argued that the story of pan-Arabism’s retreat traces primarily back to the 1967 Six Day War, also referred to as the ‘Waterloo of pan-Arabism’, for which Anwar Sadat’s move towards peace-making with Israel in 1978 became a symbol. Forty years later,

⁴³ Dehlvi, 2018.

⁴⁴ Dunne, 2015, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Arab Opinion Index*, 2013, a representative survey of 20,350 people from 14 Arab countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Mauritania, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait and Libya).

⁴⁶ Sawani, 2012, p. 395.

however, Sawani postulates that the “absent peoples” of the region have now been replaced by a “historical mass” with this wave of the Arab Spring, and simultaneously has invigorated the vision that “Arabism and Islamism have maintained their position and hold on public opinion and prevailing attitudes as the primary and inseparable trends of Arab thought”⁴⁷.

Conclusion

Since the 2011 Uprisings, the MENA does not stand as it had before. No matter which realm you look from, things have changed. From an International Relations perspective, the power alternations have bought a new power balance to the region which has enabled primarily Israel to normalize relations with the Gulf countries and Morocco under the umbrella of the *Abraham Accords*; from the angle of comparative politics it can easily be seen that the uprisings have revealed various trajectories of state-formation and (un)democratic transition. Looked at from the perspectives of democratization and social movement studies, despite the efforts of incumbents to co-opt and control the growing opposition, from the Arab Spring has emerged a new dynamic in the region – that of the *Arab Street*. The notion of the Arab Street arose through youth activism and also the cross-cutting alliances that brought together various groups.

This article has aimed to shed light on the existing calls for democracy in the region with respect to the evolving view of the notion of democracy in the eyes of the masses. The viability and effectiveness of democratic governance cannot be a panacea for the people living in this region. In addition, in the period since 2011 the regimes in the region have sought to deploy new forms of nationalism(s) in an effort to make their rule more durable. Last but not least, regardless of whether various regimes have succeeded in meeting the demands of the people, the Arab Spring can be defined as an Arab matter with new underlying components. It is no longer the heyday of Nasserist or Ba’athist forms of Arabism; instead, a new Arab paradigm of identification is on the rise which aims to identify and articulate social equity, justice and freedom. With respect to these developments, the Arab Street has become the new venue of politics, mostly replacing the old institutions⁴⁸.

Thus, it is not the political elites causing Arab nationalism to

⁴⁷ Sawani, 2012, p. 382.

⁴⁸ El Issawi & Cavatorta, 2020.

flourish, as during the 1950s and 1960s, it is the Arab citizenry and also social movements that have invigorated the idea of Arabism today.

References:

- Ajami, F., 1978. "The End of Pan-Arabism", *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1978/1979. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/1978-12-01/end-pan-arabism>
- Amin, S., 1978. *The Arab Nation: Nationalism and Class Struggles*. Trans. Michael Pallis. London, Zed Press.
- Anderson, L., 2018. "Bread, dignity and social justice: Populism in the Arab world." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 44(4): 478-490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718757841>
- Arab Barometer, 2011. *Arab Barometer*, Wave II, 2011. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/arab-barometer-wave-ii/>
- Arab Barometer, 2018. *Arab Barometer*, Wave V, 2018. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/arab-barometer-wave-v/>
- Arab Barometer, 2022. *Arab Barometer*, Wave VII, 2022. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/arab-barometer-wave-vii/>
- Arab Opinion Index, 2013. *Arab Opinion Index*, Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, June 2013. <http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/get/44aba9e5-3cd1-42fd-bd89-fa197b9f6d4a.pdf>
- Ayubi, N. N., 1995. *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*. London, I. B. Tauris.
- Bayat, A., 2017. "Is There a Youth Politics?" *Middle East – Topics and Arguments* 9: 16-24.
- Beblawi, H. & Giacomo, L. (eds.), 1987. *The Rentier State*, London, Croom Helm.
- Bellin, E., 2004. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 36(2): 139-157.
- Brand, L., 1995. "Palestinians and Jordanians: A crisis of dentity." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 24(4): 46-61.
- Dehlvi, G. R., 2018. "Theology, Terror and Politics In Egypt: Interplay in the Triangle", *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 22(2): 34-39.
- Doughan, Y., 2020. "The New Jordanian Patriotism After the Arab Spring." *Middle East Brief*. Brandeis University, Crownn Center for Middle East Studies. 1-7. <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb134.pdf>
- Dunne, M., 2015. "Egypt's Nationalists Dominate in a Politics-Free Zone."

- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2015.
https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brief-Dunne-Egypt_Nationalists.pdf
- El Issawi, F. & Cavatorta, F. (eds.), 2020. *The Unfinished Arab Spring: micro-dynamics of revolts between change and continuity*. London, Ginko.
- France 24*, 2022. "Tunisian president dissolves council tasked with ensuring judicial independence". *France 24*, February 6, 2022.
<https://www.france24.com/en/afrique/20220206-tunisian-president-kais-saied-dissolves-supreme-judicial-council>
- Gause III, G. F., 2011. "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability". *Foreign Affairs* 90(4): 81-90.
- Greenwood, S., 2003. "Jordan's 'New Bargain': The Political Economy of Regime Security." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Spring, 2003): 248-268
- The Guardian*, 2013. "Mohamed Morsi ousted in Egypt's second revolution in two years." *The Guardian*, July 4, 2013.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/03/mohamed-morsi-egypt-second-revolution>
- Heydemann, S., 2007. "Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World." The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, Analysis Paper 13, October 2007. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/10arabworld.pdf>
- Heydemann, S., 2016, "Explaining the Arab Uprisings: transformations in Comparative Perspective." *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 21.1: 192-204.
- Heydemann, S., 2013, "Tracking the "Arab Spring": Syria and the Future of Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 24, Number 4 (October 2013): 59-73.
- Hinnebusch, R., 2006. "Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East: An overview and critique." *Democratization* 13(3): 373-395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340600579243>
- IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2014*. Barcelona, European Institute for the Mediterranean. <https://www.iemed.org/publication/arab-youth-values-and-identities-impact-of-the-arab-uprisings/>
- International Labour Organization, 2022. "Unemployment - Middle East & North Africa". ILOSTAT database, June 2022.
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=ZQ>
- Josua, M. & Edel, M., 2021. "The Arab uprisings and the return of repression". *Mediterranean Politics* 26(5): 586-611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2021.1889298>

- Kedourie, E., 1992. *Democracy and Arab Culture*. Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- Kılavuz, M. T. & Sumaktoyo, N. G., 2020. "Hopes and disappointments: regime change and support for democracy after the Arab Uprisings." *Democratization* 27(5): 854-873.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1746766>
- Kirkpatrick, D. D. & El Sheikh, M., 2012. "Egypt Opposition Gears Up After Constitution Passes". *The New York Times*, December 23, 2012.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/24/world/middleeast/as-egypt-constitution-passes-new-fights-lie-ahead.html>
- Köprülü, N., 2014. "Jordan since the Uprisings: Between Change and Stability." *Middle East Policy* 21(2): 111-126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12075>
- Köprülü, N., 2022. "Is the Arab Spring over? Unpacking perceptions of democracy, elections and regime-types in MENA countries." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2022.2067835>.
- Kuran, T., 1998. "The Vulnerability of the Arab State: Reflections on the Ayubi Thesis." *The Independent Review* 3(1): 111-123.
- Lewis, B., 2003. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. New York, The Random House.
- Lucas, R.E., 2005. *Institutions and the Politics of Survival in Jordan: Domestic Responses to External Challenges, 1988-2001*. State University of New York Press.
- Rutherford, B. K., 2018. "Egypt's New Authoritarianism under Sisi." *The Middle East Journal* 72(2): 185-208. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693086>
- Sadowski, Y., 1993. "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate." *Middle East Report* 183: pp. 14-21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3012572>
- Sayigh, Y. & Shlaim, A., 1997. *The Cold War and the Middle East*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Sawani, Y. M., 2012. "The 'end of pan-Arabism' revisited." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5(3): 382-397.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2012.696785>
- Stacher, J., 2015. "Fragmenting states, new regimes: militarized state violence and transition in the Middle East." *Democratization* 22(2): 259-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1010810>
- Tessler, M., 2002. "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes Toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries." *Comparative Politics* 34(3): 337-354. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4146957>

- UNHCR, 2022. "Syria Emergency." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>
- UNICEF, 2019. "MENA Generation 2030." UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/middle-east-north-africa-generation-2030/>
- Valbjørn, M. & Hinnebusch, R., 2019. "Exploring the Nexus between Sectarianism and Regime Formation in a New Middle East: Theoretical Points of Departure." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 19(1): 2-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12293>
- Valbjørn, M. & Volpi, F., 2014. "Revisiting Theories of Arab Politics in the Aftermath of the Arab Uprisings." *Mediterranean Politics* 19(1): 134-136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2013.856185>
- Washington Post*, 2022. "The Arab Spring Is Over, But the Struggle for Democracy Isn't." *Washington Post*, August 3, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/the-arab-spring-is-over-but-the-struggle-for-democracy-isnt/2022/08/03/78ded41c-130b-11ed-8482-06c1c84ce8f2_story.html
- Yom, S., Lynch, M. & al-Khatib, W., 2019. "Youth Politics in the Middle East and North Africa." In *Youth Politics in the Middle East and North Africa*, POMEPS Studies 36, pp. 3-6. https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/POMEPS_Studies_36_Web-1.pdf

Pablo Argárate
Karl Franzens University of Graz

Monastic Egypt by the End of the Fourth Century: Reading the *Historia Lausiaca*

Abstract:

Along with the 400 anonymous *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, the *Historia Lausiaca*, which was composed in 419-420, constitutes the chief sources for early Egyptian monastic history. Its author, Palladius, born in Galatia in 363, he became a monk in Palestine in 388, moving then to Egypt. Having a tumultuous life, he experienced for many years Egyptian monasticism. He travelled the vast country, spoke to the main monastic characters of that time, and was even a disciple of one of the most influential of them, Evagrius. The immense popularity of Palladius's work, which was copied and recopied many times in Greek, sometimes not without additions, as well as the common aspects it shares with other works, such as the *Historia monachorum*, create serious difficulties regarding the exact identification of the original Greek text. However, beyond the common sources that the *Historia Lausiaca* has with other works, there are some aspects of clear originality, which distinguish the work of Palladius from those of other authors. All over, *Historia Lausiaca* represents an outstanding source to the highly relevant phenomenon of Egyptian monasticism at the end of the fourth century.

Keywords: *Historia Lausiaca*, Palladius, Egyptian monasticism

I. Introduction

Along with the 400 anonymous *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (HMA), the *Historia Lausiaca*¹ constitutes the chief source for early Egyptian monastic history.

Its author, Palladius, born in Galatia in 363, he became a monk in Palestine in 388, moving then to Egypt. Indeed, in 390 he was in Nitra, transferring then to Cells, where he remained until 399, having to return to Alexandria and then to Palestine due to health issues. The following year he was ordained bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia. At the Synod of the Oak in 403, he was accused of Origenism and, after the fall of his friend Chrysostom, he went to Rome in 405 to defend the cause of the bishop of Constantinople. At his return, he was arrested and exiled in Egypt, only to return to Asia Minor in 412, being later transferred as bishop of Apuna. He died before the third ecumenical council of 431.

Along the *Historia*, he wrote the *Dialogus de vita s. Johannis Chrysostomi*², important source for the life of this saint, and perhaps the first part of *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*.

The *Historia Lausiaca* (HL) was composed in 419-420. His sources were the explicitly-mentioned *Vita Antonii*, the HMA, with which our HL has much in common. Indeed, from the 26 chapters of the HMA, John of Lycopolis, Paphnutius, Eulogius, Isidor, Sarapion, both Macarius and Paul have their own chapters in the HL. Some parallels are to be found also in John Cassian as well as in the *Apophthegmata*.

The immense popularity of our work makes it extremely difficult to establish the original Greek text³. Indeed, it has been copied and re-copied in Greek, with additions and interpolations, as well as being translated into Latin and into the main Oriental languages, such as Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Arabic, among others. Cuthbert Butler established in 1898-1904 a sort of *editio princeps*, stating that from the two main recensions, the longer (B) and the shorter (G), it is the latter, which is to be considered the earliest version. This one is composed of 71 short accounts, preceded by an introduction in three pieces, the foreword (which perhaps was not written by Palladius), the (cover) letter sent to Lausus with the *Historia*, and a prologue.

¹ Meyer (transl.), 1965. On the *Historia Lausiaca*, see Nickau, 2000, pp. 131-139.

Also Bammel, 1996, pp. 92-104. De Vogüé, 1992, p. 217 ff.

² Devos, 1989, pp. 243-266.

³ See Bousset, 1922, pp. 81-98.

As already affirmed, if we compare it with the *HMA* and even with Cassian's *Institutiones* and *Collationes*, much material is common. Like all these works, the author has experienced for many years Egyptian monasticism. He has travelled the vast country, spoken to the main monastic characters of that time, and even been a disciple of one of the most influential of them, Evagrius. As Cassian, he left the country before the collapse of Egyptian monasticism; also, as Cassian, in putting his experiences in writing, he refers to a no longer existing reality.

There are, nevertheless, striking differences as well. Palladius does not limit himself to Egypt but includes in his work ascetics also from Palestine and from Asia Minor. Even more significant is the important presence of female ascetics⁴, responding in this to Lausus' explicit request. Out of 71 stories⁵, 17 are dedicated to virgins and nuns, some carrying out a holy life, while some others share the same problems as monks, mainly the temptation of pride.

One of Palladius' main sources, Melania the Elder, receives even two chapters (46 and 54).

II. *Historia Lausiaca*

A. Palladius' experience

From the very outset, Palladius introduces himself, as the unknown author of the *HMA* or John Cassian also do, as an (eye)witness of the accounts that will follow.

“I decided then, O man most fond of learning, to set forth for you an account of my entire experience” (...) “Now you wanted stories of the fathers, of both male and female anchorites, those I had seen and others I had heard about, and of those I had lived with in the Egyptian desert and Libya, in the Thebaid and Syene. Then there are the Tabennesiotes, and those in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria, and, in the West, those in Rome and Campania and points nearby” (Prol., 2).

Palladius claims, indeed to produce a comprehensive presentation of monasticism.

⁴ See Schroeder, 2014, p. 1 ff. Clark, 1998, p. 413 ff. Jensen, 2002, pp. 37-54. Fisher, 1991, p. 23 ff.

⁵ Rapp, 1998, pp. 431-448.

“Now I begin my narrative. I shall leave unmentioned no one in the cities, or in the villages, or in the dessert. For we are concerned not with the place where they settled, but rather it is their way of life that we seek” (Prol., 16).

B. Monastic Diversity

Monastic experience was, already at that time, extremely broad. Along with young, although not too young, monks we have a number of elderly ascetics living a life of extreme renunciation. Entrance into monastic life, mainly due to its hardship, cannot be undertaken in old age, as Antony makes clear to Paul the Simple or even Pachomius to Macarius, who, already an experienced and famous monk, intends to start monastic life.

Diversity is very patent also in the geographical⁶ as well as in the cultural provenience of the monks. Besides an “Egyptian” majority, Alexandrian (who are not considered Egyptian) monks, come along with Libyan ones. An important number of ascetics seems to proceed from Palestine, as Cassian and Palladius themselves were. Some conflicts between these Palestinian monks, who came from there but not necessarily were Palestinian as the referred authors were not, and the Egyptian ones seem to appear, as witnessed in the *Collationes* but also in our *HL*. In addition to these groups, there are also “Greek” monks, coming from Asia Minor or Constantinople, as the case of the famous Evagrius shows it. Western monks, and especially pilgrims, are also present in these accounts.

Topographic diversity is referred in the *HL* as well. Palladius starts his Egyptian experience close to Alexandria and then moves to the desert, visiting different monastic centres.

Diversity is also represented by the different professions that ascetics carried out before entering monastic life and even afterwards. The list is very vast, from murderers, thieves, passing through housemen, herdsmen, actors, businessmen, nobles, to churchmen. Indeed, we have the example of the learned deacon Evagrius, who had to leave overnight Constantinople due to a love affair and eventually became one of the greatest teachers of the desert. While some monks were considered worthy of the priesthood in order to serve their brethren, some others were later ordained bishop, as was the case with Palladius himself. However, most of them staunchly resisted any kind of ordination or ecclesiastical honour.

While the vast majority were peasants, learned monks, as already

⁶ Jotischky, 2012, pp. 57-74.

stated, were not absent. Here we have the case not only of Evagrius, but also of Ammonius, Sarapion and Jerome in Palestine. Furthermore, continuous presence of international pilgrims required the service of interpreters. Translation was commonly between Coptic and Greek, as shows the case of Cronius, who served as an interpreter of Antony, but also with Latin language for Western pilgrims, and Syriac.

The *HL* provides furthermore reference to the political framework, mainly referring to different emperors, but also governors and other leaders. In addition to these, leading monastic characters come in its pages. Among them, some are very well known to us such as Antony, Pachomius, John of Lycopolis, Paul the Simple, Evagrius, Melania, the Elder⁷ and the Younger, Jerome, and Rufinus, among other. In this regard, the *HL* provides us with important information in relation to those persons.

C. Monasteries and Monastic life

Monasteries come to existence very often through disciples that gather around a recognized ascetic. Other times, it is the initiative either of lay people, men or women, who start monastic life. A good example is the one of Elias, who, ascetic himself, founded a monastery for virgins out of his income-property. For this, he gathered all those virgins dispersed about. The account further describes us this monastery:

“He looked after them with every refreshment, gardens, household utensils, and everything their life required”⁸.

Interesting is also the case of the brothers Paesius and Isaias. While one “shared everything among the monasteries, churches, and prisons”, the other “made no distribution of his share, but built a monastery for himself and took in a few brethren”⁹. A more detailed description of a monastery and its organization is the one provided in chapters 32 and 33. There, Palladius presents Pachomius and the Tabennesiotes, and afterwards the Women’s monastery. Situated in Tabenesnnisi, in the Thebaid, an angel appeared to the monk Pachomius, giving him, in a bronze tablet, the Rule for his future monastery. This rule prescribed in detail monastic life: cells, diet, clothe, organization in twenty-four groups,

⁷ See Isola, 1996, p. 77 ff.

⁸ *Historia Lausiaca*, 29.1.

⁹ *Historia Lausiaca*, 14.3.

services and prayers. Palladius tells us, as we know, that Pachomian monasticism developed a group of monasteries with about 7000 monks. While the great monastery had 1300 monks, in each of the other houses were between 200 and 300 monks. In addition to these male monasteries, there was one for nuns with some four hundred women, situated on one side of the river, opposite the men, sharing the same cemetery with the male monastery.

Besides these large monasteries, a vast number of monks lived alone or with few other monks, building cells for themselves or even for other monks, who could not do this. It was not unusual that those monks changed cells during their lives¹⁰. Macarius of Alexandria, for instance,

“had various cells in the desert – one at Scete in the innermost part of the Great Desert, another in Libya, one in so-called Cellia, and still another at Mount Nitria. Some of them were windowless, and he is said to have sat in them in darkness during Lent; another was too narrow for him to stretch out his feet in it; another was more commodious, and in this one he met those who visited him”¹¹.

The famous John of Lycopolis even built for himself three cells:

“There, on the very top of the mountain he built himself three cells, went inside, and housed himself there. One for his bodily needs; he worked and ate in the second; in the third one he prayed”¹².

Beside the monks’ own work, often monasteries were supported by donations of rich people and pilgrims.

Entrance into monastic life was also quite diverse. As we have seen, one could begin a monastery by herself or himself. However, the most common way was to be admitted either as a disciple of a monastic father or mother (*abba* or *amma*) or into a monastic community. It has already been exposed that many virtues were requested for being accepted. Especially perseverance was tested through denial of admission. In addition, candidates were expected to show physical strength for a demanding style of life, as well as virtues. Very often knowledge by heart of a great part of Scriptures was also required.

¹⁰ See Macarius the Younger. *Historia Lausiaca*, 15.2

¹¹ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.10.

¹² *Historia Lausiaca*, 35.1.

Monastic work varied a lot. In lonely life or in small communities, ascetics had to build the own or others' cells. It is said from Dorotheus that,

“he used to collect stones in the desert all day long in the burning heat along the sea and to build cells for those who could not build their own, finishing one each year”¹³.

In addition, ascetics needed to gain their daily bread¹⁴, mainly by manufacturing products that could be sold in the market. Some monks even died while they were working¹⁵. In large monasteries, as the Pachomian ones, work was more specialized in the service of the community, for instance cooking or setting up the tables. Let us listen to Palladius' description:

“It is the same with regard to their work. One works the ground as husbandman, another works as gardener, another as smith, another as baker, another as fuller, another as weaver of large baskets, another as shoemaker, another as copyist, another as weaver of tender reeds”¹⁶.

Alongside work, an important aspect of monastic life was fasting. This, together with vigils and prayers, was regarded as a remedy for temptations¹⁷. Throughout the pages of the *HL*, we find deeds of extreme asceticism concerning diet and lack of sleep. In this regard, Macarius of Alexandria can be considered as a good (and extreme) example. It was said from him:

“Such was his practice that whenever he heard of any asceticism, he surpassed it to perfection. He heard from some that the Tabennesiote monks eat their food uncooked throughout the

¹³ *Historia Lausiaca*, 2.2.

¹⁴ Cf. *Historia Lausiaca*, 10.6, where Pambo says: “From the time when I came into the desert here and built my cell and dwelt here, I do not recall having eaten bread for nothing, but only that which was the work of my own hands”.

¹⁵ Cf. *Historia Lausiaca*, 10.5: “Shortly afterward this man of God fall asleep, not consumed by a fever or any sickness, but in the act of stitching a basket when he was seventy years old”.

¹⁶ *Historia Lausiaca*, 32.12.

¹⁷ *Historia Lausiaca*, 19.7.

Lenten period, so he made up his mind to eat no food that had come in contact with fire. For seven years he partook of nothing but raw vegetables, if these could be found, with a little moistened pulse”¹⁸.

Regarding sleep, his endeavour was not different:

“He decided to be above the need for sleep, and he claimed that he did not go under a roof for twenty days in order to conquer sleep. He was burned by the heat of the sun and was drawn up with the cold at night. And he also said: ‘If I had not gone into the house and obtained the advantage of some sleep, my brain would have shrivelled up for good. I conquered to the extent I was able, but I gave in to the extent my nature required sleep’ ”¹⁹.

Due to the command of constant prayer, ascetics tried to overcome sleep. So it is said of Antony and Paul the Simple:

“Antony got up then and prayed twelve prayers and sang twelve psalms. Then he took a little of his first rest, and at midnight he got up again to sing psalms till it was day. As he noticed the old man [Paul] willingly following his way of life, he said to him: ‘If you can do this from day to day, stay with me’- Paul answered: ‘If there is anything further, I do not know, but I can readily do what I have seen.’ The following day Antony said to him: ‘Behold, you have become a monk’ ”²⁰.

Palladius, however, wants to make clear to Lausus from the very outset that spiritual asceticism is deeper than the mere physical one.

“Now drinking wine with reason is better by far than drinking water in arrogance”²¹.

With this, he points out to pride, which is the worse vice and brings monks and nuns down to abyss. Ascetics were tempted during almost their entire lives. The strongest and worst temptations were those of

¹⁸ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.1.

¹⁹ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.3

²⁰ *Historia Lausiaca*, 22.8.

²¹ *Historia Lausiaca*, Prol., 10.

impurity and, especially, of pride. Both of them happened in Heron's life. Indeed, he

“was thrown off balance after many labours and exalted himself, feeling himself grater than the fathers [and having gone to Alexandria] he went to the theatre and the horse races and haunted the taverns. Eating and drinking to excess, he fell into the filth of lust. And since he was bent upon committing sin, he met an actress and had commerce with her. This led to an ulcer. While this affair was going on, a carbuncle developed on him, and for half a year he was so ill that his members became infested with rot and fell off. Subsequently he was restored to health without these members and he came back to a pious resolution and confessed everything to the fathers. Some days later he fell asleep just before going to work”²².

Among the diverse important and extreme ascetical works, which monks perform, many are mentioned in the *Historia*. Only few of them can be now presented.

For instance, from Isidore, the first monk presented in the *HL*, it is said that he “neither bathed nor ate meat”²³ and that he wept at table²⁴. Ptolemy used to collect in December and January dew from the rock with a sponge in pots²⁵. Some lived, at least for a period of their lives without shelter²⁶ or as recluses, like the “maidservant named Alexandra who left the city and immured herself in a tomb”²⁷, lived in confinement²⁸, in order to not see anybody²⁹. However, while most of the monks remained quiet in their cell, Sarapion “wandered about the world”³⁰, in order to save people³¹.

²² *Historia Lausiaca*, 26.1-4.

²³ *Historia Lausiaca*, 1.2.

²⁴ *Historia Lausiaca*, 1.3.

²⁵ *Historia Lausiaca*, 27.1

²⁶ *Historia Lausiaca*, 15.1: Macarius the Younger “stayed in the desert for three years without a shelter”.

²⁷ *Historia Lausiaca*, 5.1. Also, in Rome there is another maiden living in seclusion. 37.12.

²⁸ *Historia Lausiaca*, 35.2.4.

²⁹ Cf. *Historia Lausiaca*, 5.2.

³⁰ *Historia Lausiaca*, 37.1.

³¹ Cf. *Historia Lausiaca*, 37.4 where he sold himself to Greek actors, in order to convert them.

All ascetics lived in penance carrying out some extreme and curious practices, such as making themselves bite by an asp³² or by mosquitoes in a marsh,³³ in such a way that they were disfigured. Indeed, Macarius of Alexandria, after doing so, “became so swollen than some thought he had elephantiasis”³⁴.

Many of them fought against spirits and demons³⁵, while some were given the gifts of healing³⁶ or prophecy³⁷.

Summarizing his ascetical practices, John of Lycopolis told Palladius:

“Forty years have I been in this cell, never beholding a woman’s face or the sight of money. I have seen no one eating, nor has anyone seen me eating or drinking”³⁸.

When Macarius persevered in his asceticism at the Pachomian monastery, the other monks considered him a “bodiless man”³⁹. From this perspective, one can consider that the goal for asceticism was to become “dead to the world”⁴⁰.

As in the case of lack of sleep, the goal of all ascetical practices is to attain continuous prayer. Indeed, Macarius of Alexandria told to the author of the *HL*:

“I had succeeded well in every kind of life I desired; then I wanted still something else, namely, to keep my mind fixed upon God without any distractions... I gave this order to my mind: ‘Do not descend from heaven, for there you have angels, archangels, the powers above, the God of all of us; only do not descend from heaven’”⁴¹.

However, perfection is to be found, in following the Gospel, in charity. Palladius emphasized this to Lausus by writing:

³² Cf. *Historia Lausiaca*, 2.4 and 18.10.

³³ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.4.

³⁴ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.4.

³⁵ *Historia Lausiaca*, 17.2.

³⁶ *Historia Lausiaca*, 12.2.

³⁷ *Historia Lausiaca*, 17.2

³⁸ *Historia Lausiaca*, 35.13.

³⁹ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.15.

⁴⁰ *Historia Lausiaca*, 37.13-16.

⁴¹ *Historia Lausiaca*, 18.17.

“[f]or, to be sure, neither eating nor abstinence is of any account, but it is faith which has extended itself to work done in charity that counts”⁴².

This faith in charity attains its summit in compassion and mercy with the poor and the sick. Indeed, one of the brothers Paesius and Isaïas, as we already read, built a monastery for him and a few brethren,

“Then he took in every stranger, every invalid, every old man, and every poor one as well, setting up three or four tables every Saturday and Sunday”⁴³.

III. Conclusions

The *HL* is an outstanding source of the highly-relevant phenomenon of Egyptian monasticism at the end of the fourth century. It came to fill the necessity of audiences that crave for monastic tales of edification. Within a changing context, the second half of the fourth century has witnessed the emergence of the “Holy Places” and of the monastic phenomenon as well. Both would attract pilgrims from throughout the known world. Monasticism appears as being a maximalist realization of Christianity. The *HL* together with Cassian built the construct, according to which Egyptian monasticism was regarded as the standard one. Even if this is not true, and monasticism received different inculturations even at that time, the *HL* witnessed to the diversity and complexity of monastic phenomenon. In it, people of different genders, as well as nationalities, origins, and cultures undertake the most difficult task of their inner transformation. Beyond the many eccentricities and heroic tasks, the *HL* proposed then and even today to look within the lives of these saints the mystery of Christ. We should do as Palladius himself recommends to Lausus:

“Go to a clear window and seek for meetings with holy men and women so that you may see clearly your own heart as in the case with a book of small writing”⁴⁴.

⁴² *Historia Lausiaca*, Prol., 13.

⁴³ *Historia Lausiaca*, 14.3.

⁴⁴ *Historia Lausiaca*, Prol., 15.

Nuns and monks presented in our book are champions of virtuous deeds. They have renounced everything in order to be with the Only important One, especially in prayer, in order to be transformed by Him. Many were strongly challenged; other fell in their attempt.

However, it is Christ himself, who transforms the ascetic. In this sense, the story of Eulogius, who took a cripple⁴⁵ and cared for him until he died, even if this one constantly insulted him, is very instructive. Antony, addressing the cripple, told him referring to Eulogius:

“Do you not realize that it is Christ who is your servant? How dare you utter things against Christ?”⁴⁶

By serving the poor, we are serving Christ. Palladius, beyond reproducing a series of heroic adventures, has grasped the essence of monastic and not least Christian life. It is in the neighbour, especially in the suffering one, in the poor, even in the one who is repugnant to us, where Christ is mysteriously present. Indeed, before addressing the cripple in the passage I just quoted, Antony spoke to Eulogius, who was tempted to abandon the unthankful cripple, showing him the depth of God’s heart with these words:

“*You* would cast him [the crippled] out? But *He* who made him does not cast him out. *You* cast him out? God will raise up a finer man than you and He will gather him up”⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ *Historia Lausiaca*, 21.4: “Well, Eulogius stood and looked intently at him, and he prayed to God and made a compact with Him: «Lord, in your name I will take this crippled man and look after him until death, so that I may be saved through him. Graciously grant me to endure this undertaking»”.

⁴⁶ *Historia Lausiaca*, 21.13.

⁴⁷ *Historia Lausiaca*, 21.12

References:

- Bammel, C., 1996. "Problems of the *Historia Monachorum*." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 47.1: 92-104.
- Bousset, W., 1922. "Zur Komposition der *Historia Lausiaca*." *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche*, Vol. 21: 81-98.
- Clark, E.A., 1998. "Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the «Linguistic Turn»". *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 3: 413-430.
- De Vogüé, A., 1992. "Palladiana." *Studia Monastica* 34: 217-232.
- Devos, P., 1989, "Approches de Pallade à travers le «Dialogue sur Chrysostome» et «L'Histoire Lausiaque»". *Analecta Bollandiana*. Vol. 107, Issue 3/4: 243-266.
- Fisher, A.L., 1991. "Women and gender in Palladius' *Lausiaca* history." *Studia monastica* 33: 23-50.
- Isola, A., 1996. "Melania Seniore nell'*Historia Lausiaca*." *Vetera Christianorum*, Volume 33: 77-84.
- Jensen, A., 2000. "Frauen in der Asketengeschichte «Das Paradies» von Palladios (*Historia Lausiaca*)." In Jakobus Kaffanke (ed.), „... weil sie mehr liebte". *Frauen im frühen Mönchtum; Tagungsberichte der Beuronener Tage für Spiritualität und Mystik - 2002*. Beuron, Beuronener Kunstverlag, 2002, 37-54.
- Jotischky, A., 2012. "Monastic Reform and the Geography of Christendom: Experience, Observation and Influence." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 22: 57-74.
- Nickau, K., 2000. "Eine *Historia Lausiaca* ohne Lausus. Überlegungen zur Hypothese von René Draguet über den Ursprung der *Historia Lausiaca*." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, Vol. 5.1: 131-139.
- Meyer, R.T. (transl.), 1965. Palladius, *The Lausiaca History*. Westminster, Md., London, Newman Press; Longmans, Green and Co.
- Rapp, C., 1998. "Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of Diegesis". *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, 431-448.
- Rapp, C., 2001. "Palladius, Lausus and the *Historia Lausiaca*." In *Novum Millenium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck 19 December 1999*, ed. Claudia Sode and Sarolta Takács, Aldershot, Ashgate, 279-289.

Schroeder, C.T., 2014. "Women in anchoritic and semi-anchoritic monasticism in Egypt: rethinking the landscape." *Church History*, Vol. 83, Issue 1: 1-17.

Antonio Pio Di Cosmo
Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome

Justinian and sexual diseases. Hagiography and prophylaxis in early Byzantium

Abstract:

This research compares collected data from texts regarding the life of Emperor Justinian, with information on cases of sexual diseases in the context of Early Byzantium. A hagiographical text, *The Life of Saint Samson*, recounts that a serious illness affected Emperor Justinian's genital organs for which the Byzantine physicians of the time failed to find a cure. The disease was only abated through a miracle of Saint Samson. This *adynaton* placed the Emperor in a "coverage space". Afterwards, in the 23rd or 24th year of his reign, Justinian suffered a leg pain, accompanied by pain during urination. Körbler hypothesizes that these symptoms were owed to syphilis. The affliction of the Emperor's leg was cured through the intercession of Saints Cosmas and Damian. Rather the Emperor's illness can be detected as a literary *locus* of hagiography; moreover, the *adynaton* confirms the foundation of the imperial institution, and reaffirms the adequacy of the sovereign.

Key word: *adynata*, Justinian, syphilis, sexual disease, Saints Cosmas and Damian, Theodora

Introduction

The present research stems from data extrapolated from the different sources covering the life of Emperor Justinian (482-565), such as the *Life of St Samson* (?-530) or the *Historia Arcana* by Procopius of Cesarea (490-565). Those sources contain important information that historians have even used to evaluate the degree of medical proficiency in Early Byzantium. In this way, the current research aims to compare Justinian's biographical data with information provided by medical texts, which investigate cases of sexual disease in the context of Early Byzantium¹.

Yet there is more to it than that. The unofficial texts concerning Justinian's life introduce a further theme to the audience: the miracle. Indeed, the miracle was extremely necessary for the Byzantine Christian Monarchy: it served to explain and justify the sovereign's adequacy to hold the Empire. The working of miracles was clear proof that the Roman Emperor had the blessing of the Divine, and in this context, it became very useful indeed for any apologies in support of the Monarchy, and was also indispensable for the cyclical re-foundation of the Empire. Nevertheless, the miracle was a traditional *locus* in any imperial biography, and consequently it did not compromise the credibility of the historical data: it was very difficult to argue that the various authors invented eccentric medical treatments in comparison to the usual treatments employed by the public. Nevertheless, the credibility of the miraculous event, when compared to the available medical knowledge of the period, was confirmed by a malevolent narration known as the *Historia Arcana*. This text shows that this fact was universally known and, therefore, the author couldn't hide it.

Concurrently, the Emperor's illness became a *locus* for hagiography and allowed to the saints, who did wonderful things. It was used to communicate the values of the Church as well. Therefore, it was not only the Church that stood to gain something from the accidents of imperial life. Nevertheless, the same Empire gained something from these diseases because it recovered its authoritativeness started from the ideological point of view.

However, this reality involves some caution. The venereal disease afflicting by Emperor Justinian became a rhetorical expedient of the *Kaiserkritik*. At the same time, the mention of this *locus* constituted an occasion where we can find the expression of dissent by the aristocracy.

¹ Kaldellys, 2004.

Early Byzantium, gonorrhoea and, syphilis: medical care and medical knowledge

Byzantine doctors had an extensive and refined knowledge of sexual diseases, but this was in contrast to the technical means they possessed. Firstly, physicians suffered from the absence of endoscopic instruments and lacked the means to analyse the secretions of the genital organs; nevertheless, many symptoms of diseases, such as the markers for urethritis, were well-known to doctors. It is equally important, however, that we consider that the same symptoms could have had many origins. For example, urethritis is caused by both gonococcus and other germs alike. Therefore, Byzantines' knowledge of particular symptoms was independent of its precise etiological agents.

The Emperor's precise symptoms, which evoked gonorrhoea², were mentioned in the Bible and were later also described by Celsus in the 1st century BC and by Galen in the 2nd century BC. The symptoms themselves had been recognized as far back as the treatises of Hippocrates in the 4th century BC, who also described parasitic leucorrhoea, mycotic leucorrhoea, and bacterial leucorrhoea as well.

Things are markedly different in the case of syphilis; indeed, many hypotheses circulate regarding the origin of the disease in Europe. These arguments were of great interest and at the same time a source for fierce division between medical historians. Early doctrine held that syphilis was introduced to Europe no earlier than the final decade of the 15th century, by the sailors of Christopher Columbus. Today, eminent specialists have put forward biological arguments that demonstrate the disease spread throughout the world in ancient times. According to Hudson's point of view, syphilis originated as an endemic affliction during the Palaeolithic, and transformed into venereal syphilis in a multitude of places at different times, as rural life became more and more urbanized³. Indigenous and venereal forms coexisted in Mesopotamia and Egypt as early as between 4000 and 6000 BC. According to this theory, indigenous syphilis spread throughout Western Europe during the Roman period and persisted throughout the Middle Ages. This hypothesis, based on biological, sociological and cultural criteria, was however never confirmed by osteoarchaeological data. For example, no trace of syphilis was ever found

² Oriel, 2012; Brondy, 1937, pp. 2-106; Sigerist, 1961; Wortley, 2004, pp. 91-107; Angeletti, 1992, pp. 207-218; Grmek, 1989, pp. 133-151.

³ Hudson, 1965, pp. 885-901.

on mortal remains exhumed in Greece and in its environs⁴; and, therefore, the biological data collected appears to show that syphilis was not present in the ancient Greek world, unlike leprosy and tuberculosis whose traces have been attested to in human remains⁵. In the absence of further data, the idea syphilis' extensive presence in Europe becomes difficult to support, in particular for the period under review. The symptoms that affected Justinian were also very generic, and hardly demonstrate that the Emperor did indeed contract this disease.

Theodora, the aristocracy and prejudice: a strange marriage and malicious anecdotes

Justinian's choice of bride, a dancer, aroused both curiosity and ridicule among the aristocracy; if nothing else, it served as an opportune pretext for an incisive *Kaiserkritik*: the Emperor's choice appeared as a denial of the values of traditional hierarchy. The aristocracy preferred endogenous forms of marriage, since their aim was to preserve the attributes of class. A point of view even more amusing, if we consider that it was Emperor Justinian who abolished the law prohibiting marriage between members of the senatorial class and people of a lower social status – and, specifically, with prostitutes⁶. This change in the perception of the values of hierarchy allowed the creation of imaginative anecdotes and justified the consolidation of a *locus* in hagiographic literature. It encouraged the aristocratic re-interpretation of the episodes of Justinian's life, all the more so given that the aristocracy perceived the accession of a person of humble origins to high office as a destabilizing hazard.

The obvious solution was to denigrate the Emperor's chosen, and to evoke situations which highlighted Theodora's lack of credibility and of moral integrity. This virtue was considered an attribute of Roman noblewomen, and was the greatest quality distinguishing them from commoners.

This judgment censured the role of Theodora (497-548), as the first woman who directly intervened in the Imperial government. Procopius regretted this claim: "she believed that she had to regulate everything in the State, on her own initiative". After all, her conduct was

⁴ Vertue, 1983, pp. 277-302.

⁵ Grmek, 1989, pp. 133-151.

⁶ C. J. V, 4, 23; Potter, 2015; Ziche, 2012-2013, pp. 311-323; Browning, 1987, pp. 165-178; Mantellou, 1990, pp. 330-339; Ostrogorsky, 1986, pp. 69-78; Hunger, 1992, pp. 81-82.

stigmatized because it violated the prerogatives of her husband: in particular, her reception of foreign delegations in her private apartments in the absence of her husband. This unprecedented practice opened the doors for numerous tendentious interpretations⁷.

Procopius continues:

“For even Theodora was not disposed to forego this testimony to her dignity, she who acted as though the Roman Empire lay at her feet, but was by no means averse to receiving even the ambassadors of the Persians and of the other barbarians and to bestowing upon them gifts of money, a thing which had never happened since the beginning of time”⁸.

However, her constant presence in government affairs and her readiness helped defuse the crisis generated by the ‘Nika revolt’. The same Procopius reported Theodora’s heartfelt appeal, which violated every social convention of the time. Theodora is claimed to have said: “I believe that in the present situation it is irrelevant to take into account the impropriety that a woman shows courage among men and proposes bold solutions...”. This bold woman closed her intervention with a suggestive remark: “I like an ancient proverb, which said: the royal garment is a nice shroud”⁹.

It is common knowledge that actors and dancers were considered people of dubious morality in the Ancient World. The imperial purple and the crown did not constitute an absolute warranty of imperial virtue, despite the fact that the *peri basileias* used this rhetorical *locus* and attempted to colonize the public subconscious. The political machinations of the period supported this metaphor, and so the imperial insignia, like the royal purple and the crown, embodied the virtues required of any good sovereign. A good Emperor had to gird himself with the “crown of temperance, clothe the purple of justice (...) [and] parry himself with the purple of love for the poor”¹⁰.

Empress Theodora did, in fact, perform such morally dubious activities in her youth, and therefore the Empress herself could not escape from this prejudice¹¹. Little wonder, then, this presumption of her dubious

⁷ Ravegnani, 1989, p. 50.

⁸ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XXX, 21-26.

⁹ Proc. Caes., *De bell. Pers.*, I, 24.

¹⁰ Agap. Diac., *Expositio capitum admonitorum*, PG 86, cap. 18; cap. 60; Carile, 2000, pp. 127-149; Patlagean, 1992; Cavarra, 1990, pp. 28-40.

¹¹ Ravegnani, 2016, pp. 25-33.

morality, especially coming from the landed aristocracy. Consequently, this doubt was also extended to her government actions, favouring the creation of specious inferences – and was pervasive enough to arise even when Empress Theodora did works of mercy and penance¹² such as the release and conversion of the whores that had been admitted to the Monastery of Repentance. Procopius malevolently asserted that those women killed themselves, by throwing themselves from the walls of the convent.

He claims:

“Harlots, for instance, to the number of more than five hundred who plied their trade in the midst of the market-place at the rate of three obols – just enough to live on – she gathered together and, sending them over to the opposite mainland, she confined them in the Convent of Repentance, as it is called, trying there to compel them to adopt a new manner of life. And some of them threw themselves down from a height at night and thus escaped the unwelcome transformation”¹³.

Other embarrassing anecdotes also circulated regarding the Empress, which were not limited to her previous activity as a dancer. In fact, the young Theodora was known to have recited in the hippodrome’s theatre and worked in many oriental whorehouses as well, especially in Alexandria.

During her activity across the many cities of the Levant, Theodora almost certainly contracted certain venereal diseases. Nevertheless, Theodora’s father, Acacius – a tamer of wild beasts – forced his two daughters, Comitusa and Theodora, into prostitution. Therefore, when Theodora was little, she likely entertained sexual relationships with customers comparable to pederasty as well. In his work, *Historia Arcana*, Procopius of Caesarea offers a series of scandalous details about Theodora’s life before her imperial marriage¹⁴. He launches a misogynistic attack on the Empress:

“On one occasion she entered the house of one of the notables during the feast, and they said that in the sight of all the banqueters she mounted the projecting part of the banqueting

¹² Mal., 440-441.

¹³ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XVIII, 56; XXX, 24.

¹⁴ Wirth & Haury, 1963, pp. 283-284.

couch where their feet lay, and there drew up her clothing in a shameless way, not hesitating to display her licentiousness. And though she made use of three openings, she used to take Nature to task, complaining that it had not pierced her breasts with larger holes so that it might be possible for her to contrive another method of copulation there [...]. And often, even in the theatre, before the eyes of the whole people, she stripped off her clothing and moved about naked through their midst, having only a girdle about her private parts and her groins – not, however, that she was ashamed to display these too to the populace, but because no person is permitted to enter there entirely naked, but must have at least a girdle about the groins. Clothed in this manner, she sprawled out and lay on her back on the ground. And some slaves, whose duty this was, sprinkled grains of barley over her private parts, and geese, which happened to have been provided for this very purpose, picked them off with their beaks, one by one, and ate them. And when she got up, she not only did not blush, but even acted as if she took pride in this strange performance. For she was not merely shameless herself, but also a contriver of shameless deeds above all others”¹⁵.

This historian further reveals her participation in banquets and orgies. Procopius argues that during those orgies the future Empress would copulate with ten or more men. Consequently, the story alleges, she was often pregnant and would attempt to interrupt her pregnancy in various ways. Procopius claims that she failed an abortion and gave birth to a boy, called John, who conveniently disappeared when she became Empress. It is therefore not difficult to imagine that Justinian contracted afflictions from his future wife, whom he probably met in a whorehouse, ranging from a simple bacterial infection to serious venereal diseases such as gonorrhoea.

Neither did the aristocracy forgive Theodora her faith: heretical Nestorianism. Another of Procopius’ malicious anecdotes claims that the holy monk Saba rejected the miracle of an heir for the Empress because the Empress was a heretic. This information was also recorded in the *Vita Sancti Saba*. The monk said: “God (...) will supervise your Empire”¹⁶. The rejection of the miracle demonstrated the woman’s inadequacy for the imperial charge. To the faults of her humble origins, were added

¹⁵ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* IX, 24-26.

¹⁶ *Vit. S. Sab.* 71.

Theodora's irreverent interference in matters reserved to men, and her error in matters of faith, as damnable testimonies of a vile character.

Procopius didn't forgive her taste for spectacularizing absolute power either, most evident during an ironic repartee against an anonymous patrician, who was named "Patrician So-and-So". The Empress goes on to taunt the patrician's hernia:

"And the woman replied, in sing-song, "O Patrician So-and-So" (naming him), and the chorus of eunuchs, catching up the strain, said responsively, "It's a large hernia you have!" And when the man again made supplication and uttered words resembling what he had said before, the woman replied again in the same vein and the chorus chanted the response, until the poor wretch in despair made his obeisance in the customary manner and departing thence went home"¹⁷.

Therefore, the hatred of the aristocracy for Theodora was perhaps justified. Through the circulation of elitist manuscript copies such as the *Historia Arcana*, the nobility put the absolute monarchy under subdued attack, targeting the most vulnerable representative of the institution foremost. Thus, Theodora also became the 'scapegoat' of a sustained strategy of self-representation, one which did not hide the implications of the absolute system of government.

***Kaiserkritik* and embarrassing anecdotes: the disease as an ambiguous rhetorical formula**

Embarrassing anecdotes are contained in the *Historia Arcana*, a work with an elitist circulation primarily among the aristocracy that suffered the Emperor's increasing interference¹⁸. Here we find a critical intent by the aristocracy against the absolutist politics of Justinian, especially after the Emperor took the title of *despotes* and the Empress that of *despoina*¹⁹. This was the death knell of the last formal limits to the omnipotence of the monarchic institution, which now definitively lost the 'democratic mask' of the principdom²⁰. And so, the 'comedy' of power which began with Augustus finally ended its charade with the monarchy

¹⁷ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XV, 25-35.

¹⁸ Wirth & Haury, 1963, pp. 283-284.

¹⁹ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XXX, 21-26.

²⁰ Gibbon, 1967, p. 346; Teja, 1993, p. 613.

showing its absolute form²¹. For his part, Procopius directly attacked the absolute monarchy:

“In ancient times, the Senate, as it came into the Emperor’s presence, was accustomed to do obeisance in the following manner: any man of patrician rank saluted him on the right breast. And the Emperor would kiss him on the head and then dismiss him; but all the rest first bent the right knee to the Emperor, and then withdrew. It was not at all customary, however, to salute the Empress. But in the case of Justinian and Theodora, all other members of the Senate as well as those who held the rank of Patricians, whenever they entered into their presence, would prostrate themselves to the floor, flat on their faces, and holding their hands and feet stretched far out they would touch one foot of each monarch with their lips before rising”²².

In this way, the *Historia Arcana* was intrinsically a product for the use and consumption of the aristocracy. Above all, it aimed to demolish of the figure of the Emperor in the public eye. It relentlessly attacked the Emperor’s ‘weaker side’: his wife and her humble origins. All in all, these were malicious exaggerations which could always be traced back to a political design and went far beyond mere narrative intent. They were clearly directed against the monarchy, and returned the point of view of the disgruntled aristocracy, which commanded Procopius to write a polemical work.

Little wonder then that such embarrassing anecdotes were transposed into the Byzantine hagiography, and were later reinterpreted for the use and consumption of the Church – a repetition of the malicious *locus*, which affirmed the plausibility of the hypothesis of sexual disease contracted by the Emperor. Here, then, is our malicious intent. Nevertheless, these same anecdotes paradoxically served to affirm the values of the Monarchy and of Divine consent. Through the miraculous occurrence, the adequacy of the sovereign was Divinely guaranteed, and the Emperor entered a ‘sheltered space’, wherein worked Divine Favour was at work. The mention of venereal diseases was obviously not in the interest of the official imperial biography, yet proved highly useful for hagiographic literature, which paradoxically denied the critics of the aristocracy and

²¹ Teja, 1993, p. 613.

²² Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XXX, 21-24.

confirmed the Emperor in his role.

We know that a hagiographic text, the *Life of St Samson*, recounted: “a serious illness afflicted Justinian around the genital organs, and he suffered incurable ulcers to the bladder”²³. Many doctors visited the Emperor, but they couldn’t offer a cure; and the disease was ultimately only resolved through a miracle of St Samson. This miracle was of the utmost importance in the narrative of St Samson’s life, since it demonstrated the saint’s thaumaturgic power against an unknown sexual disease and bladder ulcers. It was most important to the Monarchy as well, since, as mentioned above, it placed the Emperor in a ‘sheltered space’.

Körbler tentatively supposes that the Justinian’s disease was a type of gonococcal or saprophytic urethritis, from which the emperor recovered spontaneously, without any dedicated care²⁴. Körbler’s theory posits a series of subsequent problems. First of all, this particular illness implied the presence of a bladder ulcer. The absence of any endoscopic instruments suggested that the presence of bladder ulcers was merely supposed through symptomatology – and so the hagiographer adds this detail since he considered it appropriate. Therefore, Körbler’s hypothesis places us in the field of mere presumptions. In fact, the eminent Byzantine physician Leo, who lived and worked in the 9th century, stated that ulcers appeared in the bladder when patients had dysuria or when they urinated painfully²⁵. The biography of St Samson later described the unknown disease of the Emperor’s genitals, which Körbler likened to the symptoms of dysuria²⁶.

At the same time, Procopius’ *Historia Arcana* posits the hypothesis of another unspecified disease which eventually took the life of the Empress. Procopius described the pale face of the Empress during her later years. Theodora, in fact, lost her beauty – a development was confirmed by contemporary portraits such as the famous mosaic in the Church of St Vital in Ravenna, where the Empress was depicted as melancholy, wearing an expression of fatigue²⁷. Procopius insinuated that Theodora’s chronic illness at death’s door did naught to improve her bad character. Nevertheless, it is still very difficult to claim that her death was unequivocally a consequence of sexual diseases. So too Körbler’s theory

²³ *Vit. S. Sam.*, 283-284.

²⁴ Körbler, 1974, pp. 15-22.

²⁵ *Leonis Philosophi conspectus medicinae*. In Ermerins, 1963, p. 193.

²⁶ Körbler, 1974, pp. 15-22.

²⁷ Galavaris, 1978, pp. 390-391; Deichmann, 1958.

attributing the death of Theodora to a syphilitic attack which affected her mammary glands. This illness was accompanied by an eruption of pustules, a symptom traced back to a syphilitic rupee attack²⁸.

Conversely, a 5th-century African bishop, Victor Tonnennenses, affirmed in his *Chronicles* that Theodora died from breast cancer, which had metastasized throughout her body: “*Theodora Augusta Calchedonensis Synodi inimica canceris plaga corpore toto perfusa vitam prodigiose finivit*”²⁹. Breast cancer was indeed the most probable cause. Byzantine doctors were aware of this disease and its symptomatology; it was therefore difficult to believe that an erudite man such as Victor Tonnennenses would have confused it. Aetius of Byzantium, a 6th-century physician and Paul of Aegina, living in the 7th century, were aware of breast cancer and considered it the most common of all women’s diseases, alongside uterine cancer³⁰. They also described techniques for the partial or total removal of this type of breast cancer. In particular, Aetius knew those situations particularly well, and described appropriate treatments at length. He said that breast cancer was inoperable when it adhered to the thorax, which made its removal a dangerous operation³¹. Instead, an eminent Byzantine doctor of the 4th century, Oribasius, only recommended conservative treatments³². Therefore, we can safely assume without doubt that the Palace’s doctors knew the disease very well, and that they were able to offer surgical treatments. The silence of historical sources on this topic would likely indicate that Theodora’s cancer was inoperable. This information, by itself, lays to rest defeated the thesis of Empress’ death by syphilis³³. Moreover, is Körbler’s hypothesis even credible, in truth? Did Justinian contract syphilis in a specific period, such as the end of Late Antiquity?³⁴

Nicephorus Callistus Anthropolos, an ecclesiastic scholar of the 14th century who drew his information from the most ancient sources available, stated that Justinian’s disease was “bladder lithiasis caused by his unhealthy diet and fatigue”³⁵. This statement clears any lingering doubt over the contraction of sexual illness. The diseases “caused dysuria, difficulty, and pain in urinating, and the Emperor’s doctors didn’t heal his

²⁸ Körbler, 1974, pp. 15-22.

²⁹ *Victoris Tonnennensis episcopi Chronica*. In Mommsen, 1894, p. 202.

³⁰ Briau, 1855, pp. 210-213.

³¹ *Aetii Sermo Sextidecimus et Ultimius*. In Zervos, 1901, pp. 60-68.

³² *Oribasii Collectionum Medicorum Reliquiae*, Vol. IV. In Raeder, 1933, pp. 299-300.

³³ Diehl, 1908, pp. 51-52; Nicol, 1993, p. 124.

³⁴ Lascaratos & Poulakou-Rebelakou, 1999, pp. 789-791.

³⁵ Pamperis, 1802, pp. 14-15.

unbearable pain”³⁶. And so, we are left to think that the pain was caused by colic. We have no information on whether the pain during urination was accompanied by the emission of pus; the lack thereof excluded any one bacterium in particular. In combination, the available data affirmed that colic was the more likely and credible explanation.

In the latter years of his reign, Justinian suffered from a leg disease accompanied by pain during urination. Körbler’s hypothesis started from these symptoms, and argued that it was either edema or nodules which affected the Emperor’s legs, both of which were due to syphilis. In addition to these, the Emperor was known to have suffered from dysuria³⁷.

The Emperor’s leg condition was treated through the intercession of Saints Cosmas and Damian, via the practice of *incubatio*³⁸. We must here clarify that Byzantine historians did not link this leg disease to either edema or knots. Consequently, Körbler’s hypothesis of a syphilitic gum was pure conjecture. In addition, the gums – typical of tertiary syphilis – normally appear between the third and fifth year after infection, and no more than 28 years after the contraction of the disease³⁹. This reason alone denies the credibility of Körbler’s hypothesis.

Elsewhere, Procopius claims that the Emperor suffered from repeated bouts of pain in the knee. Therefore, we may suppose that Justinian was affected by arthritic pain. Procopius informed his audience about the Emperor’s strict diet, consisting of water and wild herbs, and which excluded the consumption of wine. This diet was widely recommended by Byzantine doctors for patients who suffered from gout. Gout was widespread in Byzantium, and so it was well-known to doctors, which described its symptoms in detail in their studies. The doctors’ treatments seem to evoke a gout attack, and do not suggest a generic bacterial infection. Both gout and lithiasis of the urinary tract were very common in the period and coexisted in between 25% and 50% of cases, according to different statistics⁴⁰.

Reasonably, this *dysuria* was attributed to newly-formed accretions in the urinary tract. These urinary disorders were treated with water from the Monastery of the Holy Spring⁴¹. Nicephorus states that Justinian was

³⁶ Pamperis, 1802, pp. 14-15; Poulakou-Rebelakou *et al.*, 2011b, pp. 269-273.

³⁷ Körbler, 1974, pp. 15-22.

³⁸ Wirth & Haury, 1963, pp. 56-68, 107-108; Cuscito, 2007, pp. 99-111; Bucci, 2016; Edelstein & Edelstein, 1945.

³⁹ James *et al.*, 1990, pp. 405-422.

⁴⁰ Lascaratos, 1995, pp. 951-957.

⁴¹ Pamperis, 1802, pp. 14-15.

visited by the *Theotokos* in his dream, and the Virgin advised him to drink large quantities of water from the spring of her Monastery: the Zoodochus Pege. Indeed, this therapy occasioned the dissolution of the Emperor's kidney stones, which were expelled with the urine and from which the Emperor subsequently healed. This text also clearly states that Justinian's condition was lithiasis of the bladder, which was systematically treated with hydrops⁴².

Procopius described the final years of Justinian's reign in his usual polemical tone. In fact, the author claims that Justinian exhibited curious behaviours towards the end of his life: the Emperor would appear in the night and walk around the Palace as if a ghost or a sleepless demon.

Procopius states:

“And some of those who were present with the Emperor, presumably at very late hours of the night, and held conference with him, obviously in the Palace, men whose souls were pure, seemed to see a sort of phantom spirit unfamiliar to them in place of him”⁴³.

Later, Procopius asserts that a holy monk who visited the Emperor at the Sacred Palace saw the prince of demons on the imperial throne, instead of the *pius* Emperor.

Once again attacking the absolute monarchy, Procopius writes:

“... a certain monk, very dear to God, being persuaded by those who lived with him in the wilderness, set out to Byzantium in order to plead the cause of the people who lived very near the monastery and were being mistreated and wronged in an unbearable manner; and straight away upon his arrival, he received admittance to the Emperor. But when he was about to go into his presence, he stepped over the threshold with one foot, but suddenly recoiled and stepped back. Now, the eunuch who was his conductor and the others present besought the man earnestly to go forward, but he, making no answer, but acting like a man who had suffered a stroke, departed thence and went to the room where he was lodged. And when his attendants inquired for which reason he had acted thus, they said that he declared outright that he had seen the Lord of the Demons in the

⁴² Lascaratos *et al.*, 2001, pp. 631-634.

⁴³ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XII, 20.

Palace sitting on the throne, and he would not care to associate with him or ask anything from him”⁴⁴.

This was another *locus* of the *Kaiserkritik*, which directly invested the ‘Theology of Power’, importantly denying the divine origin of the Monarchy. Therefore, this affirmation contradicts the postulates of the official theory of power, proposed by Deacon Agapitos, who systematized all the various different elaborations on this subject. Conversely, Agapitos stated that the Roman Emperor was an emanation of the Christian God: “granted by God to collaborate with him in the accomplishment of what is advantageous (...). It is an image of piety made by God, (...) a living image of God (...)”⁴⁵.

Instead, Procopius aimed to express the moral superiority of aristocracy together with the demonization of absolute monarchy to his audience. Therefore, we hardly believe that these anecdotes represent the actual reality that transpired. In particular, the Emperor’s conduct, such as his nightly roams, suggest the symptoms of senile dementia⁴⁶. Procopius wished to demonstrate Justinian’s inadequacy to govern the Empire.

The Emperor’s mental decline was also reported by Nicolaus Alemannus, the first publisher of Procopius’ *Historia Arcana* in 1623, who referred to this symptom as *neurosyphilis*. This is the only instance of a specific mention of Justinian’s symptoms of early onset senility in Byzantine sources, as no other Byzantine historians make this claim. However, neither is there any specific information to this end available in the sources covering the health of the Emperor in his final days, and, therefore, this position itself cannot develop past mere conjecture either.

Nevertheless, we knew that sometime after 560 AD the Emperor began to be afflicted by general weakness and headaches. Even still, historians claim that Justinian died a sudden death, without any signs or markers of a particular illness; consequently, it is entirely possible that the Emperor died from natural causes.

As we have seen, Körbler believed – without evidence, as we have shown – that Justinian presented symptoms of senility and dementia during his later years⁴⁷. If we accept Körbler’s hypothesis of and believe

⁴⁴ Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XII, 24-26; Ravegnani, 1989, p. 41; Ravegnani, 2016, cap. IV, n. 12. Regarding the theme of Justinian as a demon: Proc. Caes., *Hist. Arc.* XXVI; XXVIII; XXXII.

⁴⁵ Agap. Diac., *Expositio capitum admonitorum*, PG 86, cap. 5; Carile, 2000, pp. 127-149; Patlagean, 1992; Cavarra, 1990, pp. 28-40.

⁴⁶ Poulakou-Rebelakou *et al.*, 2011a, pp. 405-412.

⁴⁷ Körbler, 1974, pp. 15-22.

in an elderly Justinian who showed symptoms of senility towards the end of his life, we must also consider whether this is an excessive interpretation of the actual situation. Justinian's symptoms didn't exemplify the signs of parenchymatous neurosyphilis or paresis. Nevertheless, we also fail to find any of the other symptoms of this disease, such as grandiose ideas, megalomania, deception, and hallucinations, all highly typical of neurosyphilis⁴⁸. Nor did we find a symptom of any other types of neurosyphilis in the available period sources.

Conclusion

The available sources, held under review, allowed for a cross-section of the intimate life of the imperial couple and, moreover, offered important information regarding the level of medical knowledge in Early Byzantium.

In conclusion, we may affirm that the symptoms suffered by Emperor Justinian were highly generic, and his urination pain could be associated with some bacterial infections as well, which the Emperor suffered from in his early years in government. At the same time, the argument for colic, which affected Justinian in his later years, appears eminently credible, certainly so if conjoined with gout. Gout was a very common disease across the Byzantine ruling classes, owed as it was to the very rich diet they subsisted on. Justinian himself likely suffered from this ailment, known as he was to have spent considerable resources on his meals. This argument is also supported by the later institution of his strict diet, based solely on water and vegetables.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult to claim that Justinian contracted syphilis with any certainty. In this light, Körbler's thesis appears highly excessive, and lack grounding in the facts documented by period sources. Therefore, we must dismiss it as a simple conjecture.

Rather, we may detect the real nature of the Emperor's 'illness': a literary *locus*, otherwise known as a formal solution, which saw particular success in the hagiography of the period. The miraculous healing confirmed the proper foundation of the Imperial institution, and served to reaffirm the adequacy of the individual sovereign to his new role. Consequently, the Emperor's ailments proved highly lucrative and important to the Byzantine unofficial strategy of imperial propaganda.

⁴⁸ Rook *et al.*, 1986, pp. 839-859; James *et al.*, 1990, pp. 405-422.

References:

- Angeletti, L. R., 1992. "La medicina." In Settis, S. (ed.): *Civiltà dei Romani. Il rito e la vita privata*. Milano, Electa, pp. 207-218.
- Briau, R., 1855. *Chirurgie de Paul d'Égine*. Paris, Masson.
- Brondy, M. L., 1937. "The history of gonorrhoea among the Greeks and Romans." *Trans Am Neisser Medical Society* 3: 2-106.
- Browning, R., 1987. *Justinian and Theodora*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Bucci, A., 2016. *I santi medici Cosma e Damiano*. Roma, Armando Editore.
- Carile, R. A., 2000. "Santi aristocratici e santi imperatori." In Carile, R. A. (ed.): *Immagine e realtà nel mondo bizantino*. Bologna, Scarabeo, pp. 127-149.
- Cavarra, B., 1990. *Ideologia politica e cultura in România fra IV e il VI secolo*. Quaderni della Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi 9. Spoleto, CISAM.
- Cuscito, G., 2007. "Origine e sviluppo del culto dei santi Cosma e Damiano. Testimonianze nella *Venetia et Histria*." In Spadoni C. & Kniffitz, L. (eds.): *San Michele in Africisco e l'età giustiniana a Ravenna*. Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editoriale, pp. 99-111.
- Deichmann, F. W., 1958. *Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna*. Baden-Baden, Steiner.
- Diehl, C., 1908. *Figures Byzantines*. Paris, Colin.
- Edelstein, E. & Edelstein, L. 1945. *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Ermerins, F.Z. (ed.), 1963. *Leonis Philosophi conspectus medicinae. Anecdota Medica Graeca*. Amsterdam, Hakkert.
- Galavaris, G. P., 1978. "Early Byzantine art." In Christopoulos, G. (ed.): *History of Hellenic Nation*, VII. Athens, Ekdotike the Zoodochus Athenon, pp. 390-391.
- Gibbon, E., 1967. *Storia e decadenza dell'Impero romano*. Torino, Einaudi.
- Grmek, M. D., 1989. *Diseases in the Ancient Greek World*. Baltimore – London, The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Halkin, F., 1977-1978. "Saint Samson le xénodoque de Constantinople (VIe siècle)." *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 14-16: 5-17.
- Hudson, E. H., 1965. "Treponematosis and man's social evolution." *American Anthropologist* 67: 885-901. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1965.67.4.02a00020>

- Hunger, H., 1992. *Byzantine Literature*, II. Athens, Cultural Foundation of the National Bank.
- James, W. D., Berger, T., Elston, D., 1990. *Andrews' Diseases of the Skin. Clinical Dermatology*. Philadelphia, Saunders.
- Kaldellys, A., 2004. *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*. Philadelphia, Penn.
- Körbler, J., 1974. "Die Krebserkrankung der byzantinischen Kaiserin Theodora (Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Syphilis)." *Janus* 61: 15-22.
- Lamma, P., 1947. "Giovanni di Cappadocia." *Aevum* 21: 80-100.
- Lascaratos, J., 1995. "Arthritis in Byzantium (AD 324-1453): unknown information from non-medical literary sources." *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* 54: 951-957. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ard.54.12.951>
- Lascaratos, J. & Poulakou-Rebelakou, E., 1999. "Did Justinian the Great (527-565 CE) suffer from syphilis?" *International Journal of Dermatology* 38: 787-791. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-4362.1999.00561.x>
- Lascaratos, J., Kostakopoulos, A. & Poulakou-Rebelakou, E., 2001. "Urolithiasis on the Byzantine throne." *Urology*, 58(4): 631-634. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-4295\(01\)01017-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-4295(01)01017-2)
- Mantellou, P., 1990. "The personal life of Theodora before marriage with Justinian, according to Procopius Anecdota." *Byzantine Studies* 2: 330-339.
- Miller, T. S., 1990. "The Sampson Hospital of Constantinople." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15: 101-135.
- Mommsen, T. (ed.), 1894. *Victoris Tonnennensis episcopi Chronica. Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, II. Berolini, Weidmann.
- Nicol, D. A., 1993. *Biographical, Dictionary of the Byzantine Empire*. Athens, Hellenic Euroekdotica.
- Oriel, J. D., 2012. *The Scars of Venus: A History of Venereology*. New York, Springer.
- Ostrogorsky, G., 1986. *History of the Byzantine State*. London, Blackwell.
- Pamperis, A., 1802. *Nicephori Callisti Xanthopouli about the Zoodochus Pege in Constantinople and its Miracles*. Constantinople, Pamperis.
- Patlagean, É., 1992. *Santità e potere a Bisanzio*. Spoleto, CISAM.
- Potter, D., 2015. *Theodora: Actress, Empress, Saint*. Oxford, University Press.
- Poulakou-Rebelakou, E., Kalantzis, G., Tsiamis, C. & Ploumpidis, D., 2011a. "Dementia on the Byzantine throne (AD 330-1453)." *Geriatrics & Gerontology International* 12(3): 405-412. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1447-0594.2011.00779.x>
- Poulakou-Rebelakou, E., Karamanou, M. & Androutsos, G., 2011b. "Urological diseases of the Byzantine emperors (330-1453)." *Urology*

- 77(2): 269-273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.urology.2010.05.04>
- Raeder, J. (ed.), 1933. *Oribasii Collectionum Medicorum Reliquiae*, IV. *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*. Lipsiae et Berolini, BG Teubner.
- Ravegnani, G., 1989. *La corte di Giustiniano*. Roma, Jouvence.
- Ravegnani, G., 2008. *Imperatori di Bisanzio*. Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Ravegnani, G., 2011. *Teodora*. Napoli, Salerno editrice.
- Rook, A., Wilkinson, D. S., Govier Ebling, F. J., 1986. *Textbook of Dermatology*, I. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Rubin, B., 1960. *Das Zeitalter Justinians*. Berlin, W. de Gruyter.
- Sigerist, H. E., 1961. *A History of Medicine: Early Greek, Hindu, and Persian Medicine*, II. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Wortley, J., 2004. "Getting Sick and Getting Cured in Late Antiquity." *Washington Academy of Sciences* 90-93: 91-107.
- Vertue, H. S . H., 1983. "Inquiry into venereal disease in Greece and Rome." *Guy's Hospital Reports* 102: 277-302.
- Teja, R., 1993. "Il cerimoniale imperiale". In Carandini, A. *et al.* (eds.): *Storia di Roma, III, L'età tardoantica*, Torino, Einaudi, pp. 613-642.
- Wirth, G. & Haury, J. (eds.), 1963. *Procopii Caesarensii Anecdota (Historia Arcana)*. Opera Omnia. Lipsiae, Teubner.
- Zervos, S. (ed.), 2019. *Aetii Sermo Sextidecimus et Ultimus*. Leipzig, Mangkos.
- Ziche, H. G., 2012-2013. "Abusing Theodora: sexual and political discourse in Procopius." *Bυζαντιακα* 30: 311-323.



Fig. 1. Emperor Justinian and his court.
Mosaic, Basilica di San Vitale, Ravenna, 6th century.



Fig. 2. Empress Theodora and her court.
Mosaic, Basilica di San Vitale, Ravenna, 6th century.



Fig. 3. The alleged head of Theodora.
Sculpture, Castello Sforzesco, Milan, 6th century.

Piotr Żelazko
Studium Theologicum Salesianum, Jerusalem

175th Anniversary of the Re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Abstract:

Jerusalem was always considered by Christians, Orthodox and Catholics alike, as being a terrestrial framework of the mysteries of redemption. This paper examines the history of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem starting from its early stage (1099-1847) to the Latin Patriarchate of present times consisting of six Vicariates.

Keywords: Nulla Celebrior, Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

1. Introduction

For Christians there is no city more famous, no region better known than those of Jerusalem and of Palestine. With these words Pope Pius IX begun, *a perpetua memoria*, his Apostolic Letter *Nulla Celebrior*, with which on July, 23rd, 1847, after mature and long consideration, he decided to restore (*restituimus*) the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarch about Jerusalem and the Holy Land¹.

Jerusalem was always considered by Christians with a special attention as being a terrestrial framework of the mysteries of redemption. Both Orthodox and Catholic tradition recognizes the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem as being of Jewish origin: James the Just, Simeon I, Justus I, Zacchaeus, Tobias, Benjamin I, John I, Matthias I, Philip, Seneca, Justus II, Levi, Ephres, Joseph I, Judas². The next bishop (Marcus) was the first of the “uncircumcised” since after the fall of the second Jewish war against Rome (135) the Jews were prohibited from living in Jerusalem and the bishops were chosen from the gentile-christians³. Roman Martyrology (*Martyrologium Romanum*) names fourteen bishops of the Holy City as martyrs: James, Simeon, Zacchaeus, Matthias, Mark, Narcissus, Alexander, Zambda, Macarius, Maximus, Cyril, Elijah, Sophronius, Albert II⁴. Gradually the administrative power of the Christian bishops in Cesarea,

¹ Filoni, 2022, p. 7.

² Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, V, 5.1: The Bishops of Jerusalem from the Age of our Savior to the Period under Consideration. The chronology of the bishops of Jerusalem I have nowhere found preserved in writing; for tradition says that they were all short lived. But I have learned this much from writings, that until the siege of the Jews, which took place under Adrian, there were fifteen bishops in succession there, all of whom are said to be of Hebrew descent, and to have received the knowledge of Christ in purity, so that they were approved by those who were able to judge of such matters, and were deemed worthy of the episcopate. Their whole church insisted then of believing Hebrews who continued from the days of the apostles until the siege which took place at this time; in which siege the Jews, having again rebelled against the Romans, were conquered after severe battles. But since the bishops of the circumcision ceased at this time, it is proper to give here, a list of their names from the beginning (...) These are the bishops of Jerusalem that lived between the age of the apostles and the time referred to, all of them belonging to the circumcision.

³ Bagatti, 2004, p. XIX.

⁴ *The Roman Martyrology*. Digitalized version:
<https://archive.org/details/romanmartyrologyoocathuoft/page/n5/mode/2up>.

Antioch and other cities grew and became more meaningful than that of Jerusalem. Council of Nicaea (325) in Canon VII restored the precedence of Jerusalem: "Let the Bishop of Ælia be honoured, the rights of the Metropolis being preserved intact"⁵. There is however a discussion among historians about the nature of the rights that should be preserved⁶. Council of Chalcedon (451) declared Jerusalem patriarchate⁷. The presence of the bishops in Jerusalem was not broken by the Persian (614) and Arab (637) conquests. From 644 till 705 the Patriarchate was administered by a Vicar nominated by the Pope⁸. Later on, the Byzantine rite Patriarchs resided in Jerusalem until Simeon who died in Cyprus (June/July 1099),⁹ and was replaced by the Latin Patriarch chosen by the crusaders after their conquest of Jerusalem.

2. Early stage (1099-1847)

The establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and, generally speaking, the formation of Latin episcopal hierarchy in the Holy Land took place during the first crusade. It was however not a result of the politics of Urban II, the Pope that started the entire movement, but rather a fruit of ideas and ambitions of the crusaders and of their break with Byzantine Christianity. After the conquest of Antioch (June, 3rd, 1098) Adhémar of Monteil could return its Patriarchal See to the legitimate title holder, Greek-Byzantine Patriarch John the Oxite, to whom was given the jurisdiction over the entire clergy, including the Latins. The Crusaders did not have doubts about his full communion with Rome and his right to be the head of the entire Church in the region. William of Tyre underlined the fact that the canon law did not allow to share the cathedral church among two heads. In fact, it was prohibited by Canon VIII of

⁵ Shaff, 2005, p. 70.

⁶ Kim, 2021, p. 166, 167: "It is very hard to determine just what was the 'precedence' granted to the Bishop of Aelia, nor is it clear which is the metropolis referred to in the last clause. Most writers, including Hefele, Balsamon, Aristenus and Beveridge consider it to be Cæsarea; while Zonaras thinks Jerusalem to be intended, a view recently adopted and defended by Fuchs; others again suppose it is Antioch that is referred to".

⁷ "Council of Chalcedon". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 Jul. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Chalcedon> (Accessed on September 14, 2022).

⁸ For the complete list of the bishops of Jerusalem see: Fedalto, 1983, p. 13.

⁹ Hamilton, 1996, p. 3, n. 15.

Nicaea¹⁰. Later on, it came out that the Crusaders treated the forms of Christianity other than Latin as deviations, close to heresy. It became visible after the death of the Papal Legate in August 1098 when a letter was sent to the Roman Pontiff with an invitation to come and take the supreme authority: "We defeated the Turks and the pagans, but we cannot fight against the heretic Greeks, Armenians, Siriacs and Jacobites (...) You, who are the Vicar of Peter, should come in order to take in possession the place that is yours in the Church"¹¹. Waiting for the Pope's answer the Crusaders conquered the city of al-Bara (October 1098) and Ramleh (June 1099) where they established Latin bishops.

It seems however that neither of these cases was a final break with the juridical tradition, there was but some respect for the most titled Patriarchate of Antioch. The end of political and military collaboration of the Crusaders with the Byzantines shortly before the siege of Jerusalem complicated the situation. After the conquest of the city (July 15th, 1099) Arnulf of Chocques was elected the new Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The question whether the title was *sede vacante* remains open. According to the mainstream of the Western historians (Hamilton, Grousset, Brehier) Simeon, the Greek Patriarch has already been dead in Cyprus¹². Some Greek authors claim the illegitimacy of Arnulf's election by the fact that allegedly Simeon tried to come back to Jerusalem, but was deprived of the permit from the Crusaders¹³. For Runciman it is sure that the Patriarch would be respected by the princes just like they respected the Patriarch of Antioch. Moreover, the historian claims that the absence of the Greek clergy that has already been in Cyprus was the decisive factor to elect the Latin Patriarch¹⁴. For Hamilton the fact that the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem by themselves only, without help from others was crucial. They were intending to make Jerusalem the capital of an independent state and the Latin jurisdiction to which they belonged seemed a natural step towards it¹⁵.

The lack of the Chapter of Canons that could elect the bishop in a legitimate way seemed not to be problematic. A Council formed by the most prominent Latin clergy elected Arnulf of Chocques that with the permission and financial support of Godfrey of Bouillon established a

¹⁰ Canon 8: "(...) and that there may not be two bishops in the city" (The Canons of the Council of Nicaea (325) - the Original Greek Text with English Translation - and Latin Versions: https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicaea_canons.htm).

¹¹ Hagenmeyer, 1973, p. 161.

¹² Pieraccini, 2006, p. 24, n. 20.

¹³ Moschopoulos, 1956, p. 132.

¹⁴ Runciman, 1995, p. 250.

¹⁵ Hamilton, 1996, p. 4.

Chapter of twenty Canons of the Holy Sepulchre. Pope Urban II died on July 29th, 1099 not being informed of the victorious siege of Jerusalem and so without a possibility to express his opinion about the election of the Latin Patriarch. Knowing however about the death of the Papal Legate he sent a new one, the Archbishop of Pisa, Dagobert that arrived in Jerusalem. At the end of December 1099 Dagobert gathered a council that declared the invalidity of the election of the Latin Patriarch and convinced the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre to elect him as a new one. Latin Patriarchs stayed in Jerusalem until 1187 when the reconquest of Jerusalem by Muslims forced the establishment of the new see in Acre. In 1291 the Kingdom of Jerusalem was destroyed and its remains moved to Cyprus where also the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem resided until 1374 (the last one was Patriarch Guilherme IV Audibert de la Garde). From this moment on the Patriarchate of Jerusalem remained a titular see¹⁶.

3. Modern age (1847-2022)

The re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

On November 7th 1841 an ex-rabbi Salomon Alexander was consecrated Anglican bishop for the newly established Anglican-Lutheran Diocese of Jerusalem. The agreement of Prussian Emperor Frederick William IV and Great Britain's Foreign Affairs Secretary Henry Palmerstone agreed to collaborate in order to evangelize the Jews in the Holy Land in an organized way. Pope Gregory XVI was preoccupied and sent a protest note to London. The Sultan refused to recognize the bishop which did not prevent Salomon Alexander from coming to Jerusalem. The same year Russian interests in the Holy Land started to become more visible. Nicholas I planned to open a Russian mission in Jerusalem. After a long diplomatic activity Archimandrite Porphyrius (Konstantin Aleksandrovich Uspensky) was sent in order to establish and run The Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. Lutheran-Anglican and Russian activity in the region met the shift in the politics of the Holy See towards the Ottoman Empire that came with the election of the new pope - Pius IX. From the beginning of his pontificate the Pope expressed his interests in awakening the missionary activity in the Holy Land and in coordinating it in an administratively organized way. The Congregation of Propaganda Fide decided that there should be a Latin bishop in Jerusalem. Cardinal

¹⁶ For the list of the titular Patriarchs see:

<http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/diocese/jeru0.htm?focus=21221&tab=bishops>

Carlo Acton answered the doubts of the Franciscans of the Custodia Terra Sancta, and formulated 37 questions to be answered before the decision. One of them was whether the newly established Latin bishop of Jerusalem should have the title of a Patriarch. The Cardinals from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide answered all 37 questions including the one if the Patriarch should be one of the Franciscan Minor Friars. The proposed candidate Mons. Giuseppe Valerga was accepted unanimously. On May 16th, 1847 these decisions were communicated officially to the Pope¹⁷.

The main document that is considered as the formal act of re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the Apostolic Letter of Pius IX *Nulla Celebrior* (July, 23rd, 1847). The Pope declared that the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem was his will from the moment of his election. Taking advantage of the fact that there were no more serious reasons that could prevent the Latin Patriarch from residing at his see in Jerusalem the Pope asked the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (today: Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) to study the possible difficulties and all aspects of the ways in which the re-establishment of the jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem could take place. After realizing that the Congregation is in favor of such a solution Pius IX decided to return to the ancient practice when the Patriarch resided in Jerusalem:¹⁸

“Nos autem postquam ad Sancti Petri Cathedram, licet immerentes, ascendimus, statim inter cetera perquam plura Ecclesiae negotia, id etiam animo Nostro considerantes reputavimus, Religionis utilitatem, Fidei Catholicae uberius amplificandae rationes Sedis Hierosolymitanae vetustissimam, ac tanto jure partam dignitatem, et temporum etiam adjuncta postulare, ut Latini ritus Patriarcham in Urbem Hierusalem rursus mitteremus. Voluimus tamen antea istud tantae gravitatis negotium Venerabilibus Fratribus Nostris Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalibus Sacro Consilio Christiano nomini propagando praepositis accurate perpendendum, perptractandumque committere. Eorum autem concors sententia fuit, in Ecclesia Hierosolymitana exercitium Patriarchalis Auctoritatis esse instaurandum. Haec vero cum accepimus Divinum auxilium ad rem tam gravem pro majori Ecclesiae bono feliciter absolvendam impensius imploravimus. Post maturam autem, ac diuturnam deliberationem Nostram

¹⁷ Pieraccini, 2006, p. 199.

¹⁸ Acta Congregationis Propaganda Fide, 10a ff.

ejusdem Congregationis sententiam probavimus, eamque sine mora ad optatum exitum adducendam censuimus. Itaque auctoritate Omnipotentis Dei, et SS. Apostolorum Petri, et Pauli, ac Nostra restituimus Hierosolymis exercitium jurisdictionis Latini Patriarchae, eundemque posthac residendi obligationi, ut olim, obnoxium fore declaramus”.

The jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarch was from now on to cover the one of the Order of Franciscan Friars (OFM). Regarding the establishment and designation of auxiliary bishops by the Patriarch, it was decided to postpone such decisions, and to reserve it to the judgment of Cardinals and to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The Apostolic Letter commanded that a precise instruction be issued by the same Congregation, and confirmed by the Pope. such an instruction will bring norms which the Custos of the Holy Land, and the rest of the Franciscan Order, and all other ecclesiastics subject to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem will have to follow and observe.

On October 4th, 1847 Mons. Daulus Augustus Foscolo, the last titular Patriarch of Jerusalem resigned from his title. During the secret consistory Pope Pius IX presented all the reports that were in favor of the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem. He recommended Mons. Giuseppe Valerga for this function and extended the jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarch up to all of Palestine and Cyprus. The Episcopal Consecration of Giuseppe Valerga took place on October, 10th, 1847. The young Patriarch arrived to Jerusalem on January 17th 1848. Earlier, on December, 10th, 1847 the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith issued a document *Sanctissimus Dominus* that precized the details of the juridical power of the newly established Patriarch¹⁹.

From the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the year 1847 until today the following Patriarchs were nominated:

1847: Mons. Giuseppe Vallerga

Born on April, 9th, 1813 in Loano, Italy. Ordained priest on December, 11th, 1836. Ordained Bishop

on October, 10th, 1847 - Principal Consecrator: Pope Pius IX, Co-Consecrators: Patriarch Giovanni Giuseppe Canali (Titular Patriarch of Constantinople) and Patriarch Giovanni Niccolò Tanari (Titular Patriarch of Antiochia). Appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem on October, 4th, 1847. Died on December, 2nd, 1872.

1873: Giovanni Vincenzo Bracco

¹⁹ Pietraccini, 2006, p. 872.

Born on March, 14th, 1835 in Torrazzo (Diocese of Albenga), Italy. Ordained priest on June, 18th, 1859. Ordained bishop May, 13th, 1866 (Titular Bishop of Magydus) - Principal Consecrator: Patriarch Giuseppe Valerga (Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem), Co-Consecrators: Bishop Guglielmo Massaia, O.F.M. Cap. (Titular Bishop of Casius) and Melchiorre Nazarian (Armenian Archbishop of Mardin). On March, 21st, 1873 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Died on June, 19th, 1889.

1889: Luigi Piavi, O.F.M. Obs.

Born on March, 17th, 1833 in Ravenna, Italy. Ordained priest on December, 22nd, 1855. Ordained bishop November, 26th, 1876 (Titular Archbishop of Siunia) - Principal Consecrator: Alessandro Cardinal Franchi (Cardinal-Priest of Santa Maria in Trastevere), Co-Consecrators: Edward Henry Howard of Norfolk (Titular Archbishop of Neocaesarea in Ponto), Bishop Ignazio Camillo Guglielmo Maria Pietro Persico, O.F.M. Cap. (Titular Bishop of Bolina). On August, 28th, 1889 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Died on January, 24th, 1905.

1906: Filippo Camassei

Born on September, 14th, 1848 in Rome, Italy. Ordained priest on April, 12th, 1872. Ordained bishop on April, 10th, 1904 (Titular Archbishop of Naxos) - Principal Consecrator: Girolamo Maria Cardinal Gotti, O.C.D. (Cardinal-Deacon of Santa Maria della Scala), Co-Consecrators: Pietro Gasparri (Titular Archbishop of Caesarea) and Edmund Stonor (Titular Archbishop of Trapezus). On December, 6th, 1906 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Retired on December, 5th, 1919. On December, 18th, 1919 nominated Cardinal. Died on January, 18th, 1921.

1920: Luigi Barlassina

Born on April, 30th, 1872 in Torino, Italy. Ordained priest on December, 22nd, 1894. Ordained bishop on September, 8th, 1918 (Titular Bishop of Capharnaum) - Principal Consecrator: Basilio Cardinal Pompili (Cardinal-Bishop of Velletri), Co-Consecrators: Pietro Alfonso Jorio (Titular Archbishop of Nicomedia) and Americo Bevilacqua (Titular Archbishop of Scythopolis). On March, 8th, 1920 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Died on September, 27th, 1947.

1949: Alberto Gori, O.F.M.

Born on February, 9th, 1889 in San Pietro Agliana, Italy. Ordained priest on July, 19th, 1914. Ordained bishop on December, 27th, 1949 - Principal Consecrator: Eugène-Gabriel-Gervais-Laurent Cardinal Tisserant (Bishop of Porto e Santa Rufina), Co-Consecrators: Luigi Traglia (Titular Archbishop of Caesarea) and Bp Iginio Michelangelo Nuti, O.F.M. (Titular Bishop of Pupiana). On November, 21st, 1949 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Died on November, 25th, 1970.

1970: Giacomo Giuseppe Beltritti

Born on December, 3rd, 1910 in Peveragno, Italy. Ordained priest on April, 15th, 1933. Ordained bishop on October, 10th, 1965 (Titular Bishop of Cana) - Principal Consecrator: Patriarch Alberto Gori, O.F.M. (Patriarch of Jerusalem), Co-Consecrators: Mikhayl Assaf (Melkite Greek Archbishop of Petra and Philadelphia in Amman), and Hanna Kaldany (Titular Bishop of Gabae). On November, 25th, 1970 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Retired on December, 11th, 1987. Died on November, 1st, 1992.

1987: Michel Sabbah

Born on March, 19th, 1933 in Nazareth, Israel. Ordained priest on June, 29th, 1955. Ordained bishop on January, 6th, 1988 - Principal Consecrator: Pope John Paul II, Co-Consecrators: Eduardo Martínez Somalo (Titular Archbishop of Thagora), and Giovanni Battista Re (Titular Archbishop of Forum Novum). On December, 11th, 1987 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Retired on June, 21st, 1987.

2008: Fouad Boulos Twal

Born on October, 23rd, 1940 in Madaba, Jordan. Ordained priest on June, 29th, 1966. Ordained bishop on July, 22nd, 1992 (Prelate of Tunis) - Principal Consecrator: Patriarch Michel Sabbah (Patriarch of Jerusalem), Co-Consecrators: Edmond Y. Farhat (Titular Archbishop of Byblus), and Francesco Monterisi (Titular Archbishop of Alba Maritima). On June, 21st, 2008 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem. Retired on June, 24th, 2016.

2020: Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Born on April, 21st, 1965 in Cologno al Serio, Diocese of Bergamo, Italy. Ordained priest on September, 15th, 1990. Ordained bishop on September, 10th, 2016 (Titular Archbishop of Verbe) - Principal Consecrator: Leonardo Cardinal Sandri (Cardinal-Deacon of Santi Biagio e Carlo ai Catinari), Co-Consecrators: Patriarch Fouad Boutros Twal (Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem), and Francesco Beschi (Bishop of Bergamo). On October, 24th, 2020 appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem.

4. General view of today's LPJ and its Vicariates

Today the Latin Patriarchate consists of six Vicariates (four territorial and two personal): Vicariate of Israel, Vicariate of Jerusalem and Palestine, Vicariate of Jordan, Vicariate of Cyprus, St. James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel and Vicariate of Migrants and Asylum Seekers²⁰.

²⁰ For more information about the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem see: www.lpj.org.

The Vicariate of Israel, run by Bishop Rafik Nahra, has its see in Nazareth. Approximately 182,000 Christians live in Israel (2021)²¹; They comprise about 1.9% of the State of Israel's population. 76.7% of the Christians in Israel are Arab Christians. They constitute 7.0% of the total Arab population of Israel. Most of the Arab Christians reside in the Northern District (70.3%) and in the Haifa District (13.5%). The localities with the largest Arab Christian populations are Nazareth (21,400), Haifa (16,500), Jerusalem (12,900), and Shefa Amr/Shefar'am (10,400), as of the end of 2020. Around 13% of all Arab Christians are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. The Vicariate of Israel consists of twelve parishes: St. Moses and Elijah Parish in Eilat, St. John the Apostle Parish in Jaffa of Nazareth, Transfiguration Parish in Muqeible, St. Anthony's Parish in Rameh, St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Reneh, St. Abraham's Parish in Beer Sheva, St. Peter's Parish in Tiberias, St. Nicodemus Parish in Ramleh, Annunciation Parish in Nazareth, St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Jaffa, St. Joseph's Parish in Haifa, Parish of the First Miracle in Cana, St. John the Baptist Parish in Acre, St. Joseph's Parish in Shefa Amr. Six of them are administered by priests of the Latin Patriarchate, while others are administered by Franciscan priests from the Custody of the Holy Land or other religious priests. There is also a priest seminary run by the neocatechumenal movement (in Korazin), which is affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, as a section of the Patriarchal Latin Priest Seminary in Beit Jallah.

The Vicariate of Israel runs schools and centres for socio-educational and sports activities, as well as playgrounds, sports fields and parish houses. Twenty schools are run by the Latin Church in Israel (not including Jerusalem). Some of them are administered by the Latin Patriarchate, while the others are run by the Franciscans and different other religious congregations. There are also two institutions for special education in Nazareth and Haifa.

The Vicariate of Jerusalem and Palestine is run by Bishop William Hanna Shomali. Its territory includes the city of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Autonomy, including the Gaza Strip. About 85% of the Christians living in these areas are Arabic-speaking. Upon its restoration in 1847, the Latin Patriarchate began to strengthen the Latin presence in Jerusalem and Palestine by founding missions there. The very first was that of Beit Jala, in 1853; then came the missions of Jifna (1856),

²¹ The statistics according to: Statistics Information Center (Central Bureau of Statistics) December 21st 2021 (<https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/mediarelease/pages/2021/christmas-2021-christians-in-israel.aspx>).

Ramallah (1857), Lydda (1858), Birzeit (1858), Taybeh (1859). Their establishment was later consolidated by Patriarch Ludovico Piavi and by the emergence of a local clergy. Today there are two parishes in Jerusalem (St. James the Apostle in Beit Hanina and St. Savior in Jerusalem), thirteen in Palestinian Territories (Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Aboud, Annunciation in Beit Jallah, Our Lady of Fatima in Beit Sahour, St. Catherine's in Bethlehem, Immaculate Conception in Birzeit, Annunciation in Ein Arik, Holy Redeemer in Jenin, St. Joseph's in Jifna, The Good Shepherd in Jericho, St. Justin in Nablus, Holy Family in Ramallah, Christ the Redeemer in Taybeh, Our Lady of the Visitation in Zababdeh) and one in Gaza Strip (Holy Family in Gaza City).

After the events of 1948 and 1967, the Christian community of Jerusalem and Palestine experienced a massive emigration abroad, which led to a drastic reduction in the number of parishioners. The Vicariate of Jerusalem and Palestine is a spot of the Latin Patriarchal Seminary²². It has welcomed and formed candidates to become diocesan priests in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and in other dioceses for over a century and a half. Patriarch Giuseppe Valerga founded the Seminary in December 1852 with a vision: to form local Arab Christians and young men coming from abroad to be diocesan priests for the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem. Because of the circumstances the seminary was transferred to Beit Jala on September 7th, 1857. Since July 7th, 1936, it has maintained its principal base of operation there. The patron Saints of the Seminary are Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Saint Joseph, Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Therese de Lisieux. The seminary has formed 289 priests, including 15 bishops and 3 patriarchs (Giacomo Giuseppe Beltritti, Michel Sabbah and Fouad Twal). Founded mainly to train local clergy, the seminary has traditionally been open to students from other institutions and countries who wish to prepare themselves on site for the service of the Church in the Holy Land.

The Vicariate of Jordan is run by Bishop Jamal Daibes Khader and has its see in Amman. In 1848, one year after the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the so-called Transjordan was home to a predominantly nomadic population that was mostly Muslim. Not numerous Christians were usually Orthodox. When the Latin Patriarchate began to expand across the Jordan river, two first missions were founded, respectively in Ermemin and Fuheis. As within the time the parishes multiplied, Jordan became the region with the most parishes in the entire diocese. In 1950, after the new State of Jordan was officially proclaimed,

²² For more information about the Seminary see: <https://www.slpj.org>.

many Catholic refugees found a new home there, which modified the structure of the patriarchal diocese. At the same time, cities such as Zerka and Amman found themselves submerged by a phenomenon of rural exodus. While some communities withered away due to strong emigration abroad, others flourished and grew. There are currently thirty two parishes in the Vicariate: Saint Joseph and Elijah in Ader, St. Paul in Ajloun, Christ the King in Al-Misdar, St. Elijah's in Al Wahadne, Our Lady of the Visitation in Anjara, Our Lady "Stella Maris" in Aqaba, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Fuheis, Immaculate Conception in Husson, St. George the Martyr in Irbid, Our Lady of Carmel in Jabal Al-Hashimi, St. John de la Salle in Jabal Al-Hussein, Annunciation in Jabal Al-Weibdeh, St. Joseph's in Jabal Amman, St. Paul the Apostle in Jubeiha, Our Lady of the Rosary in Karak, Saint James the Minor in Ma'in, Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Madaba, St. Joseph's in Mafrag, The Martyrs of Jordan in Marj Al-Hamam, Mary, Mother of the Church in Marka, Sacred Heart of Jesus in Na'ur, Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Rumeimin, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in Safout, Assumption of Our Lady in Salt, Assumption of Our Lady in Shatana, St. Michael in Smakieh, Mary of Nazareth in Sweifieh, Sacred Heart of Jesus in Til'Al'Ali, Mary, the Queen of Peace in New Zarqa, The Twelve Apostles in Zarqa North, St. Pius X in Zarqa South, Holy Family in Rusaifeh. Nowadays, the Christian community in Jordan represents 3-6% of the country's population. It is divided into different rites: Eastern Orthodox, Orthodox, Eastern and Latin Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants. Very much protected by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, this community, in particular the Latin Church, has in return the possibility to develop numerous social and educational infrastructures.

The Vicariate of Cyprus is run by Fr. Jerzy Kraj, O.F.M.²³ and has its see in Nicosia. The presence of Latin Catholics in Cyprus has been continuous since 1192. The demographic weight and the legal status of this community have constantly evolved, according to the different occupying powers, until the independence of the island and its official recognition as a religious group. Its contribution to the economic, cultural and social development of the island is constant. The Latins of Cyprus today form a community, recognized by the State as a religious minority. If the first contacts of the Latins with Cyprus date back to 1126 through traders from Venice and Genoa, the History of the Latin community of Cyprus begins in 1192, with the arrival on the island of a wave of Catholic

²³ On August 15th 2022 Fr. Bruno Varriano, O.F.M. was appointed the new Patriarchal Vicar for Cyprus. He is expected to arrive in Cyprus in December 2022.

migrants Romans from Europe, Cilicia and the Levant hosted by King Frank of Jerusalem. In 1196, the Latin Archbishop took office in Nicosia, the current Cypriot capital, accompanied by three bishops who settled in the cities of Famagusta, Limassol and Paphos. This led to the arrival of many Roman Catholic orders who settled on the island, throughout the Frankish and Venetian periods (1192-1489 and 1489-1570). During this interval, the Latins of Cyprus represented 15 to 20% of the population and exercised an important influence as a ruling nobility. The Ottoman army's conquest of the island (1571) ended this golden age, and resulted in the formal dissolution of the Latin Church on the island. The clergy managed somehow to maintain a presence on the island through, among other things, Franciscan monasteries.

The role of the consulates in Larnaca, which, from the 17th century onwards, provided support to many European migrant bankers, doctors and merchants contributed to the development of a small Latin community in this city. Schools were set up by religious communities, such as the Terra Santa school established in 1646 by the Franciscans, and the Saint Joseph school founded by the sisters of the same name in 1844. The policy of religious tolerance, which characterized the British period from 1878, strengthened the Latin community whose schools were multiplying in the various cities of Cyprus, allowing the integration of the Latins into Cypriot society. The independence of the island (1960) marks an additional stage in the emancipation of the Roman Catholic community with, on the political level, its recognition by the State as a religious group and the acquisition of an elected Representative in the Cypriot Parliament. Despite the Turkish invasion (1974), which made many Catholic families' refugees, the Latin Catholic community in Cyprus continued to grow, prosper and strengthen its contribution to the development of the island in all its aspects, particularly education. Latin schools have educated tens of thousands of children, and have always been seen as prestigious, as well as being known for welcoming pupils regardless of religion or ethnicity.

On the other hand, the Latins of Cyprus can take pride in having left an important architectural and linguistic heritage, particularly during the Frankish and Venetian periods, during which numerous monuments (forts, castles, cathedral abbeys, chapels) were constructed, and dozens of words have entered the Cypriot dialect. Since 1847, a Latin Patriarchal Vicar has been present in Cyprus, under the authority of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which runs four parishes on the island: Holy Cross in Nicosia, St. Catherine's in Limassol, Our Lady of Graces in Larnaca, and St. Paul's in Paphos. Residing in Nicosia, the Vicar is supported by priests officiating in the capital, in Limassol, in Larnaca and in Paphos,

cities which shelter a dozen churches and Latin chapels distributed in an equitable way between the four localities. The Latin community is also very active on an associative level. Numerous social, humanitarian and charitable organizations (refuge for foreign workers, retirement homes) exist today on the island, and monthly and bi-monthly bulletins are published by the parishes and their representative in Parliament as well as by Catholic humanitarian aid organization Caritas Cyprus.

The St. James Vicariate for the Hebrew Speaking Catholics is run by Rev. Piotr Żelazko and has its see in Jerusalem²⁴. SJV gathers the Hebrew-speaking Catholics who live in Israel, those belonging to the Jewish people together with those coming from the nations, including a number of local Christians and migrants. They form one community and belong to one Church being in union with the Pope through the Latin Patriarchate. At the same time, they are at home in the Israeli Jewish, Hebrew-speaking society. Before becoming a Vicariate, the “Association of Saint James” was founded in 1955 as a Catholic organization dedicated to developing Hebrew-speaking Catholic communities in the State of Israel. Saint James as the head of the early Christian community in Jerusalem, a pious Jew, who worked to establish a community made up of Jews and non-Jews was chosen the patron of the Vicariate. Since 2013, the Saint James Vicariate constitutes an autonomous Vicariate within the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Today, Hebrew speaking Catholic communities are active essentially in Jerusalem (St. Simeon and Anna), Tel Aviv-Jaffa (St. Peter's), Haifa (St. John the Baptist), Beer Sheba (St. Abraham's) and Tiberias (St. Peter's). The Vicariate includes communities of Russian speaking faithful (in Haifa and Latroun). The priests and faithful of the Vicariate are much engaged in the pastoral and catechetical service of the Hebrew speaking children of migrants and asylum seekers spread throughout the country. The four main elements of SJV's mission are:

- a. Transmission of the faith: Constituting a Catholic minority within a society that has a Jewish majority is a new experience in the history of the Church. Therefore, the Vicariate has a mission to nurture the faith of its small communities, particularly the children and youth, who live and are integrated into the Hebrew speaking Jewish society.
- b. Serving as a bridge between the Universal Church and the people of Israel: The Vicariate works to strengthen the relationship

²⁴ For more information about St. James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel see: www.catholic.co.il.

between Jews and Christians, sharpening the Church's awareness of its Jewish roots and of the Jewish identity of Jesus and his apostles. The Vicariate seeks to sharpen the awareness of Jews in Israel with regard to the history, teaching and contribution of the Church to society. Our faithful are engaged fully in the life of Israeli Jewish society and in the life of the Catholic Church.

- c. Bearing witness to justice and peace, serving the poor: As an integral part of the Church in the Holy Land, the Vicariate promotes the values of peace and justice, pardon and reconciliation within a context of violence and war. Moreover, the Vicariate has a special mission to the tens of thousands of migrants and asylum who reside in the country.
- d. Interreligious dialogue: Since its origins Saint James Vicariate has been sensitive to interreligious dialogue, especially with the Jewish people amidst whom our faithful reside. Some of our interreligious activities, involving both Muslims and Jews, make us experience that we, human beings, can live together in peace and understanding despite the painful and unresolved political problems.

The Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers is run by fr. Nikodemus Schnabel, O.S.B and has its see in Jerusalem²⁵. Since the end of the 1990s, Israel has been importing large numbers of migrant workers. St. James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel was the first ecclesiastical body dealing with the pastoral care of the migrants. The Filipino community is the largest among the migrant communities and its Chaplaincy was established at the end of the 1990s; then an Indian Chaplaincy was established in 2010. The work of St. James Vicariate with the Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Israel started to be more structured and organized in 2011. In April of that year, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem formally established the Coordination for the Pastoral Among Migrants (CPAM) to direct the Church's efforts in serving, organizing and catechizing the extensive population of Roman Catholic migrants in Israel, particularly those who were not taken care of by other Church bodies or religious orders and congregations. The responsible for CPAM was the Vicar of St. James Vicariate for the Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel. In April 2018, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate, transformed the CPAM into a Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers (VMAS) under the

²⁵ For more information about Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers see: www.vmas.info.

responsibility of a Patriarchal Vicar who would work in communion and in agreement with the Patriarch. The Vicar of St. James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel was nominated the Vicar of VMAS. The “Holy Family” personal parish, destined to care for the migrants and asylum seekers in all pastoral, sacramental and formative aspects, was erected at the same time. The VMAS tries to circulate information among those concerned with the migrants in the Holy Land, raising consciousness about the concerns of the migrants, informing the Catholic bishops, circulating updates and input, coordinating with the NGOs within civil society that work for the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, representing the concerns of the migrants to the media, coordinating with the local Embassies of the migrants’ countries and dioceses of origin, etc. It also tries to raise funds from donors for projects.

In 2013, two more Chaplaincies were established: the Sri Lankan and the Ge’ez rite. In addition, there are individual chaplains or specific priests for the Rumanian, Polish, Latin American, English and French speaking African, and other communities. The VMAS gives special attention to the second generation, sons and daughters of migrants, through different activities, such as Infant Care, and together with St. James Vicariate, the After School programs and Youth programs. In view of this ministry, the Pastoral centres were established: Our Lady Woman of Valor (Tel Aviv), the St. Joseph’s (Tel Aviv), and the St. Rachel’s (Jerusalem). From September 2021 the Vicar of St. James Vicariate for the Hebrew Speaking Catholics is no longer the Vicar of the Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers. The two Vicariates in the new administrative situation became totally independent and separated.

On November, 28th, 1997, on the occasion of 150th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Pope John Paul II addressed to the Patriarch, the Auxiliary Bishops, the priests and deacons, the men and women religious, and the faithful of the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem for Latins, an Apostolic Letter in which he wrote:²⁶

“Through its distinguished Pastors and institutions, your Diocese has always sought to be faithful to its vocation, even in a context which throughout its 150-year history has experienced profound social, political and religious change. Today the Latin Catholic faithful who now live not only in Jerusalem but also in the Palestinian Territories, the State of

²⁶ *Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to The Latin-Rite Diocese Of Jerusalem.*

Israel, the Kingdom of Jordan and Cyprus belong to this Diocese, which extended over the region then called Palestine. In the Holy Land, in addition to the faithful who are predominantly Arabic-speaking, the Diocese also has a small but important Hebrew-speaking community. With strength and courage your Diocese has shown itself worthy of the special privilege of helping to preserve and protect the Holy Places of the Redemption.”

References:

- Bagatti, P.B., 2004. "Ambiente Storico". In E. Testa, *Il Simbolismo dei Giudeo-Cristiani*, Collectio Maior 14, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem, XIX-XXXII.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2019. "Council of Chalcedon". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 Jul. Online: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Chalcedon>. Accessed on September 14, 2022.
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* (tr. Arthur Cushman McGiffert). Online: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/church-history-books-ivvi-11517>.
- Fedalto, G., 1983. "Liste vescovili del patriarcato di Gerusalemme." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 49: 5-41.
- Filoni, F., 2022. "A 175 anni dal ripristino del Patriarcato di Gerusalemme dei Latini. Una ricorrenza da non dimenticare". *L'Osservatore Romano*, 166, p. 7.
- Hagemeyer, H., 1973. *Epistulae et cartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes*. Hildesheim, G. Olms.
- Hamilton, B., 1996. "The Latin Church in the Crusader States." In K. Ciggaar, A. Davids, H. Teule (eds.), *East and West in the Crusader States. Context - Contacts - Confrontations. Acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in May 1993*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 75, Leuven, Peeters, 1-19.
- John Paul II, 1997. *Letter Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II To The Latin-Rite Diocese Of Jerusalem*. Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Online: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19971209_patriarchate-jerusalem.html
- Kim, Y.R. (ed.), 2021. *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Médebielle, P., 1963. *The Diocese of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem*. Jerusalem, Franciscan Press.
- Moschopoulos, N., 1956. *La Terre Sainte. Essai sur l'histoire politique et diplomatique des Lieux Saints de la Chrétienté*. Athene, Author's Edition.
- Pietraccini, P., 2006. "Il Patriarcato latino di Gerusalemme (1842-1851)." *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 27: 861-896.
- Pieraccini, P., 2006. *Il ristabilimento del Patriarcato Latino di Gerusalemme e la Custodia di Terra Santa. La dialettica istituzionale al tempo del primo patriarca Mons. Giuseppe Valerga (1847-1872)*, Studia Orientalia Christiana. Monographiae 15. Cairo-Jerusalem, The

Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies.

Pius IX, "Nulla Celebrior" 23 luglio 1847. In *Acta Pii IX*, 1846-1878, pars I, vol. 1, 59-69, *Acta Congregationis Propaganda Fide*, Congregazioni Particolari, *Acta Terra Sancta*, vol. 157.

Possetto, A., 1938. *Il Patriarcato Latino di Gerusalemme (1848-1938), Omaggio della luogotenenza d'Italia dell'Ordine Equestre del Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme*. Milano, Crociata.

Runciman, S., 1995. *La storia delle crociate*. Vol.1. Torino, Einaudi.

Shaff, P. (ed.), 2005. *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*. S.II, Vol.14: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Michigan, Grand Rapids. Online: https://www.academia.edu/32143030/The_Seven_Ecumenical_Councils_Philip_Shaff_pdf

Testa, E., 2004. *Il Simbolismo dei Giudeo-Cristiani*. Collectio Maior 14, Jerusalem, Franciscan Printing Press.

The Canons of the Council of Nicaea (325) - the Original Greek Text with English Translation - and Latin Versions: https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicaea_canons.htm

The Roman Martyrology. Published By Order of Gregory XIII. Revised by the Authority of Urban VII and Clement X. Afterwards, In the Year 1749 Augmented and Corrected by Benedict XIV (Baltimore, John Murphy Comp. Publ., 1916). Online: <https://archive.org/details/romanmartyrology00cathuoft/page/n5/mode/2up>

www.catholic.co.il

www.cbs.gov.il

www.lpj.org

www.slpj.org

www.vmas.info

Adrian Bărbieru
Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest

The Levant for Valeriu Anania: A journey of thought and spiritual fulfilment

Abstract: Valeriu Anania, “the hierarch with an American writer’s biography”¹, was a poet, playwright, prose writer, essayist and translator. More than his expulsion from the Faculty of Medicine (the reason why he would never fulfil his dream of becoming a doctor) he was the protagonist of several arrests that culminated in six years in prison. Even though his biography was marked by the Second World War and the difficult years of Communism, his open-mindedness to knowledge never faltered. Moreover, although his life was marked by a series of unfortunate events, Anania was an encyclopedic personality passionate about the acquisition of knowledge, and a traveler of the spirit. In this paper, we will highlight some important milestones that support the above. First of all, we will analyze Anania’s undergraduate thesis, the play *Greul Pământului*, his travels across India and Ethiopia, as well his translations of the Bible and of the *Canon* of Andrew the Cretan.

Keywords: Valeriu Anania, Oriental mysteries, dramaturgy, India, Ethiopia, the Bible, Andrew the Cretan

¹ Ghițulescu, 2000, p. 189.

Anania's theological beginnings: Oriental Mysteries and Christianity

As we know, the Second World War greatly disturbed the course of mankind; in this, Valeriu Anania was no exception. This period saw him studying Medicine and Theology. Expelled from the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj-Napoca in 1946, he would finally finish his studies in Theology, under difficult conditions, in 1948.

In 1948, he arrived in Sibiu from the Pătrunsa Monastery (where he had hidden from the Police), in order to receive treatment for toothache. While in Sibiu, he stayed at the Metropolitan House. His presence was uncovered by professors from the Academy of Theology, who happened to be attending a celebration of N. Berdiaev. The professors invited him to continue his studies: the Rector Nicolae Neaga, together with Bishop Balan, agreed to enrol him. From March until June of 1948, Anania would remain at the Academy House in complete isolation, because the Police investigator in Cluj-Napoca – who had investigated him for the events in 1946 – was named Inspector of the Securitate in Sibiu. In this time, Anania stated that, “I did not even show myself at the gate”². Moreover, there had been a massive series of arrests occurring in May, and Anania spent an entire month sleeping “with his clothes on and holding his bag,” fearing a sudden detention. As such, seven years after beginning his studies in Theology in Bucharest, which he continued in Cluj-Napoca, it was only in June of 1948 that he graduated in Theology, while in Sibiu. His thesis, *Oriental Mysteries and Christianity*, was defended at the Department of Theology and History of Religion, under the guidance of Professor Emilian Vasilescu.

This thesis, presented in 1948, would be published in 2013 featuring a critical edition and foreword penned by Aurel Sasu, by the Eikon Publishing House in Cluj-Napoca. This document is important for emphasizing Anania's natural inclination towards the Levant. According to the publisher, the thesis constitutes “an important chapter of intellectual and political biography”³. In Anania's *Memories*, we can trace the genesis of this text: “since I was in my first year in Bucharest, I began to write a thesis about *Oriental Mysteries and their connection with Christianity*. Theodor M. Popescu praised my work very highly. Ever since, I decided

² Anania, 2008, pp. 167-168.

³ Anania, 2013, p. IX.

to make a complete thesis out of it”⁴. For six years, a young Anania studied every material on the topic; , through the help of some friends, he managed to acquire the newest books on the subject from France, and his draft ran into the thousands of pages. After this, he organized and synthesized the documented material, bringing his own contribution and redaction.

The thesis is not, strictly, a study in Theology. It contains important references to religiosity and cults from Ancient Greece, the Latin Empire, Babylonia, Thrace, Macedonia, Asia, as well as the Persian and Hindu traditions. Indeed, the author speaks about a variety of deities and mythological characters, proving, through a comparative study, that the birth of Christianity represents the natural culmination of more primitive pagan religions.

Anania did not agree with the Protestant rationalisms created in the school of *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Methode*. They considered that Christianity evolved as a development of primitive religions, borrowing various different elements that the Christians later interpreted in a novel fashion. After an incursion into Graeco-Roman philosophy and an account of the Eastern Mysteries – which are presented in a descriptive and analytical manner – he arrives at the main subject of his dissertation, an analysis of the relationship between the Eastern myths and Christianity.

Valeriu Anania begins his demonstration from the historical argument of the documentary existence of Jesus Christ: “Christ has not only a transcendent existence, as the Son of God, born of Him before Eternity, but he also had an earthly existence, recorded by eyewitnesses. His Birth, Death and Resurrection were historical events, precisely situated in time and certified by authentic chronicles”⁵, unlike the tutelary personages of ancient mysteries who had a mythological rather than a historical existence. Anania rely on the Apostle Paul, at the doctrinal, terminological and liturgical level, demonstrating the convergent points, but especially the divergent ones, between the old ancient religions and Christianity. All this is demonstrated in the light of the Christian dogma to which he is faithful, a fact that makes him state about Paul “that his distaste for pagan religions went as far as ignorance. In fact, not ignorance – but a kind of emptying of his spirit of any foreign factor, precisely in order not to confuse the teachings of Gospel with what could have compromised its novelty and sanctity”⁶.

The general tone of the work could be viewed in the light of what

⁴ Anania, 2008, p. 176.

⁵ Anania, 2013, p. 106.

⁶ Anania, 2013, pp. 103-104.

was earlier stated by Mircea Eliade, who believed that “Christianity means the overthrow of all values”⁷. Despite certain similarities with the religions of Antiquity that preceded Christianity, the root causes that generated these similarities are altogether different. The ritual forms of Christianity are based on metaphysical motivations superior to other religious forms. However, the real value these religions should not be denied - o in the spirituality of their time. Therefore, Anania believes that we can speak of a certain similarity of form, while the underlying substance is completely different. In Christianity, the author sees a religious manifestation that implies the fulfilment of Man not only on a sensory and intellectual level, but also transcendently: “The Christian consciousness did not lead to despair. On the contrary, hope was both the moral support and one of the theological virtues that drove away any trace of despair – to distinguish it from the mysteries of Antiquity that, through that believed in *fatum* – which is the source of the tragedy of ancient Man”⁸.

This is an early work of youth, with a pronounced philosophical and mythological character, even though this aspect is approached from the perspective of Christian dogma. It nevertheless reveals theologian Valeriu Anania’s natural inclination towards Oriental mythologies, who, ever since his youth, rejected the isolation inherent in the theoretical space of Christian metaphysics, being more generally open to any form of knowledge.

The Levant in Anania’s dramaturgy

Oriental influences can be found in many of Anania’s plays, but the most relevant from this point of view is *Greul Pământului*, subtitled “Wallachian myth in the making”. This is one of the most important plays written by Anania, for which he received the Romanian Writers’ Union Award in 1982.

The play’s characters are identifiable as belonging to the late 12th and early 13th centuries, with the period of the drama set during the time of the Second Bulgarian Empire, led by the Vlach-Bulgarian Asănești family. The entire action swings between the south-Danube formation and the Byzantine Empire, which was grievously torn by internal power struggles as well as by attacks from outside.

In the play, the two levels of the mythical and the historical are closely interwoven and abundantly seasoned with influences of popular

⁷ Eliade, 2001, pp. 50-51.

⁸ Anania, 2013, p. 116.

heresy or with structures specific to the Church language of the Psalter. Regarding this play, Anania stated in 1984 that it was: “not history [that was] the starting point, but rather the poetic idea, into which history is organically integrated and to which it is called to serve”⁹.

From this statement, we can infer that the writer did not seek to restore historical truths with the meticulousness of an archival researcher, but instead had the creation of a literary work of fiction that bore his mark in his sights. In this perspective, the historical setting was only the crucible wherein the entire unfolding of the play took place. This idea is also supported by the title, which does not make any reference or allusion to the historical setting, but instead chooses to highlight the myth, more precisely the “myth in the making,” to preserve the playwright’s own expression. However, the accuracy of the historical data and the historical context that Anania re-created in the play must also be noted. The action is set in the 12th-13th centuries, with the atmosphere of the Constantinople era being recreated through reference to characters whose historical existence is undeniable: Isaac, the emperor of Byzantium; his son, Caesar Alexius; and the emperor's brother, Alexius Angelos III. Anania depicts a world of moral decay, suffering from a lack of principles, which gives rise to conflicts in the heart of the Byzantine Empire. This decrepitude is put on full display, and added to by showcasing the bankrupt expansionist policy of Angelos and of his son-in-law, Komnenos. This led to the draining of the empire's resources and to a series of stinging defeats. Sensing the difficulty in which the court in Constantinople found itself, the two brothers Petru and Asan launch a revolt against the Basileus, and establish the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire. Angelos blinds his brother and takes his throne, but he is left powerless before the Crusader forces that conquer Constantinople in 1204, with Baldwin of Flanders becoming king over Byzantium. The degrading situation which Byzantium reached is summarized by Ioniță, who states that “Byzantium is no longer worthy of itself”¹⁰.

The Byzantine Empire’s vulnerability, culminating in the occupation of Constantinople by the Crusaders, afforded the possibility of the creation of a Vlach-Bulgarian state south of the Danube. It, moreover, reveals the existence of the south-Danubian branch of the Vlachs, this being the space that Anania chose for the creation of a mythical world, replete with metahistorical myths and rituals that would have constituted the foundation of this civilization. Neither does the play lack the historical characters that marked the short existence of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire,

⁹ Anania, 2008, p. 78.

¹⁰ Anania, 2010.

such as brothers Petru and Asan or Boril (who, in the play, became a merchant).

From the *Mistica Pământului*, (*Mystique of the Earth*), an article published in the United States in 1969, we can deduce the author's reasons for resorting to the symbolism of the earth. The incident is related to the time spent by the writer in the United States: "the requests that moved me to the point of an earthquake by Romanians between the two great Word War to bring them land from Romania. Soil from a pit, soil from near a church, soil from a garden..."¹¹. Moreover, the writer himself, across the ocean, carried with him a bag of Romanian soil; later, he would declare that he wanted his body to be buried in Romanian soil, "not out of patriotic reasons, but because this is the only one that keeps you warm"¹². This idea is reiterated through the mouth of Borilă, the merchant, in dialogue with the Basileus Isaac: "Here is earth from the land of your roots; bury yourself in it and keep yourself warm"¹³. Therefore, the character created by Anania is meant to be the exponent of an ancestral tradition of the South-Danube Vlachs, and not just a personal flight of fiction.

In the author's view, the earth does not materialize in contradiction with the spirit – as argued, for instance, by Cioran – but in harmony with it. The earth is alive, and represents the link between the two planes. The scene where Ioniță is carried by his mother to his father's grave to light a candle is revealing in this regard. The gesture scandalized the young man, who did not understand the significance of lighting a candle for a dead person, lying in a dead ground. The mother's explanation includes the quintessence of their way of living:

"'The earth is alive, both for those here and for those beyond... the earth is also alive for the dead, for everything will rise from it.' 'But aren't the dead in heaven?' 'I am in the sky and I am also on the earth, child, because the earth and the sky always embrace and penetrate one another, and one cannot be without the other' 'Mother, where is the heart of the earth?' 'Place your ear on this grave, and listen...' And I put my ear to the ground, and I heard the heart of the earth beating, as I knew my mother's heart was beating when I bent my head on her chest"¹⁴.

¹¹ Anania, 2008, p. 46.

¹² Anania, Sasu, 2009, pp. 107-108.

¹³ Anania, 2010, p. 390.

¹⁴ Anania, 2010, p. 405.

This perspective is not new; it also appears in the work of Mircea Eliade, who speaks about the binomial *Homo-Humus*, “which should not be understood that Man is dust because he is mortal, but that Man could be alive because he derives from the earth, because he was born from it and will return to the *Terra Mater*”¹⁵. In an interview with S. N. Nicolaescu, Anania stated that *Greul Pământului* is “a myth of the earth, the myth of the earth that becomes the sky, in the sense that it is transfigured and realizes what Blaga rightly called ‘the transcendent that descends’”¹⁶.

The etymological analysis of the name of the character of Ioniță Caloian could well answer the question: “Why did Valeriu Anania choose this period of history to stage a myth of the earth?” The historical character is recorded in scholarly treatises under the name of Ioniță the Beautiful or the Good (Caloian), (cf. Greek, καλός – beautiful, good; Ιάnnης - John), the leader of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire between 1197 and 1207. At the same time, the tradition of the *caloian*, “a small statue imitating a man, crafted by girls or (young) wives in times of drought, from earth or clay, and buried by them accompanied by lamentations invoking the rain, is well-documented in communities both south and north of the river Danube. The term has a number of variants, such as *caluian*, *caluian*, *calian*, *scaloian*, *coloian*, etc. It is likely either related to the skv (*kalu*) or *clay* (the *caloian* being made from this material) and, perhaps, even represents a subordinate adjective: *kalenu*, “of clay”¹⁷. The phonetic overlap of the two etymons, which effectively have different roots (that themselves denote different entities) in the Romanian language is probably a stylistic decision consciously chosen by Anania to transpose the historical character of Ioniță the Beautiful into a “Wallachian myth in the making,” after having already transformed myth into history in *Steaua Zimbrului*.

From the United States to India and Ethiopia

In addition to his passion for writing, Anania was a tireless traveller, even if such travels were often forced on him. Between 1968 and 1974, Valeriu Anania received the right of residence in the United States, where he performed several church functions. As an American resident, on January 1st, 1969 he boarded an Air India aircraft bound for Bombay, and arrived in India before the delegation of the Romanian Patriarchate led by Patriarch Justinian. The Romanian delegation was comprised of the

¹⁵ Eliade, 1993, p. 149.

¹⁶ *Cultura*, 1998, p. 32.

¹⁷ *Dicționarul limbii române*, 1949, p. 53.

Patriarch, Metropolitan Bishops Nicolae Mladin of Transylvania and Nicolae Corneanu of Banat, and Assistant Bishop Antim Nica. As translator for the Romanian delegation, he met Paul Verghese near the Seminary of Kottayam, where the delegation of the Patriarchate was accommodated. Here, the Catholicos Patriarch Augen I emphasized that this was the first visit of an Orthodox Church to be represented by its head since the Synod of Chalcedon (451). Indeed, as Anania himself recounted, this visit was perceived “as an extraordinary event”¹⁸.

While in the subcontinent, Valeriu Anania became fascinated with the Indian world. Regarding the province of Kerala, Anania wrote: “I saw the clean cities with well-kept streets, men in simple white suits [...]; elegant women in their colourful costumes; children in a disciplined frolic; students going to university or leaving classes in the same decent manner; boys always walking on one sidewalk and girls, without exception, on the other. Kerala is the only Indian state where more than 90% of the citizens are literate, largely due to the schools and institutions of higher education created by the Christian Churches, in particular the Catholic Church. For maintenance, all these cultural settlements (including the Orthodox Seminary of Koattayam) were endowed with rubber tree plantations that would bring them a sufficient income with minimum effort”¹⁹.

On January 11th, 1969, the delegation visited the city of Kothamangalam, the metropolitan centre of the Church in Malabar, where they were welcomed by a crowd of 50,000 people. At an ecclesiastical level, Anania bore witness to a highly important historical moment for ecumenical dialogue between the churches. It was here he that met the Paul Verghese, who “recognized that the Syriac translation of the main Chalcedonian formulation, which states that the two natures of Jesus Christ, Divine and human, function unmixed and unchanged, undivided and unseparated, was ambiguous – hence the flawed interpretation”²⁰.

Ethiopia

Anania’s visit to Ethiopia began on January 15th at Addis-Ababa Airport, and concluded on January 24th. This visit was the expression of good relations between the Romanian and Ethiopian Churches, and was also a response to the visit Haile Selassie had made to Romania in 1964.

On the same day as their arrival, they held discussions with

¹⁸ Anania, 2008, p. 450

¹⁹ Anania, 2008, pp. 450-451.

²⁰ Anania, 2008, p. 451.

members of the Ethiopian Synod in order to bring the two Churches closer together. On this, Anania notes: “The hosts declared themselves open to dialogue, saying that, like their colleagues from India, the main problem of the non-Chalcedonians towards the Chalcedonians lay in the difference of translation and interpretation of the diplophysite formula. This was the core of our visit to Ethiopia. The Emperor constructed us a sightseeing schedule as great as his generosity and possibilities”²¹.

Literature and travels as initiations for his most important work – the translation of the Bible

Attempting to tackle the sacred text of Christianity represented a turning point for the writer. He confessed that, “since I started working on the Holy Scriptures, my literary work stopped being of interest to me”²², believing that the strength gained over the six decades he devoted himself to literature was merely a preamble to his final great project. Associating the words of Nicolae Iorga, who said that the Bible was “the book that can replace an entire literature”²³, with the writer's assertion above, we are not exaggerating in claiming that it is only the translation of the Book that can give the true measure of the writer Valeriu Anania. In his endeavour, he refused to limit himself to the translation, or to solely bringing the sacred text up to date, as his predecessors had done. Here, we can review the similar profile (both theologian and writer) of Gala Galaction, who instead proposed modernising the text into the modern Romanian language, supplemented by many enlightening pieces of information. Anania instead claimed that he “opted for a literal (not literary) version of the Bible; that is, one on which exegesis (a very rigorous control of terms employed) can be carried out, asking the writer to lend the text the transparency of a Byzantine icon. If the icon differs from the painting, it is due to the fact that the Face shines through the faces”²⁴.

The initiative to translate the Bible belonged to Dumitru Fecioru, who proposed a tandem translation to Anania being convinced that “not only the Church, but also Romanian culture is in need of a new translation. [...] It is a duty of conscience.” And Fecioru said to Anania: “And I thought that only the two of us could do it; I as a Hellenist, and your Holiness as an expert in the Romanian language. You hold Arghezi's

²¹ Anania, 2008, p. 452

²² *Sfânta Scriptură în limba română*, 1994, p. 100.

²³ Iorga, 1999, p. 32.

²⁴ *Sfânta Scriptură în limba română*, 1994, p. 97.

certificate; and that is no small thing”²⁵. The project did not ultimately materialize owing to Dumitru Fecioru’s unexpected death, whereupon the entire responsibility fell on Anania’s shoulders.

In *The Clarifying Word on Holy Scripture (Cuvântul lămuritor asupra Sfintei Scripturi)*, the translator expresses the form in which he viewed the assumption of the relationship between theology and philology in his approach:

“With Adamic man, the Creator spoke in one language; the man did not understand the speech of the angels; and, later, Moses remembered that it was him, the stammerer, that God was sending to speak His words to the people: ‘How will I do it, Lord, since I am slow of speech and tongue?’ ‘You are, indeed; but Aaron, your brother, is not. I will tell you; you will tell him; he will tell the people; and, thus, you will be to him what I am to you. ‘The Word had become words. Theology had become philology”²⁶.

In the aforementioned interview, Anania stressed:

“I want to underline the fact that the writer has in mind his literary goal, being primarily interested in the beauty of his language, while the Biblical translator is obliged to carefully weigh the consequences of each word, because it is meant to become an act of faith. It is a great responsibility”²⁷.

Continuing the tradition inaugurated in the Romanian space in 1688, Valeriu Anania did not limit himself to merely bringing the sacred text up to date, according to the *Septuagint*, but succeeded in creating a unique work in the Romanian language through his numerous footnotes and the rich introductions afforded to each chapter. Anania attempted a fair balance between philological norms and theological canons. The author's introductions to each book of the Bible contain numerous references to literary texts. The role of these references is none other than to shed further light upon the text, which by itself can often seem outdated. The reason why this led Anania to turn to the *Septuagint* is “the big break that occurred in 1936” through the translation co-authored by Gala Galaction, Vasile Radu and Nicodim Munteanu, who turned to the Masoretic

²⁵ Anania, 2008, p. 658.

²⁶ *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, 2001, p. 7.

²⁷ *Sfânta Scriptură în limba română*, p. 95.

text. For his part, Valeriu Anania pleads for a return to the furthest original sources, i.e., for a translation according to the *Septuagint*. However, “this does not mean that the Hebrew Version – says the translator – is to be despised or ignored; on the contrary, a correct redaction of the Biblical text is inconceivable without its consultation and use, both for highlighting some nuances of language, and in particular for the transcription of Hebrew proper names, both patronymic and toponymic...”²⁸.

The translator indeed made extensive use of several versions of the Scriptures, among them *La Bible de Jérusalem*, *La Bible* traduite par Emile Osty, the English-language Bible in its King James, Revised Standard and Today’s English versions, or the *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible*. The footnotes, moreover, contain many references to other works offering more in-depth explanations of the text itself.

Being aware of the difficulties and requirements of producing a new version of a translation, Anania began with the translation of the New Testament because, on the one hand, it did not entail so many difficulties, and on the other, because he was afraid that he would die soon thereafter. (He began translating the Bible at the age of 69). The translator published fragments of it, in order to gauge its reception by the public and also to be able to modify certain controversial terms, especially in the Old Testament “where it is not only a review, but also a restauration”²⁹.

Towards the close of *The Clarifying Word on Holy Scripture*, the author provides readers with the key in which he would like his translation to be read: “True reading and a correct interpretation of the Bible can only be done through the relationship between text and context; that is, by reading and conceptualizing the text (verse) according to what was said before and after it, as well as according to its connections with very distant yet similar texts. The part can never be separated from the whole. If, for example, a scholar today claimed that his work can only be understood if it is read in its entirety, how much more – incomparably more – so is the Bible or Holy Scripture!”³⁰.

The Canon of St Andrew the Cretan

Following his translation of the Bible, which represented the confirmation of Anania's vocation as a translator, the author did not deny himself, and offered those readers that love religious texts a masterpiece

²⁸ *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, 2001, p. 11.

²⁹ *Sfânta Scriptură în limba română*, p. 93.

³⁰ *Noul Testament*, 1993, p. 12.

of Byzantine hymnography, composed by Andrew the Cretan. The Canon of Andrew the Cretan, with an important liturgical significance in the Orthodox rite has, according to the translator, a special importance for three reasons: “its depth of thought, its beauty of expression and the great number of *troparions* (211 in total).”³¹

Just as he had done with the translation of the Scripture, Valeriu Anania did not limit himself to merely correcting the exiting text, instead providing additional notes on the side of the text; this time, the references only point to passages from the Bible that could better clarify or deepen certain meanings. Unlike his work on the Bible, here Anania limited himself to the biblical space only, withholding references to parallels or associations found in secular literature.

Conclusions

Attracted to science in his youth, when he wanted to become *a priest and doctor*, Valeriu Anania managed to dedicate himself to literature throughout his life, in no small part because writing was part of his being. His many arrests and years in prison were mere delays; they did not stop him from putting down on paper what he thought and felt. An encyclopaedic spirit, Anania refused to settle with only the field of theology, forging deep friendships with famous writers such as Arghezi or Blaga. In this way, he forged bridges between theology, the arts and the sciences.

These experiences and his travels, which we have analysed in this paper, served to shape his understanding of faith and the world under the sign of dialogue between different cultures and domains. Many of them were, as Anania himself testifies, *a preparation for the translation of the Bible*, which he endowed with a rich critical apparatus consisting of introductions and explanatory notes in which notions from literature, art, science and theology can all be found. Moreover, Anania was not only an apostle of the spirit, because he agreed “that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians, 3:6). He was also a man of real interaction, concerned with Otherness, with the real existence of his neighbour. Through this attitude, he proved not only his tolerance, but also a great desire to understand the Other. This explains his special interest for the Oriental cultures and civilizations that have fascinated him ever since his youth.

³¹ Sf. Andrei Cretanul, 2004, p. 6.

References:

- Anania Valeriu, 2008. *Drama istorică și poezia dramatică*, in Valeriu Anania, *Opera literară, IX, Publicistica, II*, Limes Publising House, Cluj-Napoca.
- Anania Valeriu, 2010. *Greul Pământului* in Valeriu Anania, *Teatru II*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași.
- Anania Valeriu, 2008. *Memorii*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași.
- Anania Valeriu, 2013. *Misterele orientale și creștinismul*, Eikon Publising House, Cluj-Napoca.
- Anania Valeriu, 2008. *Mistica pământului*, in *Credința*, 4/1969, apud Valeriu Anania, *Opera literară, VIII, Publicistica, I*, Limes Publising House, Cluj-Napoca.
- Anania Valeriu, Sasu Aurel, 2009. *Despre noi și despre alții*, Curtea Veche Publising House, București.
- Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, 2001. Ediție Jubiliară a Sfântului Sinod, tipărită cu binecuvântarea și prefața Prea Fericitului Părinte Teoctist, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București.
- Dicționarul limbii române*, 1949. Tom I, partea II, Editura Academiei Române, București.
- Eliade Mircea, *O revoluție creștină*, în *Buna Vestire*, anul I, nr. 100/iunie 1937, republished in Mircea Eliade, 2001. *Textele legionare și despre românism*, Dacia Publising House, Cluj-Napoca.
- Eliade Mircea, 1993. *Morfologia religiilor*, Jurnalul literar Publising House, București.
- Ghițulescu Mircea, *Religie și antropologie la Valeriu Anania*, in *Istoria dramaturgiei românești contemporane*, 2000. Albatros Publising House, București, apud Logos Arhiepiscopului Bartolomeu al Clujului la împlinirea vârstei de 80 de ani, 2001. Renașterea Publising House, Cluj-Napoca.
- Iorga Nicolae, 1999. *Istoria literaturii românești (Introducere sintetică)*, traducere de Lidia Simion și Andrei Pippidi, Editura Fundației Culturale române, București.
- Noul Testament*, 1993. Versiune revăzută, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București.
- Sfânta Scriptură în limba română*, interviu cu Arhiepiscopul Bartolomeu, consemnat de Costion Nicolescu, in *Alfa și Omega*, supliment – *Cotidianul*, 21 ianuarie 1994, apud Logos Arhiepiscopului Bartolomeu al Clujului la împlinirea vârstei de 80 de ani, Renașterea Publising

House, 2001.

Sfântul Andrei Cretanul, 2004. *Canonul cel Mare*, text diortosit de Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, Arhiepiscopul Clujului, Renașterea Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca.

Representations of space in folk beliefs. The Otherworld

Abstract:

The binary division of the Universe, between the visible and the unseen, between the human world and that of the Others (the world of demons, the world of the dead), the world between here and beyond, dates back to ancient times, and is couched in terms of binary oppositions. At the macrocosmic level, there is a world in which people live: *this world, our world*, which focuses on the *inhabited* space: on the hearth of each home, around which one can notice the expansion, in successive circles, of the other micro-spaces claimed by Man, which he has prepared through defence practices in order to be able to move freely within them.

The main elements in this first circle of the humanized world which have not merely spatial, but especially ritual values are *the hearth, the stove, the oven, the chimney, the beam of the house, the table, the bed (cradle), the threshold, the window, the eaves of the house*. As we move further away from the house, there are other items which Man has consecrated and used in his own interest, such as *the yard, the stable, the fence, the gate* leading to the household entrance, leading up to *the frontier of the village, its borders* which separated peoples' plots of land, and gradually reaching the most dangerous of places, such as *the crossroads, the riverbank, the bridge, the forest, the mountains*, etc. These places of transition, that can be reached by people as needed in order to gather materials, to travel, but also to earn their living, can also be reached by other, more dangerous entities, representing various embodiments of the sacred world and which inhabit another space, known as *the Otherworld*. This is not necessarily a world of the dead (which we shall endeavour to describe below), but rather a place where the Others, the anti-humans, non-humans and super-humans, lead their existence.

Keywords: folk tales, the Otherworld, the World of the Dead, Heaven, Hell

1. Our world – the Otherworld

In folk representations, **the Otherworld** is alternately seen as being contiguous, continuing the space inhabited by living humans, or, conversely, it may be located at some distance from our world, dislocated vertically, up or down. The experiences of people who have found themselves in that other universe, recounted in either folk tales or in *fabulata*, are representative of this aspect. It is sometimes said that the Otherworld is also located here on Earth, far away to the East. The Otherness of this universe, which is difficult to describe, can sometimes be limited to one fundamental trait: the fact that this world remains invisible for us, who are not entitled to stir it, touch it, or even gaze upon it. However, there are also numerous beliefs stating that it is an underground world: “The other realm is located somewhere in the depths of the Earth, but no-one knows where. It is a special world, a world of evil ghosts”¹. Many mythologies describe, even indirectly, this underground world which is also the resting place of the Sun after sunset, wherefrom it rises anew, out of the (Black) sea, into the world of humans. Within the Romanian cultural space, the folk beliefs referring to the *Rohmani*² are very much popular. The *Blajini*, or *Rohmani*, are one group of people that live outside our world. Some say that their world is located beyond our known world and that they are separated by a large body of water, while others claim their world is located beneath the Earth. They are believed to be the first kind to inhabit the Earth at the beginning, and that they are holy, good men, “Christians as we”. They spend the entire year fasting until Easter for our sins, constantly praying to God to protect our world from any danger. They pray to God, but ask for nothing in return³. People believe that, in certain sacredly conditioned moments, they can acquire conclusive evidence of their existence beneath the surface of the Earth: “If people put their ear against the ground, on the *Rohmani* Easter, they can hear their roosters crowing and their dogs barking”⁴. Their existence is also related to eschatology, with people claiming that, at the end of the world, God will return the *Blajini* into this world, as they are pious and to God’s liking, while mankind as we know it will suffer greatly. Other

¹ Bernea, 1997, p. 83.

² According to some, one partially corrupted form of the term *Brahman*, likely entered into Romanian folk culture through the adventure novel *Alexandria* (The Life of Alexander of Macedon).

³ Pamfile, 2002, p. 252.

⁴ Niculiță-Voronca, 2008 (I), p. 265.

representations depict the *Blajini* as humans who have lived before those from this era: “Before the humans populating the current world, this side of the Earth was inhabited by the *Blajini*; but, for various reasons, God turned the Earth upside down, and thus their world came to be beneath; and the underground was raised above, and this is the place in which we live. The *Blajini* have been living there ever since”⁵. The predecessors and/or replacements of contemporary humans, the *Rohmani* or *Blajini* are definitively related to us, all the while offering examples of Otherness on several levels.

1.1. The Otherworld of folk tales

This is, in its turn, a good source of beliefs referring to that Other universe. This has a trinitary structure, which we will also see reflected in relation to beliefs referring to the world of the dead. In folk tales, the Otherworld can be situated at the edge of the known world; more accurately, it is a sort of extension to our world, with the passage from one world to another sometimes being crossed without one noticing, and without any conscious effort on the part of those travelling between: “Pipăruș Petru set out, and went all the way to the forest where he found a covered furrow and decided to follow its lead. And, as he kept walking, he reached the palace of the dragon” (I. Pop-Reteganul, *Pipăruș Petru and the Blooming Flower*). Other liminal elements delineating the two worlds can be manifested as a large forest, a large and wide river (sometimes, a river of fire), which can be crossed with greater or lesser difficulty, according to the skills of the hero. The common element shared between accounts is the great distance to be travelled (“across nine countries, and nine seas, and nine high cliffs; they travelled for a long distance, and crossed many cities and others”).

More often, the other world is related to a descent – usually an easier trip, that is followed by a much more complicated return ascent. This mechanism by which individuals may arrive and leave the Otherworld is very interesting: arrival is always easier, as the other reality can even be sometimes reached by accident; however, any potential return is cast into much greater doubt. After all, this is how folk beliefs explain away why it is that so many of the travellers into these so little-known universes never returned home to tell us what they found! Sometimes, the heroic protagonist descends into an abyss, down a well (possibly abandoned) with the help of a rope secured by the minor hero

⁵ Pamfile, 2002. p. 252.

of the tale. Few and far between are the cases that explicitly mention a gate to the Otherworld (which are very probably later representations). However, there are also cases in which the Otherworld is situated in an upper, vertical plane. By climbing a tall tree or a magic beanstalk, or by throwing a chain up in the sky, our hero adventurously ascends in search of his quest and quarry.

The geography of the Otherworld is often not very richly detailed; its Otherness is the defining characteristic: "In the other realm, Parsley saw with surprise that all was different: the earth, the flowers, the trees, the animals were not the same; and there were no humans;"⁶; "The Otherworld is beautiful, full of flowers, birds and gentle and happy beasts; men never grow old there, and the sun is always shining"⁷.

1.2. The World of the Dead

Things are greatly different in the Otherworld of the dead. After all, this is a realm we all arrive at, in the end. Death has always been a moment which people have had to take into account, either beforehand (as happens in traditional societies) or, as contemporaries, when they accidentally come across it. Here, we are not only dealing with curiosity, but also with the desire to arrive where one has to be, to integrate oneself in that universe, alongside one's ancestors. Beyond the pain caused by the severing of the thread of life (which is always a brutal affair, even when involving the elderly), tradition states that the soul reaches a beautiful world, where it either meets its ancestors or an atypical God, and where it no longer has to worry about daily sustenance; a place where the sun never goes down, etc.

For contemporary Man, the Christian division of the world between Heaven and Hell (and possibly Purgatory) is predominant, and emphasizes the idea of sin and the judgement of the life of the soul which has departed the world of the living. As we are referring to a cultural area wherein the Christian confession has long been dominant, it is only natural that there are numerous folk-Christian representations of the Otherworld and of the trials of the soul on its way there; and this, not only in the case of Romanians.

In order to better emphasize the specific archaic elements of folklore in Romanian representations of the world of the dead, we must first describe the most recent beliefs, which include numerous elements

⁶ Călinescu, 1965, p. 286.

⁷ Șăineanu, 1978, p. 285.

borrowed from Christian mythology.

1.2.1. The Folk-Christian Perception

As we have stated previously, the folk perception that shows marked Christian accents includes the notions of *sin* (committed by the individual throughout their entire life on the Earth) and of *judgement*, to which they are first brought after death and, later on, on the final Day of Judgement that results in the above-mentioned inversion of the two worlds and their inhabitants (this purification is more often than not seen to be carried out through fire being cast upon the Earth, following the plagues and trials to which sinful people will have been submitted; it is followed by the re-emergence of a new world and of people entirely bereft of sin). Finally, among the strong Christian inflections can also be counted a series of detailed beliefs about Heaven and Hell, seen as end points on the journey of the soul.

The Christian perception of death has long contaminated folkloric Romanian beliefs. Here, we are referring to the trials to which the soul is submitted after death, and in particular the trials of the tolls and of the bridges, which we shall outline below. There are some beliefs stating that, after death, the souls of the dead do not immediately leave the world they had lived in: they remain here, invisible, until the Last Judgement, when each will occupy their rightful place, in either Heaven or Hell⁸. However, the vast majority of representations mention the fact that the soul remains on Earth for 40 days following death, during which time it wanders through this universe, accompanied by its guardian angel, whereupon it prepares for a very long, arduous and dangerous journey.

In truth, it is not the journey itself that is dangerous, but, rather, the stops along the way: **the tolls** which the soul has to pass, the barriers it must cross, these preliminary, partial judgements, without which it cannot reach its Final Judgement. In most accounts, there are twelve such tolls (but there could be as few seven, or as many as twenty-four, or ninety-nine), and these stops of the soul on its journey to the Otherworld are paralleled by as many halts made in the world of the living, during the ritual procession of interment when the dead was being taken to their grave, during which rituals of adjustment were being performed for them by those attending the funeral. The tolls to be crossed also make reference to the idea of purification, as they are frequently represented as being covered in flames; following successive immolations and passages

⁸ Niculiță-Voronca, 2008 (II), p. 501.

through fire, the soul would be purified and could come before God white, without any sin⁹. In addition to the prayers customarily uttered at crossroads, where the funeral cortege usually paused, one was expected to charitably give various items of the deceased away, meaning to guarantee a safe journey for the dead and ensure their safe arrival in the After. Among the apotropaic items of the deceased was the rooster, which was meant to announce the burial feasts held in honour of the dead while in the Otherworld, and to prevent devils from tampering with the fair weighing of the deceased's sins¹⁰. All such beliefs depict one of two types of "toll officers":

- in most beliefs, these "customs agents" are devils, who were expected to collect money or ritual items from the deceased souls. There occurs a dualistic judgement of the soul, as the devils hold a large, black book wherein the person's sins are written in white; however, the travelling soul is not abandoned, as, here again, their guardian angel carries its own white book, where their good deeds are written in black, thereby countering the demonic judgement¹¹. It is sometimes said that each toll corresponds to a possible human sin.

- other beliefs (in particular, the ceremonial burial song titled *The Dawn Song*) state that ritual items were demanded as payment for passage through the tolls (items such as black headkerchiefs, or bunches of flowers bought by the dead person with the money expressly given them for this purpose);¹² in these readings, there were also representatives of the human world present – old men, old women, young women¹³ – in order to let the dead person pass on without asking for some part of their body as an offering in return (reinforcing the belief in the requirement for the full preservation of the body after death, a very common trope among ancient civilizations, and a *sine qua non* condition for any desired future resurrection).

Marine, Marine,/ I can well see, I can well see/ that you have left, that you have left/ on a long road, on a long road/, where you have never been before./ Mind you/ that on the right/ there is a well/ with brackish water,/ the way you like it;/ mind you/ that on the right/ there is an old woman/ with woollen teeth/ who will

⁹ Niculiță-Voronca, 2008 (II), p. 491.

¹⁰ Marian, 1995, pp. 192-193.

¹¹ Marian, 1995, pp. 287-288.

¹² In church, for these customs, people gave away for charity 40 candles adorned with handkerchiefs and coins.

¹³ Kahane & Georgescu-Stănciuleanu, 1988, p. 590.

ask/ for your eyes./ But don't give them away,/ because you need them in Heaven,/ and you have what to give her,/ a little kerchief/ and a little ring biscuit,/ a little kerchief/ with a candle in it,/ and with a coin in it./ Mind you well/ for she will ask,/ she will ask/ for your shoulders./ But don't give them away,/ because you need them in Heaven,/ and you have what to give her,/ a little kerchief/ and a little ring biscuit,/ a little kerchief/ with a candle in it,/ and with a coin in it./ Mind you well/ as she will ask,/ for your waist./ But don't give it away,/ because you need it in Heaven,/ and you have what to give her,/ a little kerchief/ and a little ring biscuit,/ a little kerchief/ with a candle in it,/ and with a coin in it./ Mind you well/ as she will ask,/ for your knees./ But don't give them away,/ because you need them in Heaven,/ and you have what to give her,/ a little kerchief/ and a little ring biscuit,/ a little kerchief/ with a candle in it,/ and with a coin in it./ Mind you well/ as she will ask,/ for your feet./ But don't give them away,/ because you need them in Heaven,/ and you have what to give her,/ a little kerchief/ and a little ring biscuit,/ a little kerchief/ with a candle in it,/ and with a coin in it¹⁴.

An equivalent of the tolls of the dead, but also a clear reference to the two final *topoi*, are **the bridges**. In order to reach its final destination, the soul will have to cross many dangerous places, rivers from the Otherworld, abysses and even the Gehenna. In order for the soul itself not to forget about the ritual payments needed, these were most often paid here on Earth, ceremonially, during the dead's final journey to the cemetery. People would give away pieces of cloth for charity (the first of these would cover the lintel when the dead person was taken out of the house; the following one was usually placed at a crossroads or over a river, if there was one in the way of the procession), which, in the Otherworld, became bridges, candles to light the way of the deceased, as well as food offerings (a ring biscuit, a mug filled with water)¹⁵. Moreover, people would throw away coins for the payment of the bridge toll (especially in cases featuring representations of the ferryman, who could was able to

¹⁴ Șerban, 2002, pp. 159-160. The burial handkerchiefs (*pomnete*) are little strips of white cloth. Twenty-four such burial handkerchiefs are made, one for each of the twenty-four tolls. Each kerchief has a metal coin and a candle and a small ring biscuit attached to it, and are given away for charity above the ground. They are usually crafted in the evening. While making the handkerchiefs, women sing the above-mentioned text (Șișu, 2001, p. 10).

¹⁵ Marian, 1995, p. 196.

take the dead person to the other side).

There are two perceptions referring to the placing of **Heaven** and **Hell** in the Otherworld. Both speak of another world, one below and above our own, in which the bright side (on the right) is Heaven, while Hell is located on the left, plunged in eternal darkness. However, there is also an up/down dichotomy: irrespective of the place of the Otherworld, Hell is always below, while Heaven always above. One current representation in Romanian beliefs mentions a river separating Heaven from Hell, which the soul comes across after passing the tolls of the dead. One could argue this is a decisive trial for the deceased, as sinful souls cannot cross it (even if they somehow managed to pass the tolls), and they plunge into Hell, as they cannot remain on the bridge (or, because of the lack of having been offered a ritual burial feast, in which case the bridge never materializes):

If the soul was able to pass all customs, the most difficult trial is still in store for it: the crossing of the bridge towards Heaven. This is a very long bridge, but narrow, as thick as a fingernail and as sharp as a knife's edge. If the soul was sinful and manages to pass the tolls with the help of pardons or trickery, this is the end for it, as it cannot go any further, but falls beneath it into an abyss as deep and dark as a night without stars. The howling of beasts can be heard from its bottom, and there are all kinds of dragons living on the banks of a large sulphur lake, which leads to Hell¹⁶.

Even if there is no explicit mentioning of sin, the difficulty in crossing resides in the bridge's incredible narrowness (a hair's breadth):

But according to some, the bridges placed in the way of the dead person are related to the bridge of Heaven, which is very narrow and difficult to cross. The soul, which has now passed all tolls, in reaching the bridge of Heaven – which is always located before Heaven – lays the cloth that was placed in their path while being taken to the grave over this bridge and, thus, manages to go further. The person deprived of a bridge in this world will, likewise, be deprived of one in the Otherworld¹⁷.

¹⁶ Olinescu, 2001, p. 366.

¹⁷ Marian, 1995, p. 197.

The descriptions of this *topos* are very interesting: through these mentions, they shape the idea of sin in the folk perception:

The bridge to Heaven is built over Hell, and it consists of three parts. Only the most sinful of people fall from the first part; the middling ones from the second, and only those who have the fewest number of sins from the latter. Those who have fallen from this last part can very easily escape and get out. However, at the end of the bridge, they cannot ascend and, therefore, they have to jump. God gives wings to those who don't have any sins, and by this they can fly instead of jumping¹⁸.

Another interesting depiction is the imagery given the guardians of this final bridge. As we have seen, the soul is required to account for the sins it has committed, either through valour or by way of the ritual offerings it has brought (or failed to bring) over the course of several tolls (themselves aided by the living members of its family). Following the trial of the bridge (its darkness, slipperiness, narrowness, sharpness etc.) at the end of which there are still evil-doing devils casting doubt on the further progress of the frightened soul, there is a final struggle, which can well cast it into the darkness of Hell:

But half-way through the bridge there is a cat and a dog. The cat darts at the soul, intending to throw it down off the bridge. It uses every trick on earth to deceive it and throw it into the darkness of Hell. However, there is also a loyal dog, which hurls itself at the cat and does not allow this to happen. There is a terrible fight that occurs between these animals that are closest to the human soul. Afterwards, a man comes; and if the soul has a coin attached to its finger, it gives it away and can thus cross the bridge to Heaven, where it is welcomed by St Peter who, after listening to its deeds, lets it enter¹⁹.

Another dog, this time the dog of God, is represented as being the ultimate arbiter:

In Heaven, God has a big, black, fleecy dog, which lies at God's feet; and if the soul thinks bad things about God, saying: "Good

¹⁸ Marian, 1995, p. 289.

¹⁹ Olinescu, 2001, pp. 366-367.

thing that I have got rid of you, I don't care about you!", the dog darts at it and throws it down into Hell, where it shall remain for all eternity. Good souls advance to the right. On the left, there are several puppies²⁰.

This bridge represents the end of the long, one-way journey of the soul after death. After arriving in Hell, the soul is greeted by the starkest of views, which includes the merciless torment of sinful souls by an army of devils commanded by Old Scratch, the supreme demon²¹. We will move to close our description of these cultural patterns by recounting a few folkloric descriptions of Heaven and Hell:

Hell is a very deep and large abyss at the bottom of the Earth, where fire burns for all eternity; nonetheless, there is never light, but constant darkness, because of the thick and hot smoke coming out of that fire²²; Hell is located beneath the Earth, in its depths. There, there is a vast land surrounded by high walls which none can jump, and that is why no one has ever returned from there. Only Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary ever went to Hell and back, but they too entered and exit through the gate²³; At the gates of Hell, which are made entirely of iron, there are always two devils that tempt passers-by to enter and who reject all those who want to leave from Hell, in order to rid themselves of the harshest of labours²⁴.

Heaven is a beautiful garden, more beautiful than human mind can imagine. In it, God has gathered all the beauties of the world. Heaven is to Earth as the emperor's palace is to the poor man's hut. No one knows where it ends – and it may be as wide as the Earth, if not even wider. It is located in the 9th circle of the sky, and it hosts God's court and His palace. Heaven is a garden full of all sorts of trees, the most beautiful of them bearing fruit as sweet as honey. Among the trees, there are millions of birds of all kinds, with brilliant feathers of all colours, which sing so lovely and have such beautiful songs that they charm one's mind. No

²⁰ Niculita-Voronca, 2008 (II), p. 491.

²¹ Deriving from the Slavonic agnomen, *Iskariotski*, Iscariot, given to Judas.

²² Marian, 1995, p. 291.

²³ Olinescu, 2001, p. 369.

²⁴ Marian, 1995, p. 292.

human ear has ever heard such songs, and no mind has ever imagined them. The entire garden is covered in green grass, sprinkled with the most beautiful and heavenly smelling flowers, coloured in thousands of hues, with golden apples fallen from trees. There are springs that are as cold as ice and as clear as crystal running through the trees. Sometimes, their banks are adorned with pastures as green as emerald, on which flowers sparkle like precious stones. There is no painter in the world able to paint them and no colours to match them. In the middle of Heaven, there is a glass mountain with its top covered in moss and greenery, but it can only be climbed by those who are thrown a golden stair by the angels. Both sides of this stair are bordered by star-like lights²⁵.

1.2.2. The Archaic Folk Perception

The strict folkloric perception is even more dramatic, as it emphasizes the unprepared removal of the dead person from this world. It is precisely this idea of the sudden departure of the dead that is the subject of folk beliefs and rituals, with one of the most important among these being ritual mourning. The ordinary, improvised, non-specialized mourning of the bereaved family is a natural component, a sudden manifestation of grief. However, in some areas of Romania (especially in the Mehedinți area), there still exist specialized, ‘professional’ mourners, who are called upon, if needed, by the entire community; veritable connoisseurs of a Romanian *Book of the Dead*.

There are two types of ceremonial songs performed upon a funeral, during the three days in which the dead person is kept within the house and subject to a continuous vigil. They are *The Song of the Dawn*, performed for all the dead, irrespective of their age or gender, and, respectively, *The Song of the Fir Tree*, which is only performed for unmarried young persons, and especially males. In the case of the latter, besides featuring the character described above, it is also a song of mourning for the phytomorph substitute of the dead person, which is claimed to be unpleasantly impressed as it was sacrificed for a funeral and then summoned to help in the Otherworld. Its human parallel, *The Song of the Dawn*, with its numerous variants, indeed offers a full guide for the ‘white traveller’ (a frequent name for the dead, who in leaving this white world enters the black one, travelling from the world of longing to that of

²⁵ Olinescu, 2001, pp. 368-369.

non-longing, and so on).

The Song of the Dawn also expresses what the dead person must feel when they become aware of their death: what they see on their journey. Yet, the deceased is still most often presented in terms of valuable recommendations, which are enunciated by initiates with relation to the posthumous behaviour of the deceased. These mainly refer to important preparations for the proper voyage of the dead (the fact that the soul must be endowed with the necessary items, that it must say goodbye to its family and that it must finalize its dealings with this world), noting the key places the soul will reach on its trek and documenting the behaviour it is expected to show. Last, but not least, the *Song of the Dawn* also makes reference to the identification of the final destination of the dead, and to the necessary adjustments it must undergo to acclimate to this new *topos*.

Just as was the case in the previous perception outlined above, here, too, the journey is emphasized most prominently; the same is the case of the strong ritual nature of the burial ceremonial, which must be performed without error, else the dead person shall either forever remain suspended between the two worlds, deprived of eternal rest, or else it shall reach the wrong place than that intended it. The ultimate purpose was, of course, the well-deserved rest of the soul; on this point, there was no insisting upon.

In the dialogue between the living and the dead, there is clear uncertainty of the receipt and the fear that something unexpected might happen. While there are references to certain forms of knowledge certified by tradition, these can be called into question – albeit for a brief time – owing to a lack of physical evidence. Come what may, it is most often better for one to observe the rituals guaranteed by tradition, instead of perhaps occasioning some lamentable accidents, which would be a burden too heavy to be borne by the remaining living relatives of the deceased. “There are all sorts of roads, – it is said –, but the most significant of them leads to the Otherworld. Man can only see it once. Some say that it has twists and turns, others that it is a stair. But I, for one, say: whosoever has seen it? We cannot know what this road is like, but it is sure to be a sad one, as one is leaving their loved ones behind”²⁶.

It is interesting how this ideal road pattern only makes some askance references to the names of certain Christian deities, being vaguely reminiscent of the functions and representations of the Church. Furthermore, while we may also mention the tolls we have discussed

²⁶ Bernea, 1997, p. 44.

previously, these do not form the broader panorama of the road of the dead. On it, a first point of rest is arrived at when encountering the **blooming willow**, which includes several important symbols:

- near the willow, there is a well of clear water from which the soul is allowed to drink in order to quench its thirst. The Virgin Mary, (referred to as 'Mary,' 'Mother of Jesus,' 'Saint Mary,' or 'an old woman'), sitting on a stool, is the one who offers the deceased a glass of water. She also tells travellers the path to take onwards. This feminine character is represented as the final arbiter for the deceased, who, by offering them drinking water, determines the traveller to assume its new state and forget its human nature, thereby coming to terms with its new condition;

- near the willow, there is a fork in the road; the path to the right, which is full of flowers, leads to Heaven and to the ancestors of the deceased; the one on the left, filled with thorns, sometimes described as akin to a river of fire, leadsto Hell.

“There are two roads / and it’s quite difficult to choose between them;/ one is full of thorns,/ leading to strangers./ The other is full of flowers,/ leading to sisters / and beloved brothers”;

or:

“Because there are two roads:/ one is filled with flowers,/ dark and mourning flowers;/ the other one with basil,/ like a river of fire”²⁷.

The image of the **crossroads** is independent from that of the arbiter above. After travelling along a predetermined road, bearing no particular identifying elements, the traveller arrives at the crossroads. Here, we come to the principal moment of disjunction between the two Romanian folk perceptions, the Christian and the archaic. The emphasis is no longer on one’s sins; the soul is not asked to give an account of its deeds. Rather, it must observe the ritual provisions in order to take the correct path and reach the proper destination, the world of its ancestors. Accounts of this moment also perceive the lingering presence of evil after death, as the soul faces a multitude of traps, pitfalls and deceit any one of which might well cast it into nothingness, solitude and oblivion:

“Walk slowly, you soul,/ this untroubled road.../ Dear soul,/

²⁷ Marian, 1995, p. 278.

keep going forward/ until you reach/ the fork in the road/ where it tees across./ Stop there/ and pay attention”²⁸.

“Get up, John, get up,/ see with your eyes,/ receive with your hand,/ that we have come./ As we heard / you are now a traveller,/ with feet bathed in dew,/ carrying fog on your back,/ on this long path,/ long, unshaded path./ And we are uttering/ a great prayer,/ a great calling,/ for you to pay attention,/ pay attention to the road/ and not go/ to the left,/ as that’s not the good path,/ it’s been ploughed by bulls,/ and sowed with thorns/ and there are a lot of feasts there;/ but you should go/ to the right,/ where the road is clear,/ ploughed with white bullocks,/ sowed with wheat / and there are a lot of feasts there/ and lighted torches”²⁹.

Another important *topos* can be found in the middle of Heaven; more accurately, in the middle of the road, as this is the most important moment of the journey of the deceased after death. Unfortunately, folk texts are not consistent with regard to the episodes of this journey that they include. Older beliefs even make reference to a god of death (depicted as an old fairy, or an old hag) who takes their own tribute, or otherwise tests the traveller to see if they have been initiated or not:

“On the hill, near the well/ there is an old fairy/ with a woollen cap,/ holding a staff,/ who will ask of you...”³⁰; “Farther away / there is an old fairy/ holding a crutch,/ with a woollen girdle/ who will ask you/ for your face./ But don’t give it to her,/ as you have something to give her [instead],/ a little kerchief/ with a candle in it,/ to pay the toll with”³¹.

“There is a well,/ a clear well/ with little water in it/ and an old woman/ holding a pen,/ and sitting on a chair./ All who pass through there/ are written down by her,/ into eternity./ She wrote me down too,/ and life drained out of me”³².

We again come to an image of an impressive tree, whose tip touches the sky and whose branches reach the sea. Usually, this tree is

²⁸ Papadima, 1994, p. 54.

²⁹ Ghinoiu, 2004, p. 207.

³⁰ Şişu, 2001, p. 185.

³¹ Şişu, 2001, p. 37.

³² Şişu, 2001, p. 193.

connected to the world of the dead (an apple tree, willow, or willow). Beneath it, there is a set table (the tree (sometimes filled with fruit) and the set table are traditional elements often presented in folk descriptions of Heaven). At this table sits a deity that is known to bear one of several names ('Saint Mary' / 'Mary, Mother of Jesus' / 'the Virgin Mary' / 'Saint Samoslia' / 'Giva' / 'Sila Samodiva'³³ / 'Saint Irodia' / 'Archangel Michael'), who writes down the names of those who come before it in the Book of Life and Death. In effect, theirs is a process of selection of 'applicants' to either Heaven or Hell, a sentence to a life of eternal death. In effect, this is a repetition of the motifs of the cup of water offered the deceased and that of the crossroads; however, this time the emphasis is placed on the final act being performed here. In some variants, the clear-water well that determined the deceased to accept their condition, can also be found here:

"In the middle of Heaven,/ be patient/ and pay attention,/ as there will be/ an apple tree blooming on Saint Peter's/ with flowers at the top/ and fruit on the lower branches./ And in its shade,/ there is a set table/ and lighted torches/ and a silk chair,/ of royal silk./ You will sit on that chair/ And write"³⁴.

"But go, and go, and go,/ until you will reach/ a large willow/ with leaves on the lower branches./ At its root,/ there is a clear well/ with brackish water,/ and whoever drinks from it, will no longer feel yearning"³⁵.

"And there is Saint Mary,/ who writes down the passers-by;/ she has a glass of water/ from which travellers drink,/ she shows them the way;/ the water is cold,/ and whoever drinks from it, will no longer feel yearning./ Drink from it, and you will no longer feel./ When the yoke will bloom,/ then you will be able to walk;/ when the oars come into leaf,/ then you will come/ to join us in this world;/ when the willow will bear nuts/ and the willow sweet apples,/ then, and not until then"³⁶.

³³The last names are corrupt forms of an evil deity from Southern Slavonic folklore (especially Bulgarians and Serbians, who inhabit the regions where these songs have been best preserved), air, water and forest genies, frequently associated to the protective deities of fate.

³⁴ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, pp. 625-626.

³⁵ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, p. 604.

³⁶ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, p. 604.

Here, in vicinity to the gates of Heaven, so very close to reaching the final goal, we come across the motif of intercession with the Divine; namely, the attempts of bereaved parents to ensure their children's entry into Heaven. Those still alive must not abandon faith in the goodwill of this deity, the patron of death, who will understand their grief and will facilitate the access of their children into Heaven. Moreover, in this context death is portrayed as a gradual loss of the soul, as a form of clinical death, so to speak; for, as long as the dead lies in this state, being watched by the family, their parents or living relatives can attempt to occasion the return of the soul to the concrete world of the living. In this specific instance, death is viewed as a cosmic accident, a misfortune of the dead person: consequently, folk accounts often mention how in this instance the divine ink or divine paper are running out, meaning that the divine arbiter can no longer include the name of the deceased on the list of the living. Consequently, the departed are forced to assume their new condition, moving into another world. In some accounts, the soul of the deceased itself addresses the deity of death:

“Up, up there/ there is a stone, some stone / and a sanctum of incense,/ where old Irodia lives/ together with old Saint Mary/ and they keep writing on the paper,/ they write down the living and the dead,/ they write, and write, with the pencil,/ the living are written down with the pencil,/ as they are so few;/ the dead are written down with ink,/ as they are so many./ The mother rose,/ kneeled far away/ and prayed from close:/ – Write my daughter down too!/ Don't write her with the dead,/ but with the living!/ – You are very late,/ their pencil is gone/ the paper is full/ and we lost the pen./ And the mother/ went back/ still weeping and sighing/ that she cannot be placed with the living/ so she began to adorn her...”³⁷.

“Gia, Gia, Samogia/ what was she working on?/ She was writing two records./ One with the living,/ and the dead on the right./ And there was one, praying/ to be placed with the living./ Gia told him:/ – I cannot place you with the living/ it's too late now/ word has already been spread in the village,/ and I lost my pen,/ and I have no more paper,/ and no ink either;/ but I can put you with the dead,/ this sheet is empty,/ I still have my pen/ and

³⁷ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, pp. 601-602.

ink too./ And when he heard so,/ he began weeping,/ he turned/
with his back against the ground,/ facing the East./ His back
rotted,/ his cheeks rusted in,/ his eyes were covered by a mist/
because of the genie of the earth,/ of the rays of the sun,/ and the
waves of the sea”³⁸.

The endpoint of any such voyage is Heaven, which in folk perceptions is not necessarily seen as a place where only the virtuous reside, but rather as a world of the dead in a broader sense, situated in opposition to the world of the living. Even so, the journey of the soul had not yet ended: in some songs, the soul is asked to hurry onto Heaven, even if it knew the road it must follow, as the gates of Heaven were not always open. They could close, with the lights going out and the tables being cleaned, with the deceased having to wait for another appropriate moment to enter. Up until its entrance to Heaven, the soul still preserved certain elements of having been a living being; after stepping into Heaven, there soul suffered a final, irreversible passage to another status. In some accounts, it would reach this new condition after the soul ate food from the Otherworld, the same as in folk tales:

“Brother, my dear brother,/ run, or let it go,/ you cannot reach
me anymore;/ I have stepped on the grass of Heaven/ and I have
lived a better life;/ I have stepped beyond the gates/ and I have
drunk the cup of death”³⁹.

“(Someone) can no longer return,/ as they have eaten bread
from Heaven/ and have drunk water from there too”⁴⁰.

Yet it is not enough for the soul to enter Heaven. Once there, it still had another very important mission, namely to find its relatives and integrate into their broader extended family, bearing messages for them from those left behind in the land of the living:

“You tired soul,/ who have come from this world,/ go further/
and walk, keep walking,/ you lost soul,/ until you reach the gates
of Heaven./ And pray/ to Jesus Christ/ for a place to rest;/ and
then pray/ to the merciful angels,/ to take you/ under their

³⁸ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, p. 604.

³⁹ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, p. 634.

⁴⁰ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, p. 651.

wings,/ and take you to Heaven,/ so you can live there”⁴¹.

“There, in the valley/ there is a big house,/ with sunny windows,/ a door overlooking the main road,/ and round eaves,/ where everyone is gathered./ There, there are/ our neighbours/ who will come to you/ young and old,/ groups of girls,/ and of housewives./ Look upon them,/ and you will find my relatives./ When they see you/ they will rejoice / and ask you:/ whether I have given them something./ Tell them/ that we have sent them/ a flurry of light/ and flowers from the garden,/ and tell them also/ all of them/ that we await for them/ on holy days,/ on Maundy Thursday,/ with new pots,/ bowls filled with milk;/ with hot cakes;/ full glasses,/ as they like it;/ with clean clothes,/ sun-dried,/ and tear-soaked”⁴².

Only when the soul was accepted by the community of Heaven and was included in the ceremonial, initiatory round dance of its kindred, could it enjoy a peaceful life:

“Look in the valley, / where there is / a group of pigeons. / But these are no pigeons, / they are your parents. / Look in the valley, / where there is / a group of turtle-doves, / your relatives. / But they are no turtle-doves, / but your grandmothers, / calling you to them. / Look in the valley, / where there is / a blooming tree, / and a round dance, / where everybody goes / and so you too / should go there, / to the round dance, / because that is your place”⁴³.

This, then, closes the circle of birth and death. The soul, having thus socialized and integrated into the community of the dead, watches over its remaining living relatives from the Otherworld. It receives its gifts of alms and ritual offerings graciously given in its name by its living relatives on holy days, thereby creating a permanent bridge between the two worlds; worlds that, although sharing an identical structure, are situated at different levels of the spirit.

⁴¹ Kahane-Georgescu, 1988, p. 629.

⁴² Bîrlea, 1981, pp. 459-460.

⁴³ Şişu, 2001, p. 336.

References:

- Bernea, E., 1997. *Cadre ale gândirii populare românești*. Bucharest, Editura Humanitas.
- Bîrlea, O., 1981. *Folclorul românesc*, vol. I. Bucharest, Editura Minerva.
- Călinescu, G., 1965. *Estetica basmului*. Bucharest, Editura pentru Literatură.
- Ghinoiu, I., 2004. *Cărările sufletului*. Bucharest, Editura Etnologică.
- Kahane, M. & Georgescu-Stănciuleanu, L., 1988. *Cântecul Zorilor și Bradului. Tipologie muzicală*. Bucharest, Editura Muzicală.
- Marian, S. F., 1995. *Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnografic*. Bucharest, Editura Grai și suflet – Fundația culturală română.
- Niculiță-Voronca, E., 2008. *Datinele și credințele poporului român adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică*, vol. I & II. Bucharest, Editura Saeculum Vizual.
- Olinescu, M., 2001. *Mitologie românească*. Bucharest, Editura Saeculum I. O.
- Pamfile, T., 2002. *Povestea lumii de demult după credințele poporului român. Pământul după credințele poporului român. Sfârșitul lumii după credințele poporului român*. Bucharest, Editura Paideia.
- Papadima, O., 1994. *O viziune românească asupra lumii*. Bucharest, Editura Saeculum I. O.
- Șăineanu, L., 1978. *Basmele române în comparațiune cu legendele antice clasice și în legătură cu basmele popoarelor învecinate și ale tuturor popoarelor romanice*. Bucharest, Editura Minerva.
- Șerban, A. D., 2002. *Nașterea, nunta, moartea la gorjeni. Credințe, mituri, tradiții*. Târgu-Jiu, Editura Scrisul Gorjean.
- Șișu, V., 2001. *Odiseea sufletului. Epos funerar românesc*. Drobeta Turnu-Severin, Centrul Județean de Creație Populară Mehedinți.

Mihai-Bogdan Marian

The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization,
Bucharest

On the Thracians and Thracology. A brief foray

Abstract:

The Thracians represent one of the mysterious peoples of Antiquity whose roots go back to prehistoric times, placing them, along with other nations such as the Hellenes, Illyrians, Celts, Germans or Slavs, among the primordial peoples of Europe. The aura of mystery that surrounds the Thracians' world is mainly owed to the paradox that, although the writings of ancient historians and Greco-Latin mythology alike abound in references to the Thracians (where they are recorded as an extremely numerous people), the information we have on the Thracians does not come from themselves, but from third-party sources. These sources are primarily Greek and Roman, or stem from archaeological research that, once again, sheds light on the fact that the Thracian world had developed a complex culture, confirming the accounts of ancient authors. Given the fact that the epicenter of the Thracian world was the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic and Balkan areas, Romanian and Bulgarian researchers have naturally been interested in Thracian culture and the Thracian civilization. Thus, through the efforts of Bulgarian professor Alexander Fol and Romanian professor Dumitru Berciu, as well as those of other researchers from the two countries, a new field of scientific research was established under the title of 'Thracology'. Since the beginning of its existence, Thracology has aroused a lively interest among many researchers from other parts of the world, this aspect being visible in the countless scientific international panels and the vast number of publications that have appeared in this relatively new field during the half-century since its establishment.

Keywords: Thracians, Dacians, Getae, Thracology, Eneolithic, Bronze Age, Antiquity

Preamble

The earliest traces of the Thracians go beyond the beginnings of written history. They descend beyond the diaries of the historians of Greco-Latin Antiquity regarding the south-Danube land of the Thracians conquered by the Persians (ca. 500 BC), which later became a Macedonian (ca. 341 BC Hr.) and then a Roman province (46 AD)¹, or those concerning the North-Danubian Geto-Dacians Herodotus² described as “the bravest and most righteous of the Thracians”³. They go down into prehistory, to a time when the age of polished stone met the age of metals (Eneolithic / Chalcolithic). A time where the tangible material reality revealed by archaeological excavations intertwines with the hypotheses of scientific research that still await new discoveries to be validated to be able to give us as faithful as possible an image of certain worlds either long gone or, as the case may be, metamorphosed into new forms of culture and civilization with the passage of time.



Fig. 1. “The Thracian Knight”, funerary stela,
Constanța National History Museum, Romania

Source:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cavalerul_trac_Muzeul_din_Constanta_2013_01.JPG, accessed at 25.11.2021

¹ In this regard, see Hornblower, Spawforth, 1999, pp. 1514-1515.

² The Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus, also called “The Father of History”, lived between ca. 484-425 BC.

³ Herodot (Herodotus), 1961, vol. I, p. 345.

Thus, the first mentions regarding the Thracians we found in **Homer's** *Iliad*, where they are omnipresent in the great Trojan War; indeed, from the description of the great bard of early history, the city of Troy itself appeared to be a bastion of a population of Thracian origin⁴. However, Homer only lived sometime between the 9th and 8th centuries BC, while the events of the Trojan War, to which he made us witnesses over the millennia by way of his *Iliad* seem to have taken place several centuries earlier – sometime between the 14th and 12th centuries BC, as the archaeological discoveries made in the 19th century by the German archaeologist **Heinrich Schliemann** in the present-day territories of Turkey and Greece⁵, corroborated with other sources and descriptions of ancient historians, would reveal⁶. Given these aspects, the presence of the Thracians in the Balkans and the Carpathians must have preceded the events associated with the “Trojan War” by at least a few centuries. In this sense, referring to the writings of Herodotus that mention the Agathyrsi who arrived inside the Carpathian Arch around 700-500 BC as being “a kind of Thracians”, the renowned Romanian historian and archaeologist **Vasile Pârvan**⁷ pointed out that the Agathyrsi, “in order to have Thracianised themselves, they must have found the Thracians here. However, if the Thracians were in the Carpathians around 700 BC, they must have been here for a very long time, because the analysis of the historical facts

⁴ “[...] But why do you ask me and want to know everything? Do you want to reach the Trojan camp? The Thracian warriors have arrived from afar and are now at the edge of the camp. At their head is Rhèsos, the offspring of Eionèus. The fairest horses I have ever seen are the mares of Rhèsos, whiter than snow, swifter in flight than the breath of the wind. With gold and silver is his iron chariot beautifully adorned. Rhèsos is clothed in all gold; his weapons are marvels, and are not the same as those of mortals - rather, they seem to the measure of the gods of the deathless.” (Homer, 2002, pp. 163-164). It might reasonably be assumed that several populations, in certain regions of Asia Minor such as Bithynia, Mysia, Phrygia, Troas and Lydia, would likely have been of Thracian origin. They would have descended from the Carpatho-Balkan area southwards in successive waves during the 13th -11th centuries BC at the cusp between the Bronze and Iron Ages, i.e. in the reference period for the events associated with the “Trojan War”. For more on this, see D.M. Pippidi (coord.), 1976, p. 580.

⁵ In the 1870s, the German researcher discovered the ruins of Troy in Anatolia, and the remains of the ancient Mycenaean civilization, unknown at that time, in the Peloponnese.

⁶ With reference to the Egyptian and Hittite texts dating from the second half of the 13th century BC (mainly the “Milawata” and “Tawagalawa” letters) but also some aspects mentioned in Greek mythology.

⁷ Vasile Pârvan (1882-1927), Romanian historian, archaeologist and epigraphist, became a full member of the Romanian Academy in 1913.

developed above shows us that, from 700 going back at least until 1400 BC, the culture of the Carpathians was uninterrupted”⁸. Thus, Vasile Pârvan concludes, “around 1000 BC the Carpatho-Danubian countries were [already] inhabited by Thracians from the north”, and that “the civilization that still dominated there was also that of bronze, whose last and most brilliant period (IV) was just beginning”⁹. Similarly, with reference to the Geto-Dacian branch of the Thracians, starting from the same records of the “Father of History”, historian **Hadrian Daicoviciu**¹⁰ also shows that “they were not only here from the 6th century, but from much earlier. It is not known exactly to what extent the populations of the Polished Stone Age (Neolithic) participated in the formation of the Daco-Getae; it is certain, however, that around 1700 BC, at the beginning of the Bronze Age, the Carpatho-Danubian lands were inhabited by a population that was not yet Daco-Getic, but from which the Daco-Getaes would be born”¹¹.

If, as we have seen, **Herodotus** called the Getae¹² “the most valiant and just of the Thracians,” he also argued that, “after the Indians, the race of the Thracians is the greatest of all peoples; if they had but one leadership, and were united in thought, they would, in my opinion, be invincible, and by far the strongest of all the tribes of the earth. But their union is impossible and it cannot be accomplished; therefore, they are weak. Thracians go by many names”¹³. In addition to Herodotus’ description of the Thracians, **Mircea Eliade**¹⁴ and **Ioan P. Culianu**¹⁵ provided us with further details:

⁸ Pârvan, 1967, p. 55.

⁹ Pârvan, 1967, p. 59.

¹⁰ Hadrian Daicoviciu (1932-1984), Romanian historian, archaeologist and epigraphist.

¹¹ Daicoviciu, 1965, p. 14. See also Giurescu, 2000, p. 34.

¹² The names *Getae* or *Dacians* refer to one and the same people, belonging to the North-Danubian branch of the Thracians and inhabiting the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic space. The Romans assigned the name *Dacians* to the population of Thracian origin that they encountered inside the Carpathian Arch, further west, while the moniker of *Getae* was given by the Greeks to the same North-Danubian Thracians whom the latter encountered in the space between the Carpathians and the Black Sea, further east (hence the combined name of *Geto-Dacians* or *Daco-Getae*). See also Daicoviciu, 1965, pp. 13-17; and Giurescu, 2000, p. 38.

¹³ Herodot, 1964, vol. II, p. 31.

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), historian of religions and Romanian philosopher, Professor at the University of Chicago since 1957.

¹⁵ Ioan P. Culianu (1950-1991), historian of religions and Romanian philosopher, Mircea Eliade’s disciple and Professor at the Chicago Divinity School, affiliated to the University of Chicago.

“The term *Thrakes*, in ancient Greek, denoted the inhabitants of the north-east of the Balkan Peninsula, including about two hundred tribes bordering the Scythians to the East, the Pannonians, Dalmatians and Illyrians to the West, the Balts and the Celts to the North. To the south of the Danube was the demarcation line between two linguistic and cultural areas: the southern Thracians and the northern Thracians (Geto-Dacians)”¹⁶.

The historical perspective regarding the Thracians and the area they occupied is completed by historian **Constantin C. Giurescu**¹⁷, who argues “the Thracians spread over an enormous area, from the Aegean Sea and from western Asia Minor to the marshes of Pripyat and from the Bohemian quadrilateral to beyond the Dniester. And, if we also count the Cimmerians as Thracians, as seems likely, then their eastern limit must be extended beyond the Sea of Azov, the area inhabited by the Thracians including, in this case, the entire northern shore of the Black Sea. They were divided into a multitude of nations or tribes that were in enmity with each other. Because of this, they could not even defend themselves properly, and were subjected to different conquests”¹⁸. In addition to the Daco-Getae, other important Thracian tribes were the Triballi, the Odrysi, the Bessi, the Crobysi and the Moesi¹⁹.

¹⁶ Eliade, Culianu, 1993, p. 265.

¹⁷ Constantin C. Giurescu (1901-1977), historian and member of the Romanian Academy since 1974.

¹⁸ Giurescu, 2000, pp. 38-39.

¹⁹ See Giurescu, 2000, p. 39: “Among the more important tribes of the Thracians, we must mention the *Odrysi*, living south of the Balkans, in the region between the shores of the Black Sea and the river Hebrus (present-day Marița). At one point, in the 5th century, under their King Sitalkes, they managed to establish a powerful state with a large army [...]. Another important Thracian race were the *Bessians*, who inhabited the upper basin of the Hebrus River, between the Balkan Mountains and the Rhodope, and had *Bessapara* as their most important centre. Some of these Bessi later lived in Dobrogea. We meet them here, in the villages around the fortress of Histria and the fort at Ulmetum, in some inscriptions from the 2nd century. Also in Dobrogea, in its southern part, between Callatis (Mangalia) and Odessos (Varna), lived the *Crobys*, another Thracian race. The *Moesi* were settled between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains, especially in the western half of this region. From them took its name the land that has been called, until today, *Moesia*.” For further details, see also Pippidi, 1976, pp. 580-581.



Fig. 2. The spread of Thracian tribes in the 5th —2nd centuries BC.
 Source: Boamfă Ionel (2017). „Are the bearers of the name of Carp the descendants of the ancient tribe of the Carpi?” in *Proceedings of the „Dimitrie Cantemir” Geographic Seminar*, vol. 45 (31.10.2017), pp. 125-150, DOI: 10.15551/lsgdc.v45i0.10.

Considering not only the above, but also the fact that references to the different branches of the Thracians can be found, beyond Herodotus, in the works of practically all the great geographers and historians of Antiquity (for example, **Hecataeus** (ca. 550 BC-ca. 476 BC), **Thucydides** (460 BC-390 BC), **Strabo** (ca. 64 BC.-ca. 24 AD), **Ptolemy** (ca. 100 AD-ca. 170 AD) or **Trogus Pompeius** (1st century AD), and that knowledge of

the Thracians has animated the work of countless historians, geographers and archaeologists from all over the world and continues to do so today, we can conclude, for the moment, that the Thracians were extremely numerous, occupying an extensive area ranging from Asia Minor in the south to beyond the Carpathians to the north and from Central Europe in the west to the Dnieper and even further, towards the Caucasus, in the east. Moreover, the remote origin of the Thracians, which descends beyond historical times to the Bronze Age and even earlier, to the Eneolithic, places the Thracians – alongside the Illyrians, Hellenes, Celts, Germans and Slavs – among the primordial peoples of Europe, which is still an intensely disputed research topic in specialized circles. In this sense, in what follows we will also conduct a brief review of the main research hypotheses and theories regarding the origin of the Thracians.

The origin of the Thracians, a subject still debated in specialized research

Before referring to the dominant issues regarding the origin of the Thracians, some clarifications are required regarding the origin of the ethnonym of *Thracians* (*Θρακιῶτες* or *Thrakiótes*).

In this sense, the connection between the ethnonym *Thracians* and the toponym *Thrace* is very interesting. This toponym roughly denoted that part of the area inhabited by these peoples that would later become a province of the Roman Empire roughly corresponding to the southeastern half of modern Bulgaria, extending southward to the coastal portion of the northern Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. According to Greco-Latin mythology, Thrace appears to us as the daughter of Oceanus and Parthenope and, at the same time, as the sister of Europe, being considered the eponym of the region with the same name in both Greek and Roman sources²⁰.

Moreover, according to the same mythology, the name of the Thracians has a filiation that leads to Ares, the god of war (known as Mars to the Romans), a direct allusion to the warrior traits specific to the Thracians. Therefore, according to certain sources, the Thracians took their name from *Thrax* (or *Traxe*, which means naught but Thracian), who was the son of Ares and none other than the primordial ancestor of the Thracians²¹. From a mythological perspective, however, the connections of the Thracians with the god of war do not stop only at Thrax, as Ares was also the father of "Diomedes the Thracian", the king of the Bistonians (a people from

²⁰ Ferrari, 2003, p. 842.

²¹ Ferrari, 2003, p. 93. See also Lemprière, and Wright, 1949, p. 387.

Thrace) and the master of mares whom Hercules defeats when he performs his eighth labor²². According to other sources, Ares was the father of *Thrassa*, whose mother was the nymph Tereine, the daughter of the river Stryma (Struma on the territory of today's Bulgaria), which crossed the territory where the Thracian tribe of the *Triballi* lived²³.

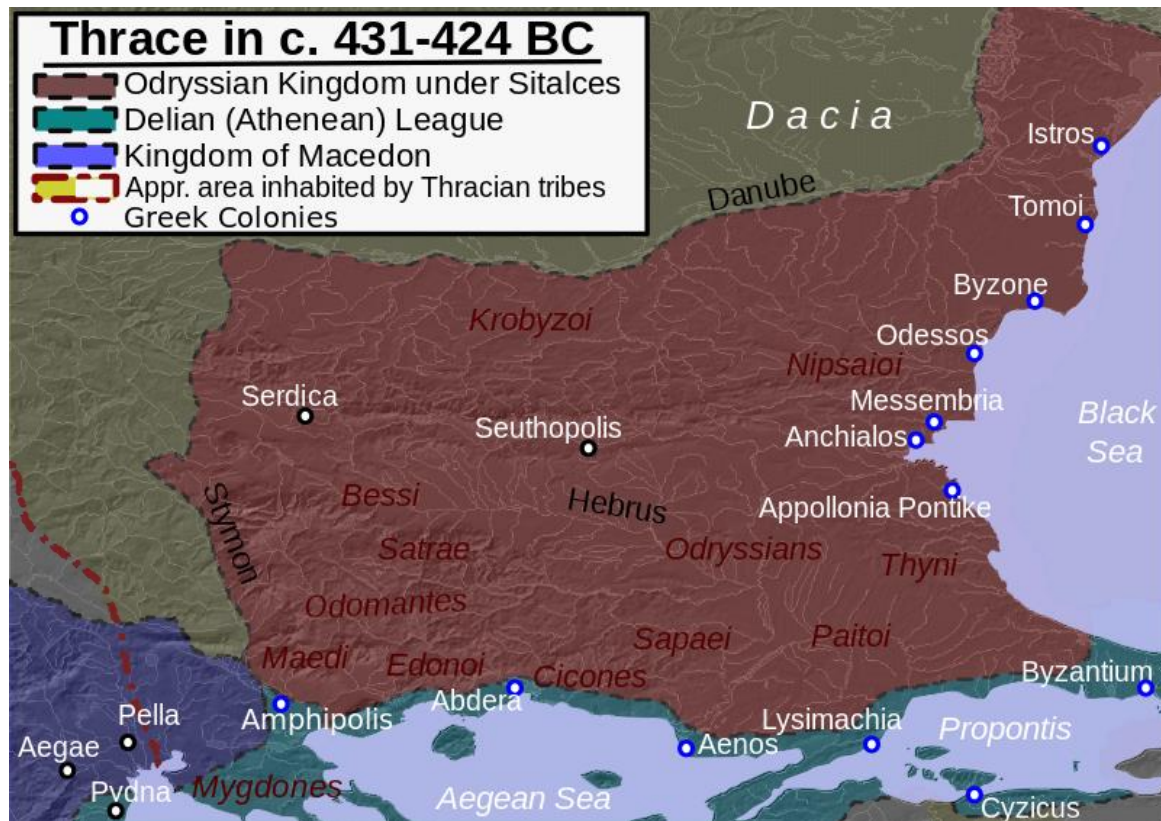


Fig. 3. Thrace (ca. 431-424 BC), highlighting the water courses of the Strymon (Struma) and Hebrus (Marița)

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Odrysian.svg>, accessed on 11.11.2021

Beyond these mythological references that strictly concern the origin of the ‘Thracian’ ethnonym, it is also necessary to emphasize the fact that, in a broader sense, stories involving the Thracians abound in Greco-Latin mythology. As such, they are likewise omnipresent in the great myths, as would be expected from a people as numerous as Herodotus described.

²² Ferrari, 2003, p. 93, p. 290.

²³ Celoria, 1992, p. 77. Available online at <https://documents.in/document/metamorphoses-of-antoninus-liberalis.html>, accessed on 11.11.2021.

However, to return to the issue regarding the genesis of the names of Thrace and the Thracians: these have involved the connection between a powerful male deity and a fantastic female being, such as naiads (nymphs of rivers and springs) or sirens. Here, we can see that all these mythological references appear to be suspiciously convergent, as **Marija Gimbutas**²⁴ points out. They reveal an interaction between populations belonging to different cultures; namely, one indigenous to the area of reference, with strong feminine accents, and another, more recently arrived, with a patriarchal tradition²⁵. Thus, the horizon that the mythological references regarding the origin of the Thracians open for us, corroborated with the observations of Marija Gimbutas, directs us to search for the roots of the Thracians concretely towards the time of the first Indo-European migrations in the Carpathian space and the Balkans.

On the other hand, however, as the 1st-century historian, **Flavius Josephus**²⁶ points out, it is also relevant that both the name 'Thrace' and the name 'Thracians' were assigned by the Greeks to the territory and to the people in question, respectively. Moreover, Flavius Josephus appears to indicate a lineage of Thracians that goes back to Noah. In this, the author brings the history of the Thracians into the realm of biblical myths, which in many cases also turned out to be highly reliable sources, like Greek

²⁴ Archaeologist and anthropologist Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994), a Professor at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) since 1964, was famous for patenting the concept of "Old Europe" to designate the Neolithic and Eneolithic cultures of south-eastern Europe, as well as for issuing the "Kurgan hypothesis" (tumulus graves) and for placing the origin of the Indo-European populations in the area of the North-Pontic steppes.

²⁵ Regarding this process of synthesis, Marija Gimbutas opines: "The 'Old European' religion centered on the worship of female deities had become clandestine and was continued by the subjugated population, primarily by the grandmother and the mother of the family. [...] The parthenogenetic and asexual goddesses (born by themselves, without the help of male insemination) gradually changed into brides, wives and daughters, becoming «erotized», bound by the principle of sexual love as a result of the patriarchal and patrilineal social system of Indo-Europeans. The Greek goddess Hera, the likely heiress of the "Old European" snake-goddess, became the wife of Zeus. Moreover, Zeus would seduce hundreds of other female deities and nymphs to impose himself. All over Europe, Mother-earth has lost her ability to give life to plants without the union with the god of thunder - only after the first thunder does the grass start to grow and the water is purified." (Gimbutas, 1989, pp. 118-119; for more details, see pp. 76-123).

²⁶ Titus Flavius Josephus, born Yosef ben Matityahu (ca. 37 AD-ca. 100 AD), Roman historian of Hebrew origin, one of the most important chroniclers of the 1st century AD, who provided descriptions regarding the tensions and conflicts between Israelites and Romans during that period.

mythology, of great importance in providing clues to solving some of mankind's great past enigmas. In this sense, Josephus mentions that "The sons of Noah had, in turn, sons who honored their memory, the names of the fathers being given to the peoples wherever their land belonged to them. Seven sons were born to Japheth. The territory under their rule began from the mountains Taurus and Amanus, stretched in Asia to the river Tanais, and in Europe to Gadira. As these lands occupied by them had not been inhabited before, their names were given to the peoples settled there. [...] After the leader of Thiras, they were called Thirii, whose name the Greeks changed to Thracians. These are the nations that had the sons of Japheth as their progenitors"²⁷.

Thus, Flavius Josephus' clarifications based on Biblical histories also seem to suggest certain migrations and settlements of populations from time immemorial that would have immediately followed the alleged Biblical flood, offering some clues regarding the traceability of these processes which, as we have seen, also concern the Thracians. What is interesting, however, is the fact that a number of researchers and authors have come to support the veracity of certain phenomena that could circumscribe the image of a "biblical flood" of smaller magnitude. This was a regional, rather than global flood, with correspondences in the "Epic of Gilgamesh"; a flood that would have deeply marked the development of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea areas, and which would have been capable of inciting larger population movements in certain periods that might be dated towards both the beginning of the Neolithic period in the Balkan region (ca. 6500-5500 BC) and towards its end (ca. 4000-3500 BC)²⁸.

In addition to Josephus, **John Gill D.D.**²⁹ offers further details about Thiras the ancestor of the Thracians, noting that a river called Athyras³⁰ flowed in Thrace. Part of this river's name was Thyrras, sometimes

²⁷ Flavius Josephus, 1999, pp. 23-24. In addition to what Flavius Josephus mentions, the editors specify, in three footnotes, that the mountain of Amanus separated Syria from Cilicia; that the river Tanais is identified with today's Don, and that Gadira is the city of Cadiz in southwestern Spain.

²⁸ See Williams, and Pittman, 1998. For further details, see also Voinea, 2009, pp. 21-46. For an alternative hypothesis regarding major changes recorded on Earth during the period between ca. 7600 BC- 3100 BC, this time due to impacts with celestial bodies, see Knight, and Lomas, 2002, pp. 67-72.

²⁹ John Gill D. D. (1697-1771), English Baptist theologian and Biblical scholar.

³⁰ The Athyras River, called *Karasu* ("Black Water") in Turkish, *Nestos* in Greek or *Mesta* in Bulgarian, originates in the Rila Mountains and crosses the border between the current territories of Bulgaria and Greece from north to south, flowing into the Thracian Sea (the northern Aegean). Through the pass near Nikopolis, it connects the valley of the Struma (Strymon) and Marița (Hebrus) rivers.

called Thuras - who would be the same as Odrysus, none other than the Ares or Mars whom the Thracians worshipped³¹.

Whether myth or legend, or whether we try to discern realities prior to the historical period based on contemporary scientific findings that offer some degree of certainty, archaeological research has clearly revealed significant mutations in the population structure and cultural profiles throughout the Balkan area and the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic space during the transition to the Bronze Age. Notably, this occurred exactly in the period in which the Thracian people seem to find their roots, according to the oldest accounts corroborated with the clues resulting from archaeological excavations.

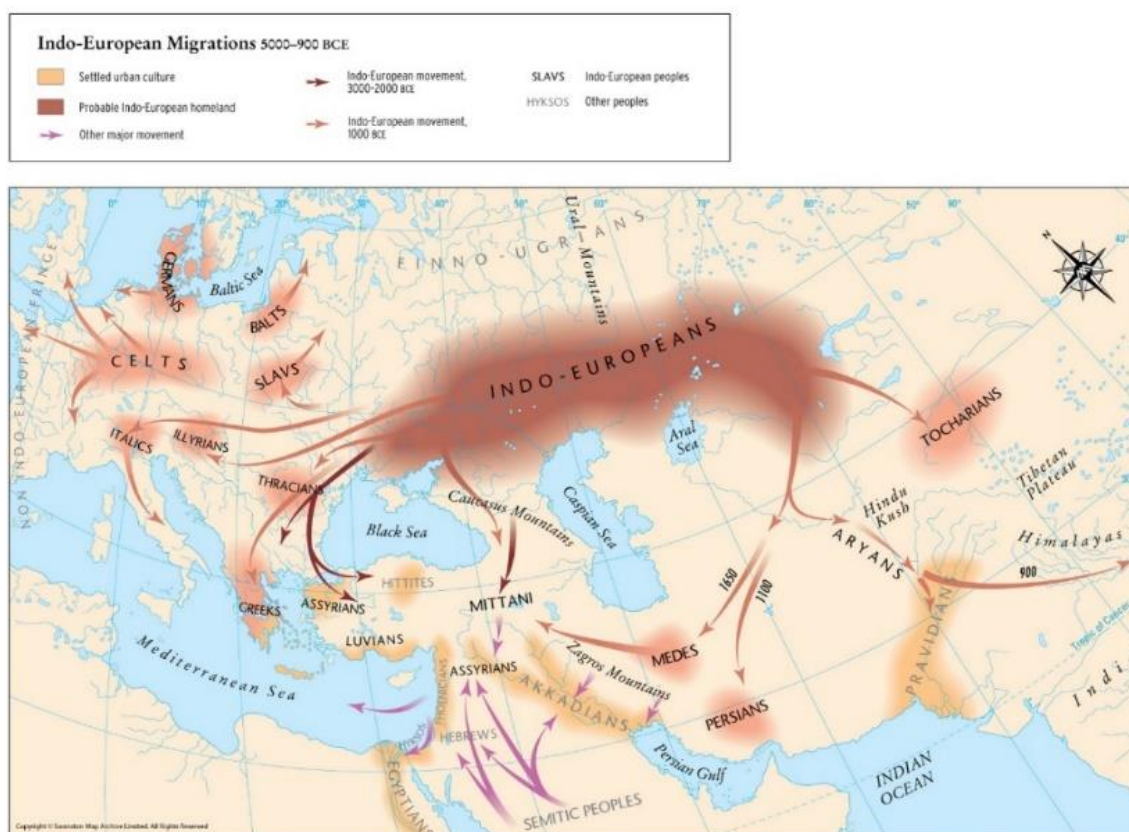


Fig. 4. Indo-European migrations (ca. 3000-900 BC)

Source: *themaparchive.com*, available online at <https://mapsontheweb.zoom-maps.com/post/612485544020197376/indo-european-migration-5000-900-bce>, accessed on 11.11.2021

³¹ Gill (ed.), 2018, p. 114. Also available online at https://issuu.com/davidclarke81/docs/genesis_19_issuu, accessed on 17.11.2021.

In light of the above, **Marija Gimbutas** described the process of infiltration of the nomadic, pastoral and patriarchal populations coming from the North-Pontic steppes – the so-called ‘Indo-Europeans’ – into the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic space and the Balkans. This took place over three successive waves (I., approx. 4400-4200 BC; II., approx. 3400-3200 BC; III., approx. 3000-2800 BC) and had two main consequences. On the one hand, it caused the dislocation and amalgamation of the old cultures in this area pushing them further westward and southward; on the other hand, it occasioned the synthesis between two large categories of populations with different cultural profiles – a characteristic, it seems, of a logic of confrontation and conquest of the natives by the newest arrivals³². The aspect is best visible in the Cernavodă³³ and Ezero³⁴ cultural complexes, situated in present-day Romania and Bulgaria. These present some of the most interesting correspondences with the Troy complex³⁵ (located in modern Turkey) which opened new cultural horizons that they are markedly distinguished from the autochthonous Eneolithic cultural funds of Tripoli-je-Cucuteni-Ariuşd and Gumelniţa-Karanovo VI, over whose area they had overlapped, favoring the transition to cultures specific to the Bronze Age³⁶.

³² Gimbutas, 1989, pp. 197-236.

³³ The Cernavodă cultural complex represents “a group of prehistoric cultures known from the research of three settlements located on Sofia Hill, which includes: the Cernavodă I culture (late Eneolithic), characterized by pottery decorated with cord impressions, with analogies to the populations of the northern Pontic steppe; the Cernavodă II and Cernavodă III cultures, from the transition period between the Eneolithic to the Bronze Age (approx. 2500 BCE-2000 BCE). Cernavodă III belongs to a large cultural complex alongside the Ezero (Bulgaria) and Boleraz (Hungary) cultures.” Pippidi, 1976, p. 157. While the Cernavodă II culture shows differences that highlight a new infusion of population from the north-Pontic steppe area that displaces the Cernavodă I culture as well, the Cernavodă III culture shows similarities with Cernavodă I that indicate it as a continuation of the latter in the Bronze Age. See also Mallory, and Adams (eds.), 1997, p. 104.

³⁴ The Ezero culture (ca. 3300-2700 BC) is an early Bronze Age culture that covered almost the entire territory of present-day Bulgaria. Together with the Cernavodă culture, it formed part of a larger cultural complex that extended from the Central European Baden culture and the northern Romanian Coţofeni culture to northwestern Anatolia, at the *Troy* complex. The habitation at Ezero shows traces of occupation since as early as the Eneolithic period (approx. 4000-3700 BC), but with an interruption of several centuries until the discovery of bronze. (Mallory, and Adams, 1997, p. 188).

³⁵ For further details, see Liuşnea, 2007, pp. 77-106.

³⁶ Gimbutas, 1989, pp. 197-236. See also Chirică, and Boghian, 2003, p. 103: “Toward the end of the 4th millennium B.C./beginning of the 5th millennium BC, the Kodža-dermen-Karanovo VI culture suffered a strong restructuring process,

However, it was precisely this sudden shift in the native cultural background, characterized, on the one hand, by the emergence of new elements and the assimilation of pre-existing ones, corroborated with a relative cultural homogeneity that seems to have quickly spread over an extended area from the Carpathians to northwestern Anatolia, and, on the other, reflecting a phenomenon of migratory populations in the area of reference, that was highly likely to give rise to broad controversies and debates among the specialist circles regarding the origin of the above-mentioned cultures in the transitional period between the Eneolithic and the Bronze Age, as well as in terms of their place and role in the process of Thracian ethnogenesis. Thus, for example, reviewing a series of archaeological discoveries and emphasizing certain distinctive notes between the North Pontic and Aegean-Anatolian influences, **Marin Dinu**³⁷ concludes by stating that: “The new discoveries seem to strengthen our previous hypotheses regarding the antiquity of the Thracians, in formation since the period corresponding to the transitional cultures of the Classical Eneolithic to the Early Bronze Age within which the local background, with some influences (especially southern Aegean-Anatolian), constituted, in our opinion, the defining factor in the ethnogenesis of the Thracians”³⁸. Although the assent of Professor Marin Dinu is reinforced by other reputable researchers from Romania, Bulgaria and elsewhere, a number of other, no less prestigious researchers support other hypotheses³⁹.

part of its communities being conquered and assimilated by the carriers of the North-Pontic pastoral horizon of the Petro Svistunovo-Suvorovo-Cainari type, and the Pevec/Cernavoda I culture was formed, which still preserved some previous elements [...]. Other communities retreated to hilly and mountainous areas, continuing the tradition of Kodžadermen-Karanovo VI, or penetrated into the environment of neighboring civilizations (Krivodol, Cucuteni-Tripolie). On this background, a series of civilizations specific to the late Eneolithic and Bronze Age of the eastern Balkan Peninsula (Ezero culture) were formed.”

³⁷ Professor Marin Dinu (1925-2012), historian and archaeologist, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University from Iași (for details, see <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/amold/article/view/29294/22968>, accessed on 19.11.2021).

³⁸ Dinu, 1998, pp. 32-43.

³⁹ Liuşnea, 2007, p. 78 mentions: “Bulgarian archaeologist V. Mikov believed that in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC the area of southern Bulgaria, together with Asia Minor, the islands of the Aegean Sea, the Thracian coast and Macedonia were parts of the great Aegean-Anatolian cultural and ethnic koine, a theory also supported by G. I. Georgiev following discoveries at the settlements of Karanovo and Dipsiska Moghila (Ezero). They supported the idea of the existence of a sedentary population, with agricultural occupations, evolving within certain



Fig. 5. Cernavodă culture
(ca. 4000-3200 BC)

Source:

J. P. Mallory & D. Q. Adams (eds.)
(1997) *Encyclopedia of Indo-European
Culture*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers,
London and Chicago, p. 103

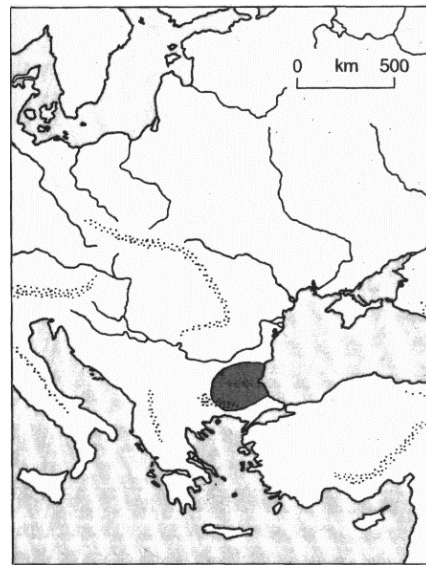


Fig. 6. Ezero culture
(ca. 3300-2700 BC)

Source:

J. P. Mallory & D. Q. Adams (eds.)
(1997) *Encyclopedia of Indo-European
Culture*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers,
London and Chicago, p. 189

Summarizing this dispute from the perspective of the process of Thracian ethnogenesis, **Constantin C. Giurescu** points to the existence of two distinct theoretical currents: one that supports an organic evolution of the Thracians from the autochthonous Neolithic background in the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic space and the Balkans, and another that, on the contrary, believes that their origin can be traced to the North Pontic populations who migrated southward to the Balkan Peninsula at the beginning of the Bronze Age:

cultural limits. However, at the same time, in the north and center of Anatolia, there was a change that has been attributed by some specialists to displacements of populations from southeast Europe, the first phase of the Early Bronze being explained, at least in part, as being the result of such influences. It is likely that the movement of herders from the North-Pontic area who reached Anatolia could trigger the migration of agricultural communities from the Balkan Peninsula to the East. This phenomenon is documented in Anatolia and the Caucasus through the existence of «*symbiotic cultures*» that are based on other European traditions, the archaeological discoveries in Anatolia and Greece highlighting infiltrations of Eneolithic communities from the northern Balkan region. Thus, the Anatolian cultures of the Troy I circle relate to the central European Baden culture, and the direction of influence is from Europe to Anatolia and not the other way around.”

“To which race do the creators of this Eneolithic civilization belong? A certain answer is difficult to give, at the current stage of research; however, the hypothesis that attributes this civilization to the Thracians does not seem unfounded, the name Thracians being understood in a broad sense, i.e. including the northern branch - the Dacians or the Getae - and the southern branch - the Thracians proper. The German scholar Carl Schuchardt characterizes the Eneolithic civilization of painted pottery as «higher» (hochstehend) and attributes it decisively to the Thracians, considering it as a brilliant age of their race, an age that the Homeric Greeks remembered only in legend and with wonder. On the other hand, the learned French anthropologist Eug. Pittard states (...) that «nothing prevents us from assuming that the inhabitants, who erected the funerary huts of Moldavia in the polished stone age, are those who later received from the old historians the names of Dacians or Getae». Finally, among our scholars, Mr. Andriesescu shares the same opinion. (...) Against this opinion there is another, also supported by scholars who believe, on the contrary, that the inhabitants who gave birth to the remarkable Eneolithic civilization are other than the creators of the bronze civilization. According to this last opinion, there would have been an overlap of peoples in our regions, following some catastrophic struggles, the newcomers destroying the civilization of their predecessors. This would have happened to the people of Bronze, who destroyed the previous Eneolithic civilization; so, they suffered, in their turn, from the people of the Iron Age, who came, some from the region of the Alps, descending to the southeast, others from the east of Asia, to southern Russia. The Dacians [that is, the North-Danubian Thracians - n.n.] would, in the view of these scholars, be precisely the population over which the people of the Iron Age invaded. In any case, even in this last hypothesis, it is still admitted that the Dacians or Getae inhabited our lands from around 1800 BC”⁴⁰.

In the area of confluence between the two previously mentioned hypotheses, however, we also find a third – ‘middle’ – possibility, which seems to be confirmed by some recent archaeological discoveries. In this perspective, it can be assumed that the ethnogenesis of the Thracians

⁴⁰ Giurescu, 2000, pp. 31-34.

really did take place in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space and in the Balkans, but with the participation of both autochthonous elements and those of North-Pontic origin, aspects somewhat revealed by the Cernavodă-Ezero culture and its extensions.

The mystery surrounding the origin of that “most numerous people after the Indians” in ancient times, coupled with the fact that its homeland overlaps almost perfectly over the ancient and impressive Neolithic civilizations of Europe that Marija Gimbutas used to refer to by the phrase “Old Europe” (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 7) and with the sudden and apparently inexplicable transition of the Thracians into the realm of myth and legend at the beginning of historicity, in spite of the abundant references by the authors of Antiquity who portray them as a special race and the abundance of traces of their material culture that archaeological research has revealed, constitute the foundation of the scientific research concerns that are gathered under the broad umbrella of **Thracology**.



Fig. 7. “Old Europe” (Danube Civilization). Source: Merlini M. (2005). “Semiotic approach to the features of the «Danube Script»”, in *Documenta Praehistorica* XXXII (2005), pp. 233-251, esp. 235)⁴¹

⁴¹ Available online at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237618040_Semiotic_approach_to_the_features_of_the_%27Danube_Script. accessed on 19.11.2021.

Thracology, a science dedicated to the Thracians

The three-volume study by Professor Wilhelm Tomaschek⁴² penned in the last decade of the 19th century, “Die alten Thraker. Eine ethnologische Untersuchung” (“The ancient Thracians. An ethnographic study”), would rekindle researchers’ interest in the world of the Thracians and their mysterious past, especially given that the period in question was characterized by a strong interest in discovering the roots of European nations, subsequent to a wider process of building national identities on the “Old Continent” and justifying the borders of the young national states by resorting to so-called “historical rights”⁴³. Unfortunately, the combination of political passions and scientific interest have not infrequently had a negative impact on academic debates and specialized research, polarizing two antagonistic scientific currents which either manifested the tendency to exaggerate the importance of the Thracians in the history of Europe, or to minimize the existence and role they played in ancient times.

Therefore, considering the data that has reached us through the ages about the Odrysian Kingdom (latter half of the 5th century BC) and the Dacian Kingdom (approx. 1st century BC – 1st century AD), placing the homeland of the former in the current territory of Bulgaria and the hearth of the latter in that of Romania, the interest in the Thracians and the Thracian world has found a particularly fertile ground among (but has not been limited to) Bulgarian and Romanian researchers. Thus, the Bulgarian professor **Alexander Fol**⁴⁴ would establish the *Institute of Thracology* within the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1972, which he would coordinate, as Director, until 1992. Later, the Institute of Thracology established by Alexander Fol became the *Centre for Thracology*. Since 2010, it is part of the “*Prof. Alexander Fol*” *Institute of Balkan Studies & Thracology Center* at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences⁴⁵. On a similar note, in 1979 another

⁴² Wilhelm Tomaschek / Vilém Tomášek (1841-1901) Austrian geographer, historian and ethnographer of Czech origin, Professor of Geography at the University of Graz since 1877 and member of the Vienna Academy of Sciences since 1899.

⁴³ For further details, see Marinov, 2013, pp. 10-117.

⁴⁴ Professor Alexander Fol (1933-2006) Bulgarian historian, archaeologist and thracologist, founder of the Institute of Thracology within the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1972), whose director he was until 1992, and organizer of the first six International Congresses of Thracology. At the same time, he was the Secretary General of the International Council for Indo-European Studies and Thracology. He was also a member of the *Accademia Medicea* in Florence, Italy, a member of the German Institute of Archaeology, a member of the Leibnitz Society in Berlin and a member of the House of the Academy in Paris, France.

⁴⁵ See <https://balkanstudies.bg/en/struktura.html>, accessed on 22.11.2021 (for further details, see <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/leibniz-sozietaet/vorgestellt/2002/fol.htm>).

Institute of Thracology was established in Romania within the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest⁴⁶, whose first Director, was Professor **Dumitru Berciu**⁴⁷ between 1979-1992. Later transformed into the *National Institute of Thracology*, the Bucharest institute would also become an academic institution, being subordinated to the Romanian Academy in 2003 under the title of the *Center of Thracology within the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology* of the Romanian Academy⁴⁸.



Fig. 8. Alexander Fol (1933-2006)

Source:

<https://milnakatosheva.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/1401.jpg>, accessed on 22.11.2021



Fig. 9. Dumitru Berciu (1907-1998)

Source:

<https://afnews.ro/2021/02/11/dumitru-berciu-descoperitorul-perechii-de-la-cernavoda/>, accessed on 22.11.2021

⁴⁶ The Institute of Thracology in Bucharest was established by Decree of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania no. 256 of July 6, 1979 (Official Bulletin no. 57 of 7 July 1979), available online at <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/22589>, accessed on 22.11.2021.

⁴⁷ Professor Dumitru Berciu (1907-1998), historian and archaeologist, director of the Institute of Thracology in Bucharest (1979-1992) and honorary member of the Romanian Academy since 1997. He is the discoverer of “The Thinker and the Sitting Woman” pair from Hamangia (1956). Since 1980, he was also a member of the International Thracology Committee (for details, see <http://afnews.ro/2021/02/09/dumitru-berciu-o-viata-inchinata-arheologiei-romanesti-iii/> and <https://afnews.ro/2021/02/11/dumitru-berciu-descoperitorul-perechii-de-la-cernavoda/>, accessed on 22.11.2021.

⁴⁸ By Decision of the Government of Romania no. 334/2003; see also <https://muzeu.unibuc.ro/ro/fpu30-institutul-de-tracologie/> and <https://iabvp.ro/centrul-de-tracologie/>, accessed at 22.11.2021.

The two institutions in Bulgaria and Romania focusing on the research of the Thracian world would become veritable pillars of support at the national and international level for scientific research in the topic, research that would increasingly shape its distinct profile under the name of *Thracology*. Thus, as was defined from the beginning by its founder, Professor Alexander Fol, *Thracology* would evolve as a specific field of research entirely dedicated to the Thracians, to their past and their culture. On the one hand, this fact would place it in the sphere of interest of ancient historians and archaeologists; on the other hand, it would fall in the area of confluence and interference between several disciplines such as linguistics, religion, mythology, art, geography or ethnography, giving it a pronounced interdisciplinary character.

In the field of research assumed by Thracology, beyond the apparent interest in what the Thracian world meant in a broad sense, both Bulgarian and Romanian researchers would pay special attention to the Thracian branches that settled and established political-administrative units in the territories that today correspond to Bulgaria and Romania in the past. Thus, Bulgarian researchers would prefer to focus on researching the south-Danubian branch of the Thracians, while their Romanian counterparts would primarily focus on researching north-Danubian Thracians, i.e., the Daco-Getae. The polarization of research interest between the two countries, even beyond other distinctive notes worth mentioning between the north-Danubian Thracians and their southern counterparts⁴⁹ was greatly aided by the distinction the ancient Roman administrative system made between the provinces of Thrace and Dacia, as reflected in the works of ancient historians. This fact has sometimes led Romanian Thracology studies to instead be defined by the term *Dacology*. This preferred (but not exclusive) reorientation of the research of the Thracian past towards their own national territory would very often expose researchers from both Bulgaria and Romania to accusations of protochronism⁵⁰, with the exception of certain obvious exaggerations that deserve their negative label, unjustifiably referring to the archaeological evidence and the conclusions formulated on the basis thereof.

⁴⁹ See Daicoviciu, 1965, pp. 11-24.

⁵⁰ For an exposition on the issue of Bulgarian protochronism, see Marinov, and Zorzin, 2017, pp. 85-110, or online at http://archaeologiaexnovo.org/2016/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/6_Marinov_Zorzin_Ex_Novo_2.pdf, accessed on 23.11.2021. Regarding the label of 'protochronists' attributed to some Romanian researchers, see Măndescu, 2013. available online at https://www.academia.edu/3688832/DACII._Despre_amagirea_protocronismului_i_alte_mistificari, accessed on 23.11.2021.

Beyond the polemics and controversies which represent a natural characteristic of any field of scientific research, the passion, the engagement and academic rigour of the studies undertaken by researchers from Bulgaria, Romania and elsewhere allowed Thracology to secure its place on the international scientific agenda as a field of first-rate scientific research over its five decades of existence. It has managed to offer an extremely generous investigation base and a broad spectrum of thematic research, while its development potential is still far from exhausted. During this period, an extremely large number of specialist works have been published, in addition to a number of scientific journals dedicated to the themes and topics it subsumes⁵¹. Moreover, several scientific events dedicated to the Thracians (symposiums, congresses, exhibitions etc.) have been organized at both national and international levels, most notable among them the International Congresses of Thracology that have come to represent a beautiful tradition of the field.

In 1972, following the establishment of the Bulgarian Institute of Thracology, Professor Alexander Fol and his colleagues organized the First International Congress of Thracology in Sofia. At this event (which enjoyed a wide international participation), Romania was represented by a large delegation of first-rate researchers, among them Dumitru Berciu, Radu Vulpe, Sebastian Morintz, Alexandrina D. Alexandrescu and Eugen Comşa. A brief but eloquent perspective on the scope and proceedings of the Congress was offered by one of the Romanian participants in the event, Professor **Sebastian Morintz**⁵²:

“Between July 5th and 8th 1972, the proceedings of the first International Congress of Thracology were held in the capital of Bulgaria. The merit of the initiative and the excellent organization of this new and important scientific event belongs to the Bulgarian National Thracology Committee, led by Academician Vladimir Georgiev. The Congress was included among the important actions sponsored by the International Association of Southeast European Studies, with the aim of deepening the knowledge of the history of the Balkan peoples and their civilization. Over 270 scientists from 23 countries, from Europe, Asia and America,

⁵¹ The periodicals *Thraco-Dacica* and *Symposia Thracologica*, founded and coordinated by Dumitru Berciu until 1992 and 1998 respectively, represent an eloquent example in this sense.

⁵² Sebastian Morintz (1927-1997), researcher, professor and archaeologist at the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archeology in Bucharest.

were in attendance. From Romania, a delegation of 20 historians, archaeologists and linguists participated, led by Professor Dumitru Berciu. In total, approximately 130 papers were presented, which gave rise to numerous and interesting discussions. In the absence of general reports to be discussed in the Congress' plenary, the communications were presented by section, as follows: 1. *archeology and art*, 2. *linguistics*, 3. *history and the history of the Thracian civilization*. The thematic area of communications included issues regarding the history of the Thracian nations, their spread, the language and the Thracians' material and spiritual culture. The Thracians' connections with other peoples or nations (Greeks, Illyrians, Scythians, Persians) were also discussed, with emphasis on the role of reciprocal influences in their historical and cultural evolution. The elements transmitted by the Thracians to today's peoples in southeastern Europe were also highlighted"⁵³.

The following Second International Congress of Thracology was organized in Bucharest in 1976⁵⁴. Seen to enjoy broad interest among specialized researchers worldwide, the series of International Congresses of Thracology would continue every fourth year. These events were organized not only in Bulgaria and Romania, but also in Austria, Holland, Russia, Spain, the Republic of Moldova, Greece or Turkey; respectively, in Vienna (1980), Rotterdam (1984), Moscow (1988), Palma de Mallorca (1992), Constanta/Tulcea/Mangalia (1996), Sofia/Yambol (2000), Chisinau (2004), Komotini/Alexandroupolis (2005), Istanbul (2010), Târgoviste (2013) and Kazanlak (2017).

Organization of the proceedings of the 14th International Congress of Thracology under the title "THRACing the Past: From Bronze Communities to Iron Kingdoms", originally scheduled to take place in May 2020, in Deva (hosted by the Deva Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization) was unfortunately disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the event had to be postponed⁵⁵. Over 128 researchers with over 90 specialized publications had initially announced their participation⁵⁶.

⁵³ Morintz, 1973, pp. 359-360.

⁵⁴ For details about the proceedings of the Congress, see Vulpe, 1980.

⁵⁵ For details on the organizational issues related to the event, see <https://thracology2020.com/>, accessed on 24.11.2021.

⁵⁶ Dates mentioned according to the organizers; see <https://thracology2020.com/sermon/a-treia-circulara/>, accessed on 24.11.2021.



Fig. 10. Promotional banner for the 14th International Congress of Thracology

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/International-Congress-of-Thracology-Deva-2020-XIV-edition-116495056422896/posts/>, accessed on 24.11.2021

The previous two congresses, organized in Romania and Bulgaria respectively, concerned topics circumscribed to the themes grouped under the titles “The Thracians and their Neighbors in the Bronze and Iron Ages” (Târgoviște, 2013)⁵⁷ and “Ancient Thrace: Myth and Reality” (Kazanlak, 2017)⁵⁸. The two events also enjoyed broad international participation.

In lieu of conclusions

The Thracians prove to have been one of the primordial peoples of the European continent. Moreover, looking to the abundance of references regarding them found in the works of ancient historians and in Greco-Latin mythology, and taking into consideration the richness of the testimonies revealed by archaeological research about their existence, we can resolutely argue that the Thracians were in the midst of all the great events occurring in the ancient world, from the early Bronze Age (if not before), to the Roman conquest of the North Danubian kingdom of the Geto-Dacian branch of the Thracians. The fertile land of Neolithic “Old Europe” (defined by the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic space, the Balkans

⁵⁷ For details, see the two volumes in which the Congress proceedings were published, edited by Schuster, Cîrstina, Cosac, Murătoareanu (eds.), 2013.

⁵⁸ For details on the proceedings of the Congress, see the *13th International Congress of Thracology*. “Ancient Thrace: Myth and Reality,” available online at <https://pdfcoffee.com/summariespdf-pdf-free.html>, accessed on 24.11.2021.

and the Aegean archipelago) which practically offers us the first sample of European civilization, was also the hearth wherein the powerful Thracian polities were born both south and north of the Danube: the Odrysian Dacian Kingdoms.

Under these circumstances, it was only natural that the Thracians' past, their world and culture would quickly become extremely attractive and exciting subjects of scientific investigation for Bulgarian and Romanian researchers. And just as attractive have they proved to be to a multitude of scholars from other parts of the world who have expressed interest in unraveling the events of Antiquity that are related to the very roots and evolution of what we today call the European culture and civilization. Therefore, through the passion and efforts undertaken by the Bulgarian Professor Alexander Fol, the broad scientific interest in Thracian research materialized into a distinct field of research with an interdisciplinary profile, corresponding to all academic rigours, which was given the name of Thracology. For half a century, Thracology has had an upward evolution at the international level, through the work and dedication of countless researchers and scientists (among them Dumitru Berciu, Vladimir I. Georgiev, Radu Vulpe, Margarita Tacheva, Ion Niculita, Georgi Kitov, Iosif Constantin Drăgan, Henrieta Todorova, Sebastian Morintz and many others). It succeeded in bringing to light a part of what 'the Thracian world' once meant. However, far from being able to entirely dispel the mystery that surrounds the Thracians, Thracology is described, to this day, as an extremely generous field of scientific research that offers multiple research perspectives, the most diverse of development potentials and, certainly, many more surprises waiting to be discovered by those who delve her depths.

References:

Indicative bibliography

- Celoria, F., 1992. *The Metamorphoses of Antoninus Liberalis. A translation with a comentary. (21)*. London & New York, Routledge.
- Chirică, V. & Boghian, D., 2003. *Arheologia preistorică a lumii. Neolitic și Eneolitic. [Prehistoric Archeology of the World. Neolithic and Eneolithic]*. Iasi, Helios Publishing House.
- Daicoviciu, H., 1965. *Dacii. [The Dacians]*. Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House.
- Danov, K. M. & Ivanov, T., 1980. *Antique Tombs in Bulgaria*. Sofia, Sofia Press
- Dinu, M., 1998. „Foltești-Cernavodă II. O cultură de origine răsăriteană?”. *[”Foltești-Cernavodă II. A culture of eastern origin?”]*. *Carpica*27:32-43.
- Eliade, M. & Culianu, I. P., 1993. *Dicționar al Religiilor. [Dictionary of Religions]*. Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House.
- Ferrari, A., 2003. *Dicționar de mitologie greacă și romană. [Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology]*. Iasi, Polirom Publishing House.
- Gill, J. D. D., 2018. *A commentary on the Book of Genesis*. King James Version, Hampshire, Bierton Particular Baptists.
- Gimbutas, M., 1989. *Civilizație și Cultură. [Civilization and Culture]*. Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing House.
- Giurescu, C. C., 2000. *Istoria românilor. Vol. I – Din cele mai vechi timpuri până la moartea lui Alexandru cel Bun. [The history of the Romanians. Vol. I – From the earliest times to the death of Alexander the Good]*. Bucharest, All Educational Publishing House.
- Herodot (Herodotus), 1961, 1964. *Istorii. [Histories]*. Vol. I, II, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House.
- Homer, 2002. *Iliada. [Iliad]*. Bucharest, Mondero Publishing House.
- Hornblower, S. & Spawforth, A. (eds.), 1999. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. (3rd edition), Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Josephus, F., 1999. *Antichități Iudaice. Cărțile I-X. De la facerea lumii până la captivitatea babiloniană. [Jewish Antiquities. Books I-X. From the creation of the world to the Babylonian captivity]*. Bucharest, Hasefer Publishing House.
- Knight, C. & Lomas, R., 2002. *Aparatul lui Uriel. Originile antice ale științei. [Uriel’s machine. The ancient origins of science]*. Oradea, Aquila ’93 Publishing House.
- Lemprière, J. & Wright, F. A., 1949. *Lemprière’s Classical Dictionary of Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors*. London, Routledge.

- Liuşnea, M. - D., 2007. „Observații privind perioada bronzului timpuriu în sud-estul Europei”. [*„Observations on the Early Bronze Age in Southeastern Europe”*]. Peuce 5: 77-106.
- Mallory, J. P. & Adams, D. Q. (eds.), 1997. *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*. London and Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.
- Marinov, I. & Zorzin N., 2017. „Thracology and Nationalism in Bulgaria. Deconstructing Contemporaneous Historical and Archaeological Representations”. in *Ex Novo: Journal of Archaeology* (vol. 2/2017) – *Who Owns the Past? Archaeological Heritage between Idealism and Destruction*, pp. 85-110.
- Marinov, T., 2013. „Ancient Thrace in the Modern Imagination: Ideological Aspects of the Construction of Thracian Studies in Southeast Europe (Romania, Greece, Bulgaria)”. *Balkan Studies Library*. Vol. 16/ 2013, pp. 10-117.
- Măndescu, D., 2013. „Dacii. Despre amăgirea protocronismului și alte mistificări”. [*„The Dacians. On the Delusion of Protochronism and Other Mystifications”*]. in *Historia*, available online at https://www.academia.edu/3688832/DACII._Despre_amagirea_protocronismului_i_alte_mistificari, accessed on 23.11.2021.
- Morintz, S., 1973. „Primul Congres Internațional de Tracologie de la Sofia”. in *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (SCIV)*, [*„The First International Congress of Thracology in Sofia.” Ancient History Studies and Researches (AHSR)*], vol. 24, no. 2, Bucharest, pp. 359-360.
- Pârvan, V., 1967. *Dacia. Civilizațiile antice din țările carpato-danubiene*. (ediția a patra revăzută și adăugită). [*Dacia. The ancient civilizations of the Carpatho-Danubian countries. (revised and added fourth edition)*]. Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House.
- Pippidi, D. M. (ed.), 1976. *Dicționar de istorie veche a României (Paleolitic-sec. X)*. [*Dictionary of ancient history of Romania (Paleolithic – 10th century)*]. Bucharest, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House.
- Schuster, C., Cîrstina, O., Cosac, M. & Murătoareanu G. (eds.), 2013. *The Thracians and their Neighbors in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Proceedings of the 12th International Congress of Thracology. Târgoviște 10th-14th September 2013*. Vol. 1-2. Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House.
- Voinea, V., 2009. „Cauze privind sfârșitul eneoliticului în zona litoralului vest-pontic. Așezarea de pe insula «La Ostrov», Lacul Tașaul (Năvodari, Jud. Constanța)”. [*„Causes regarding the end of the Eneolithic in the west-Pontic littoral area. The settlement on «La Ostrov» island, Tașaul Lake (Năvodari, Constanța County)”*]. *Pontica* 37-38:21-46.

- Vulpe, R., 1980. *Actes du I^{er} Congrès international de thracologie: Bucarest, 4-10 septembre 1976*. Bucharest, Publishing House of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania.
- William, R. & Pittman, W., 1998. *Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event that Changed History*. New York, Simon & Schuster.
- 13th International Congress of Thracology. "Ancient Thrace: Myth and Reality". Available online at <https://pdfcoffee.com/summariespdf-pdf-free.html>, accessed on 24.11.2021.

Additional Bibliography

- Bălașa, D., 2000. *Dacii de-a lungul mileniilor. [Dacians throughout the millennia]*. Bucharest, Orfeu Publishing House.
- Berciu, D., 1966. *Zorile Istoriei în Carpați și la Dunăre. [The dawn of history in the Carpathians and the Danube]*. Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House.
- Berciu, D., 1967. *Romania before Burebista*. London, New York, Thames and Hudson.
- Berciu, D., 1967. *La izvoarele istoriei. O introducere în arheologia preistorică. [At the sources of history. An introduction to prehistoric archaeology]*. Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House.
- Berciu, D., 1969. *Arta traco-getică. [Thracian-Getic art]*. Bucharest, Publishing House of Academy of the R.S.R.
- Berciu, D. & Berciu-Drăghicescu, A., 1986. *Războiul dintre Geți și Perși. 514 î.e.n. [The war between the Getae and the Persians. 514 BCE]*. Bucharest, Military Publishing House.
- Berindei, D. & Căndea, V., 2001. *Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate. [The legacy of distant times]*. Encyclopedic Publishing House.
- Bogdanov, B., 2016. *Orpheus and the Ancient Mythology of the Balkans*. Sofia, East-West Publishers (published in Bulgarian).
- Comșa, E., 1996. *Bibliografia Epocii Bronzului pe teritoriul României. [Bibliography of the Bronze Age in Romania]*. Bucharest, National History Museum.
- Drăgan, I. C., 1976. *Noi, Tracii. Istoria multimilenară a poporului român. Vol. I, II. [We, the Thracians. The multimillennial history of the Romanian people. Vol. I, II]*. Craiova, Romanian Writing Publishing House.
- Densușianu, N., 2002. *Dacia Preistorică. [Prehistoric Dacia]*. Bucharest, Arhetip Publishing House.
- Fol, A., 1972. *Political history of the Thracians*. Sofia, Nauka i izkustov /

- Science and Art State Publishing House (published in Bulgarian).
- Fol, A., 2010. *Thracian Culture: Told and Untold*. Sofia, TANGRA TanNakRa.
- Fol, A., 1993. *Word and Works in Ancient Thrace*. Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press (published in Bulgarian).
- Fol, A., 2008. *History of Bulgarian Lands in Antiquity*. Sofia, TANGRA TanNakRa (published in Bulgarian).
- Fol, A., 2009. *The Ancient Culture of Southeastern Europe*. Sofia, TANGRA TanNakRa (published in Bulgarian).
- Fol, A., 2018. *The Orphic Hymns*. Sofia, Gutenberg (published in Bulgarian).
- Fol, A., 2020. *The Thracian Dionysus. Naming and Faith*. Sofia, Zahari Stoyanov Publishing House.
- Fol, A. & Fol, V., 2005. *The Thracians*. London, Coronet Books.
- Fol, V. & Popov, D., 2010. *The deities of the Thracians*. Sofia, TANGRA TanNakRa.
- Gorgiev, V. I., 1981. *Introduction to the Indo-European Languages*. Sofia, Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences.
- Georgiev, V. S., 1966. *The Genesis of the Balkan Peoples*. Slavonic & East European Review.
- Hoddinott, R. F., 1989. "Thracians, Mycenaeans and «The Trojan Question»". In Best, J. G. P. & de Vries, N. M. W. (eds.). *Thracians and Mycenaeans: Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Thracology Rotterdam, 24-26 September 1984*. Leiden, Brill.
- Ilieva, P., 2006. *Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria*. Sofia, Borina Publishing House.
- Katičić, R., 1976. *Ancient Languages of the Balkans*. The Hague, Mouton.
- Mansuelli, G. A., 1978. *Civilizațiile Europei Vechi. [The civilizations of Old Europe]*. Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing House.
- Morintz, S., 1976. *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii. [Archaeological Contributions to Early Thracian History]*. Bucharest, Publishing House of Academy of the RSR.
- Nikolova, L., Merlini, M. & Comșa, A. (eds.), 2017. *Western-Pontic Culture Ambiance and Pattern. In memory of Eugen Comșa*. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Oppermann, M., 1988. *Tracii, între Arcul Carpatic și Marea Egee. [Thracians, between the Carpathian Arch and the Aegean Sea]*. Bucharest, Military Publishing House.
- Paliga, S., Comșa A. & Borangic, C., 2018. *Tracii. Oameni, Zei, Războaie. [Thracians. Men, Gods, Wars]*. Bucharest, Meteor Press.
- Pârvan, V., 1982. *Getica*. Bucharest. Meridiane Publishing House.
- Pippidi, D. M. & Berciu, D. 1965. *Din istoria Dobrogei: vol. I – Geți și*

- Greci la Dunărea de Jos; vol. II – Romanii la Dunărea de Jos. [From the history of Dobrogea: vol. I – Getae and Greeks in the Lower Danube; vol. II – The Romans on the Lower Danube].* Bucharest, Publishing House of the Academy of the Romanian People's Republic.
- Popov, D., 2014. *Thracian religion*. Sofia, East-West Publishers (published in Bulgarian).
- Rădulescu, M.M. 1984. "Illyrian, Thracian, Daco-Mysian, the substratum of Romanian and Albanian." *Journal of Indo-European Studies*.
- Renfrew, A. C., 1987. *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (First ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Săvescu, N., 2002. *Noi nu suntem urmașii Romei. [We are not the descendants of Rome]*. Bucharest, Intact Publishing House.
- Valeva, J., Nankov, E. & Graniger, D., 2015. *A Companion to Ancient Thrace*. Denver, Wiley Blackwell.

Constantin Haită, Daniel Iosif, Ștefan Marincea
The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization,
Bucharest

GIS project for the spatial analysis of prehistoric occupations in the Casimcea Valley Basin

Abstract:

The objective of the GIS application that we propose is the analysis of the spatial distribution of prehistoric sites and the characterization of the geomorphological parameters of the natural environment near prehistoric settlements, during different periods of habitation. The area of interest is the entire hydrographic basin of the Casimcea Valley, one of the most important hydrographic basins in Dobrogea, presenting an important density of archaeologically researched prehistoric sites, found both in caves and in the open.

The GIS application was made with the aid of the QGIS program, a freeware program that allows viewing, editing, and analyzing geospatial data. This stage of the project integrated data related to the topography and hydrography of the area, as well as the main altitude points, at a scale of 1:25000. The digital terrain model (DTM) was obtained based on the contour lines, with a 5m equidistant. The inventory of prehistoric settlements is based on the National Archaeological Repertoire (RAN), on inventories made within research projects, but also on those found specialized synthesis publications. Some sites were verified in the field, their precise locations recorded with GPS.

From the landscape point of view, the results of this stage of the project show well-individualized occupational patterns for the prehistoric periods under review, suggesting a number of possible scenarios in the relationship between man and the environment. In future, the project will integrate data on the evolution of the paleogeographic environment, and a more detailed analysis will consider the internal chronology of each prehistoric period and culture.

Keywords: *GIS, Casimcea Valley, archaeology, prehistory, geomorphology*

1. The GIS project: main components and features

The Geographic Information System created for the spatial analysis of the archaeological sites in Dobrogea allows the integration of both spatial and interdisciplinary data obtained through sedimentological, geomorphological, petrographic, archaeozoological, physiochemical, chronological (and other) studies. Moreover, the information system allows for spatial analyses querying the database, creating neighborhood areas, overlaying the map layers, and measuring not only geomorphological parameters, but also distances, perimeters, and areas.

Geographical data is represented as a point, line, or a polygon spatial entity, and is rendered on the map in a vector data model¹, well suited for representing a large volume of complex elements.

Quantum GIS (QGIS) is an open-source geographic information system, comprised of a package of programs that allow the visualization, editing and analysis of geospatial information.

2. Geographical and geological characterization of the studied area

Dobrogea is a significant territory in the southeastern extremity of Romania (15,570 km²), being bounded between the Danube Valley (to the west and north) and the Black Sea coast (to the east). It consists of three geographical units – plateau, delta, and coast, each with specific physical and geographical conditions and resources².

The relief descends from north to south and west to east; in general, altitudes are modest. In the north, the heights of a heavily eroded mountain massif determine the highest altitudes of 300-400 m. Further south, altitudes decrease to values of 100-180 m, the hills formed by the fragmentation of the plateau either on rocks that are easier to erode or on the alignments of certain fault lines. In the southern and eastern extremes, the deltaic, littoral, and pediplanar plains appear, featuring the lowest altitudes (below 50 m)³.

These forms were created through a long evolutionary process, when repeated uplifts and leveling, faulting, and differential erosion processes took place. Today, geomorphological regionalization requires the delimitation of three sub-regional units, with different genetic and

¹ Mihai, 2013, pp.11-12.

² Posea *et al.*, 2005, p. 685; Tufescu, 1974, p. 156.

³ Ielenicz & Săndulescu, 2008, p. 218.

geomorphological features.

From a geological point of view, starting from the Precambrian period Dobrogea was formed by joining three different structural units, which gives the regions a special identity to this day.

The **Northern Dobrogea Plateau**, from the Danube Valley to the Peceneaga – Camena fault, is formed by the remnants of mountains from the Hercynian and Caledonian. Heights range from a few meters in the meadow regions and the coastal plains up to 467 m at the top of Țuțuiatu (Dobrogea's highest point). The lithological variety of Northern Dobrogea is reflected in the multitude of relief macro- and micro-forms. As such, the relief developed on crystalline schists, with strongly inclined slopes and sharp peaks (Măcin Mountains); on eruptive rocks (granites, porphyries, diabases) with elongated and chamfered heights (Culmea Pricopan), remnants of erosion and wide gravel surfaces; on sedimentary rocks (limestones, sandstones, loess), with forms of karstic relief (valleys, slopes, sinkholes) in the Babadag Plateau and the Tulcea Hills⁴.

The **Central Dobrogea Plateau** is framed by two major fault lines: Peceneaga – Camena to the north, and Capidava – Ovidiu to the south; to the west, it is bounded by the Danube Valley, and to the east by the Black Sea coast.

From a geological point of view, greenschists dominate this region, the oldest layers found in all of Romania (dated to the Precambrian). In the upper part, the overlapping loess cover Jurassic and Cretaceous sedimentary deposit surfaces.

The relief has the appearance of a wide and slightly undulating plateau, with altitudes between 100 and 180 m, corresponding to the oldest leveling surface found on the territory of Romania to date. The highest areas can be found on the anticlinal structures (Topolog – Dorobanțu), and the lowest on the synclinal ones (Casimcea Valley)⁵.

The *Casimcea Plateau* is the most extensive area in Central Dobrogea. The geological structure of this plateau is represented on the surface mainly by Quaternary deposits, under which are found Upper Mesozoic and Proterozoic formations, mainly greenschists⁶. In some areas, the latter are uplifted to the surface by the intense and long-term action of external agents.

The *Casimcea Plateau* borders the Gârliciului Plateau to the west and the Istriei Plateau to the east. It is shaped as a peneplain, with the

⁴ Posea *et al.*, 2005, pp. 688-689.

⁵ Posea *et al.*, 2005, pp. 730-733.

⁶ Jipa, 1970, p. 40.

highest altitudes towards the north (La Pandele, 395 m), which gradually decrease until the river flows into Lake Tașaul. The 25-30 m thick loess mantle gives the relief its general appearance, cut from north to south by the Casimcea River and its tributaries – Râmnic, Cartal, Grădina, Valea Seacă, Visterna. In the lower basin of the Casimcea Valley, karst relief (sinkholes, slabs, towers) predominates, while an imposing sector of gorges (*Cheile Dobrogei*), which represents a well-known geological reserve and also includes several caves (Cheia – *La izvor*, Cheia – *La Baba*, Cheia – *Peștera Craniilor*, Târgușor – *La Adam*, Gura Dobrogei – *Peștera Liliecilor*)⁷, can be found in the vicinity of the towns of Grădina and Gura Dobrogei.

The Casimcea Valley basin covers an area of about 1200 km², being the most developed river basin in Dobrogea. The Casimcea River flows for a distance of 60 km, from Beipunar until its mouth to Lake Tașaul. The elevation of the relief decreases from north to south, from 359 m at Ciolpan Hill to below 2 m at the confluence with Tașaul. Viewed at the national level, it is part of the category of medium hydrographic basins within Romania⁸. The Casimcea Plateau represents approximately one-third of central Dobrogea, administratively split between the two Dobrogean counties – Tulcea (approximately one-third of the basin) and Constanța (the larger part).

The Southern Dobrogea Plateau is bounded to the north by the Capidava – Ovidiu fault, and to the south by a conventional line representing the state border with Bulgaria. To the west and east, its limits have a morpho-hydrographic character, following the course of the Danube and the Black Sea cliff, respectively. It represents a typical platform region, with the lowest altitudes in the entire Dobrogea area (75-100 m). Wide valleys and interfluves that present themselves in the form of long and low plateaus dominate the relief. Limestones, especially of the Sarmatian period, create specific micro-reliefs, with small irregularities caused by sinkholes or poles⁹.

Morpho-hydrographic systems – through their characteristics and variables – have conditioned or favored human occupations throughout history. Prehistoric communities were directly influenced by geomorphological conditions, with a continuous exchange of resources and energy taking place between the geophysical backdrop and the human community.

⁷ Comănescu, 2004, p. 27.

⁸ Pișota & Zaharia, 2001, p. 57.

⁹ Ielenicz & Săndulescu, 2008, p. 218

3. Characterization of prehistoric occupations

The prehistoric occupations considered in this study are attributed to the Paleolithic Era, the Neo-Eneolithic Period, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Although the Late Iron Age, the *La Téné* period, is generally included in the period of Antiquity, given that there are interactions and continuity with the Hallstatt period occupation, we have integrated the known sites for the entire Iron Age in our analysis, specifying their chronological interval.

The inventory of archaeological sites was based on the national archaeological repertoire (RAN¹⁰), completed by inventories of prehistoric sites presented in the specialized literature, especially in synthesis studies. Some of these sites were precisely located during field research through GPS.

Paleolithic Era

Classically, the Paleolithic is divided into three sub-periods: Lower or Early, Middle, and Upper. Archaic lithic industries, represented by flint or quartzite pebbles, processed either on the end, on one face, on both (*choppers, chopping tools*), but also by chip tools¹¹ are attributed to the very oldest Paleolithic, chronologically between about 1,000,000 and 600,000 years ago. The Old Paleolithic, which chronologically corresponds to most of the Middle Pleistocene, is characterized by more advanced processing techniques, such as *Levallois* and the technique of *Acheulean* type bifacial pieces, the ‘domestication of fire’ and the early arrangement of living spaces¹². These later industries also correspond to the few lithic pieces (including a bifacial flint carver) discovered *in situ* in the aven zone of the *Peștera Liliacilor* cave from Gura Dobrogei (Constanța County), associated with the bone remains of micro-mammals and chronologically assigned to the final period of, or immediately after, the Cromerian complex¹³ (about 700,000 years). On the territory of Dobrogea, a recently attested ‘open air’ site, OSL dated to the interval ca. 320-392 ka BP and attributed to Lower Paleolithic, has been located at *Peștera - Dealul Guran*¹⁴.

Within Romania, the Middle Paleolithic is characterized by the

¹⁰ <https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/>

¹¹ Păunescu, 2001, p. 73.

¹² Păunescu, 2001, p. 73.

¹³ Păunescu, 2001, p. 73.

¹⁴ Doboș & Ioviță, 2015.

development of several Mousterian *facies*, to the formation of which the pre-Mousterian industries also contributed from the beginning of the Riss – Würm interglacial (approx. 100,000 years) until the Middle Würm (33,000-30,000 years)¹⁵. In Dobrogea, a series of lithic pieces attributed to the Mousterian were discovered, with two *facies* identified: the first including both typical Levallois inventory (such as those from Castelu, Cuza Vodă, Lumina, and from the Cheia – *La izvor* cave) and non-Levallois (such as those from Lumina and Mamaia Sat, all localities in Constanța County). The second *facies* is denticulate, with weak Levallois debitage, represented by the discoveries from Saligny – *Făclia*, Peștera – *Dealul Peșterica*, Ovidiu (all localities in Constanța County). The only radiocarbon dating was carried out at the Cheia – *La izvor* cave, returning a value of 36810±790/-720 BP¹⁶.

The Upper Paleolithic corresponds to the Aurignacian and Eastern Gravetian cultures, which evolved during the last glacial period – the middle and upper Würm periods. The Aurignacian is defined by techno-complexes that evolved from the older lithic industries of the Late Middle Paleolithic, such as those of the denticulate Mousterian (with bifacial forms) or of the Acheulean tradition (with numerous scrapers) or of bifacial points and bifacials of different types¹⁷. On the territory of Dobrogea, the sites of the Cheia – *La izvor* and Târgușor – *La Adam* caves (Constanța County) are well-known. The Eastern or ‘Eastern European’ Gravetian is chronologically framed between 24000 and 22000 years BP, with the intervals of 14000-12000 years BP, and 12000-10000 years BP respectively corresponding to the two Epigravetian stages, marked in Dobrogea by the settlements at Tariverde – *Pe izlaz*, and Țibrinu III¹⁸.

The Epipaleolithic is chronologically framed between ca. 13300 and 9500-9000 BP and is characterized by a cultural diversification, respectively by the presence of regional groups with very well-defined territories – such as those in Moldova and Dobrogea, which belonged to the latter Epigravetian and were characterized by lithic industries with accentuated microlithism. In Central Dobrogea, the sites at Castelu and Gherghina (Constanța County) are known to date from this period, sites that could have been at the origin of the Northwestern Pontic Tardenoisian¹⁹.

¹⁵ Păunescu, 2001, p. 78.

¹⁶ Păunescu, 2001, p. 73.

¹⁷ Păunescu, 2001, pp. 84-87.

¹⁸ Păunescu, 2001, pp. 90-92.

¹⁹ Păunescu, 2001, p. 97.

Neo-Eneolithic Period

In Dobrogea, the Neo-Eneolithic period is represented by the Boian, Gumelnița, Hamangia and Cernavodă I cultures.

The **Boian culture** is considered to have been formed through the synthesis of the Linear ceramic culture and the Dudești culture in the central area of Muntenia. It is part of the Boian – Gumelnița cultural complex, specific to the eastern part of the Lower Danube, as well as to the northeastern part of Bulgaria²⁰. The Boian culture spread across south-eastern Transylvania, Dobrogea (the area of the evolution of the Hamangia culture), and north-eastern Bulgaria; but not south of the Balkans, in the area of the Marița culture, thought to be related to the Boian culture through the same southern origin²¹.

The communities in southern Muntenia evolved in the Vidra phase (classically for Boian), also extending south of the Danube, as far as the Balkans and the shores of the Black Sea. In its last phase, the Spanțov phase, the Boian culture entered Dobrogea as well, where overlaps can be observed in sites of the Hamangia culture²². The settlements of these two phases are located on high terraces and structured as *tell*-type settlements, sometimes reinforced with delimitating structures. Moreover, these phases are characterized by rectangular surface dwellings, featuring walls with wooden poles, twigs and and clay plastering, as well as floors of beaten loam.

Based on the radiocarbon data series from Căscioarele – *Ostrovel* for the calibrated and analyzed Boian Spanțov levels, combining the intervals of the maximum probability, Cătălin Bem assigned the period 4900-4550/4525 BC to this phase²³.

The **Hamangia culture** is thought to have been developed by a population of southern origin, being most well-known within Dobrogea and isolated on the left bank of the Danube, in the southeastern extremity of Muntenia, with a few discoveries in Bulgaria. According to several researchers²⁴, the southern origin of this culture is indisputable; at least part of these communities likely arrived in this area by advancing on the western shores of the Black Sea.

Dumitru Berciu states that “... the intimate structure of the Hamangia culture has a very strong Mediterranean, more precisely

²⁰ Dumitrescu *et al.*, 1983, p. 101.

²¹ Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 2001, p. 150.

²² Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 2001, p. 150.

²³ Bem 2000-2001, p. 41.

²⁴ Dumitrescu *et al.*, 1983, p. 97.

Eastern-Mediterranean, component”. Thus, he considers that the first communities belonging to it came by sea and settled in the coastal areas, later penetrating inland²⁵. The presence of some materials from an older phase, for example at Cernavodă, could indicate that they also penetrated along the Danube almost simultaneously. The eponymous settlement is represented by Hamangia, today the village of Baia (Tulcea County). In the third phase of the culture, the Mangalia phase, after the occupation of the Danube area by the communities of the Boian culture, the Hamangia culture continued to develop in the south and center of Dobrogea, here preserving itself until the end of its natural evolution when it organically transformed into a Dobrogean variant of the Gumelnița culture²⁶.

The settlements of the Hamangia culture are located in coastal areas, on the shores of lakes, on the low or middle terraces of the rivers, or in caves²⁷. The main form of housing is the open settlement, located along the coast or on the shores of the lakes, as is the case at Techirghiol, Limanu, and Baia - Golovița, or on the lower terraces of the rivers, such as at Ceamurlia de Jos or Tariverde. Some settlements on the lower terraces of the Danube could also extend to the middle terraces, such as those from Cernavodă²⁸. The second type of settlement typical of the culture is the cave, such as at *Peștera Liliacilor*, Cheia – *La izvor*, or Târgușor – *La Adam*. Dwellings and hearths were discovered at the entrance of the latter, indicating that these sites were occupied both seasonally and for somewhat longer periods. Sporadically, as in the case of the Hârșova settlement, they were also dwelt in tell-type sites, as can also be found south of the Danube, at Sava and Varna²⁹.

Regarding the absolute timeline, a radiocarbon dating of a bone taken from the Cheia settlement indicated values of 5020-4797 cal. BC (2 σ), falling within the chronological range established for Hamangia III, 5000-4700 cal. BC³⁰.

The ***Gumelnița culture*** represents one of the most brilliant civilizations of the latter half of the 5th millennium BC³¹. This culture gradually developed north and south of the Danube, on the previous background of the Boian, Hamangia, and Marița cultures (Karanovo V). It occupied a vast area that includes Muntenia, northeastern Oltenia,

²⁵ Berciu, 1966, p. 56.

²⁶ Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 2001, p. 151.

²⁷ Dumitrescu *et al.*, 1983, p. 97.

²⁸ Berciu, 1966, p. 58.

²⁹ Berciu, 1966, p. 59.

³⁰ Voinea & Neagu, 2008, p. 16.

³¹ Marinescu-Bîlcu, 2001.

Dobrogea, southern Moldova, the neighboring regions of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and eastern Bulgaria, where it is known as Kodjadermen (near Sumen) and Karanovo VI (near Nova Zagora). Some elements have even been reported as far as the Aegean Sea³². The Gumelnița settlements are usually of the tell-type, with deposits several meters thick (Boian, Glina, Hârșova, Tangâru, Vidra, Căscioarele, Gumelnița, Sultana, Bordușani, etc), but can also be found on terraces (reinforced, in some cases, with boundary structures). Several settlements have also been reported in the caves of Dobrogea. The houses, usually found on the surface, can have a rectangular platform made of split wood or clay; they bear marks of successive plastering, and sometimes feature annexes. The inventory discovered in the settlements of this culture is particularly rich: it includes tools and weapons on flint blades and chips (which stand out for the retouching and carving techniques), flint axes and other types of rocks, antler axes and harpoons, bone points and daggers, as well as numerous copper objects.

In terms of chronology, the A1 phase of the Gumelnița culture falls within the interval of 4600/4550-4375/4350 BC, with the A2 phase dated to 4350-3950 BC³³.

The *Cernavodă I* culture was first defined in the settlement on Sofia hill in the city of Cernavodă, considered to have been established by the contact between the communities of the Gumelnița culture in Dobrogea and the shepherd tribes of the northern Pontic steppes³⁴.

Cernavodă I spread throughout Dobrogea and the Danube Plain, to southern Oltenia, northern and northeastern Muntenia and southern Moldova, to northeastern Bulgaria and to the south of the Balkans. Its penetration into the Danube Plain contributed to the movement of the late Gumelnița communities northward, in the region of the Sub-Carpathian hills³⁵. In many cases, the Cernavodă I cultural levels overlap settlements attributed to the Boian and Gumelnița tell-type sites (Boian, Chirnogi, Hârșova).

It is known that the evolution of the Gumelnița culture ended, in the majority of its area of distribution, with the penetration of communities attributed to the Cernavodă I phase, with the exception of the hilly areas in northwestern Muntenia³⁶.

³² Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 2001, p. 155.

³³ Bem, 2000-2001, p. 43.

³⁴ Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 2001, p. 168.

³⁵ Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 2001, p. 168.

³⁶ Harțușche, 1971, p. 32.

From a chronological point of view, the Cernavodă I culture, which, in its first stages, evolved alongside the Gumelnița culture, is framed in the interval of ca. 4000-3400/3300 BC³⁷.

Bronze Age

The first age of metals also presents a tripartite division into an early period (in which new cultural-historical structures were formed), a middle period (with the establishment of new cultures, stable development and well-defined development areas) and a late period (characterized by the formation of cultural complexes across large areas)³⁸. The first period lasted from the middle of the 4th millennium BC, with the appearance of the Baden – Coțofeni cultural block, until the end of the 3rd millennium BC. The second stage is best highlighted around 2200 BC, through the formation of better-established cultures such as those at Monteoru, Periam – Pecica, Wietenberg, Otomani and Tei. The third stage began around 1500 BC, and was characterized by trends of cultural syntheses, such as those in the Carpatho-Dnieper (through the Noua – Sabatinovka cultural complex) or Carpatho-Balkan areas (through the Govora – Fundeni and Zimnicea – Plovdiv cultural complexes)³⁹.

The date that separates the Bronze Age from the Iron Age is conventionally set at 1150 BC and reflects the generalization of the adoption of the plastic decoration of pottery (especially by grooves and protuberances) and the beginnings of iron metallurgy⁴⁰.

With respect to Dobrogea itself, the Coslogeni culture appeared during the Late Bronze Age, , penetrating the plains regions along the Danube, east of Mostiștea, and Dobrogea proper.

Iron Age

The two distinct periods of the Iron Age, both chronologically and culturally, are respectively defined by the *Hallstatt* necropolis and the Celtic fortified settlement (*oppidum*) of La Tène⁴¹. Chronologically, Hallstatt culture is divided into an early period (approx. 1200/1150-850/800 BC), a middle period (in which the use of iron becomes widespread) around approx. 850/800-650 BC, which roughly corresponds to the evolution of the Basarabi culture, and a late, also known as “Frigile”, period, approx.

³⁷ Bem, 2000-2001, p. 50.

³⁸ Vulpe *et al.*, 2001, p. 222.

³⁹ Vulpe *et al.*, 2001, pp. 222-223.

⁴⁰ Vulpe *et al.*, p. 225.

⁴¹ Vulpe *et al.*, p. 294.

650-450/400 BC⁴². The early Hallstatt is represented by the Babadag culture, found in its first phase in the north of Dobrogea, from where it spread throughout the territory in the second phase and continued its evolution into the third phase. For the middle period, discoveries with Basarabi-type materials have been documented⁴³.

During the Late Hallstatt period, in the 6th-4th centuries BC, the evolution of civilization in Dacia took place under the influence of important events such as the foundation of Greek colonies on the shores of the Black Sea and the growth of Scythian power in the North Pontic territories⁴⁴.

The second Iron Age period, La Tène, was heavily influenced by Celtic communities. However, the Dacians did not immediately assimilate the elements that illustrate the superiority of Celtic culture (wheel-made pottery, the advanced metallurgy of bronze and iron); even so, the settlements and necropolises of the La Tène type bring evidence of the coexistence of the two ethnicities⁴⁵.

In Dobrogea, very few typical Getic settlements and burials are known, dated to the 3rd – 1st centuries BC, and, likewise, a single fortified settlement, of ‘dava’ type, has been found at Satu Nou (Constanța County)⁴⁶.

4. Spatial distribution of sites attributed to the main stages of habitation

Paleolithic Era

Of the seven sites considered in our analysis, most (4) represent cave sites (Cheia - *Peștera Bursucilor*, Cheia – *La izvor*, Gura Dobrogei – *Peștera Liliecilor*, Târgușor - *La Adam*. They are located in the Cheile Dobrogei karstic zone, on the two tributaries of Casimcea – Ghelengicul and Visterna. Among them, two have dwellings attributed to both the Middle and the Upper Paleolithic, one solely to the Upper Paleolithic, and one including, along with the Upper Paleolithic, an occupation level attributed to the Mesolithic.

The two open-air settlements are located in the Târgușor area (on the gentle slope of a hill in the *Sitorman* valley) and, respectively, at *La*

⁴² Vulpe *et al.*, pp. 298-299.

⁴³ Vulpe *et al.*, p. 329.

⁴⁴ Vulpe, 2001, p. 467.

⁴⁵ Babeș, 2001, p. 503.

⁴⁶ Babeș, 2001, p. 503.

Grădină, on a flattened hillock, on the left side of the Visterna valley. They are attributed to the Upper Paleolithic and the Mesolithic, respectively.

An isolated discovery is represented by a single piece, attributed to the Middle Paleolithic, at a point located on the shore of Lake Corbu.

Neo-Eneolithic Period

Of the 24 sites recorded in this GIS application, seven are located in caves. They show levels of associated occupations corresponding to the Hamangia, Boian, and Gumelnița cultures (three sites, one of which also includes vestiges of habitation attributed to the Cernavodă I culture), Hamangia, Gumelnița, and Cernavodă I (three sites), and one site showing only traces of Cernavodă I habitation. Almost all known caves in the Cheile Dobrogei area (with the exception of Cheia – *La Soci*) were inhabited in the Neo-Eneolithic period and, broadly speaking, largely overlap its duration.

One settlement attributed to the Gumelnița culture is considered to be of the tell-type (Tașaul – *La Ostrov*, including two levels of housing, with a total stratigraphic thickness of approx. 1 m, and located on an island of greenschists).

Most Neo-Eneolithic sites (11) represent simple, open settlements with a single occupation level. They are located on small promontories, on the smooth slopes of hills or on the higher terraces of the Casimcea Valley or some of its tributaries or streams, and are attributed to the Hamangia culture (4), Gumelnița (3), the association of these cultures (3) or to unspecified Neolithic dwellings (1).

Two of the represented sites are burial necropolises, attributed to the Gumelnița culture, and are located on the shores of Lake Corbul and Tașaul, respectively.

Three other sites represent isolated discoveries of some archaeological materials, attributed to the Gumelnița culture, located either on the terrace of a tributary of the Casimcea Valley or on the shore of Lake Tașaul.

Bronze Age

Among the seven sites introduced in the application, two dwellings are located in caves, attributed to the unspecified period of Bronze Age (Gura Dobrogei – *Peștera Liliacilor*), and to the Late Bronze Age (Cheia – *La Baba*), respectively.

Two sites, which represent open settlements belonging to the Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age respectively, are located at the base of the hills on the banks of the Casimcea or near a small river ('derea').

Two other sites represent discoveries of the type of deposits of metal pieces, one attributed to the Early Bronze – Coslogeni culture, and the second to the Final Bronze (D).

A single site represents an inhumation grave, discovered at Casimcea, with a limestone scepter in the shape of a horse's head, attributed to the Yamnaya culture.

Iron Age

Of the 22 sites entered into the GIS application, seven are located in caves, attributed to both Iron Age periods – Hallstatt (Babadag culture) and La Tène (5) or only to the latter (2). Almost all known caves in the Cheile Dobrogei area (with the exception of Cheia – *Grota Călugărului*) were inhabited during the Iron Age.

Of the 12 open settlements, most are attributed to the La Tène period (7), three are attributed to the Hallstatt, and only two to the entire span of the Iron Age. They are located on the slopes of certain hills (such as the one at Casimcea – *Site 15*) or the higher terraces of the Casimcea Valley or its main tributaries, as well as on the shores of Lakes Corbu and Taşaul.

The two burial necropolises (one simple, attributed to the Hallstatt period, and the other of the tumulus type, attributed to the La Tène period) are located on the shore of Lake Corbu, and near a high point between two left tributaries of the Casimcea, respectively.

The deposit of metal pieces is attributed to the Hallstatt A period, and is located on a promontory near the locality of Gura Dobrogei.

5. Geomorphological characterization of the prehistoric sites

Geomorphological analysis was carried out on the 60 sites integrated into the GIS application: 7 assigned to the Paleolithic, 24 to the Neo-Eneolithic, 7 to the Bronze Age and 22 to the Iron Age.

The geomorphological analysis considered the hypsometry, hydrology, the slope of the terrain and the exposure (orientation) of said slopes (tab. 1). Maps of these parameters were crafted for each prehistoric period (figs. 2-13).

From a geomorphological point of view, all sites are located in the meadow of the Casimcea Valley, either on the low terraces or its related slopes. Only one site was identified as falling in the interfluvial zone (Piatra necropolis).

The sites in the meadow are located in those areas where it is most developed, also considering the fact that one of the valley's geomorphological

characteristics is the floodplain's asymmetric development. This asymmetric character can be observed both in its longitudinal and transverse profile. For example, the Casian and Cheia – *Pazvant II* sites are located in developed meadow areas (with a width of 200-300 m), on the right side of the valley.

An important number of sites are found on the Casimcea river terraces. In general, 3-5 such terraces are notable, with altitudes between 5 m and 90 m. The terraces appear in the form of steps, which gave human communities protection against floods. As in the case of the meadow areas outlined above, these terraces mainly developed on the right side of the valley.

From a hypsometric point of view, most sites (43 out of 60) are located at an altitude no greater than 75 m.

	Subcategory	Values	Paleolithic	Neo-Eneolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age
Hypsometry	Level 1	≥ 75 m	6	15	5	17
	Level 2	75-149 m	1	5	2	3
	Level 3	150-224 m	---	3	---	---
	Level 4	< 224 m	---	1	---	2
Hydrology (Horton-Strahler)	Order 1		2	4	---	4
	Order 2		---	2	2	---
	Order 3		5	8	4	6
	Order 4		---	10	1	6
Slope	Level 1	$0-9^\circ$	1	6	1	8
	Level 2	$10-29^\circ$	1	8	3	5
	Level 3	$30-59^\circ$	2	5	1	4
	Level 4	$> 60^\circ$	3	5	2	5
Exposure of slopes	North		4	8	3	5
	East		1	4	1	4
	South		1	8	2	9
	West		1	4	1	4

Table 1: Synthetic representation of the geomorphological

characteristics of the prehistoric sites in the Casimcea Valley Basin.

Regarding hydrology, the position of the sites was analyzed with reference to the Horton – Strahler system (fig. 1). Following this analysis, Casimcea is an order 4 basin. Consequently, four levels of hydrographic courses were established. Starting from the idea that the point of confluence causes a change in the dynamics of riverbeds, this ordering system considers tributaries without ramifications as being of order 1; from the confluences of two such courses, a course of order 2 is formed, and in similar fashion up to order 4, representing the Casimcea valley itself.

The distribution of sites according to the order of the hydrographic course was then established. This ordering allows for the determination of existing relationships between the frequency of river courses, the length of channels and drainage surfaces, the perimeter of said surfaces etc., and the establishment of human settlements, through reference to the morphogenetic conditions.

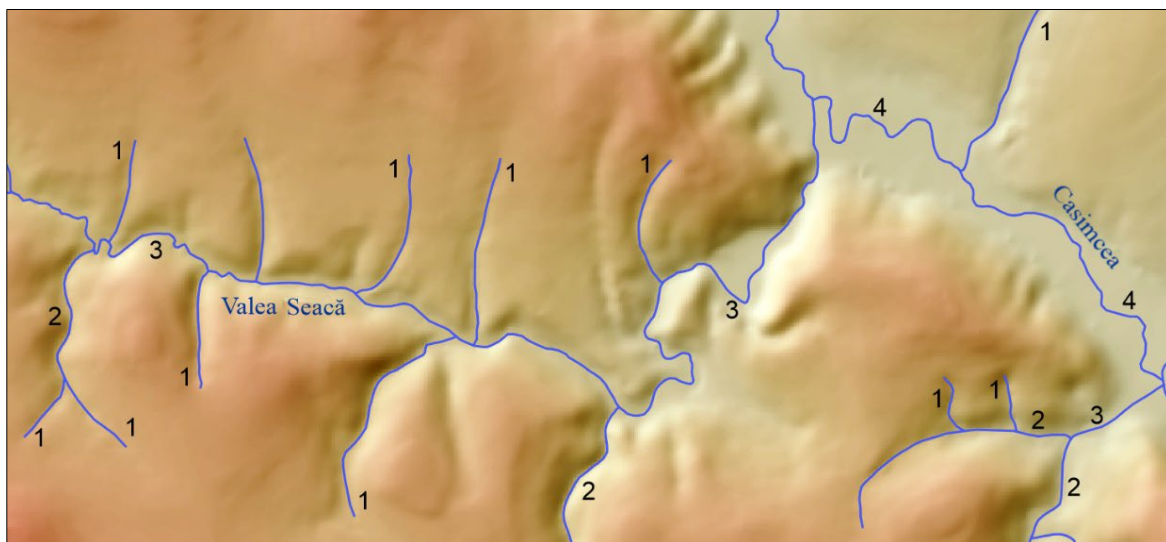


Figure 1: Representation of the Horton - Strahler system in the Casimcea Valley Basin.

The Paleolithic sites are located on the 3rd order valleys, direct tributaries of the Casimcea River. However, we must also take into account the fact that most of these sites are located in the caves of the Cheile Dobrogei area. The Neo-Eneolithic sites are, likewise, located in valleys of orders 4 and 3, but also in those of orders 1 and 2, which suggests their gradual advance towards the upper part of the basin. The Bronze Age sites are located in valleys of order 3, but also of orders 2 and 4, while the Iron Age sites are found in valleys of orders 4, 3 and 1.

Regarding the slope, higher values are specific to Paleolithic sites (over 60°), which is evident for the karstic area. The majority of Neo-Eneolithic sites are located on much lower slopes (68.4% of the sites on slopes below 30°). Bronze Age sites are also located on lower slopes, while the Iron Age sites are more homogeneously distributed, with a slight preference for lower slopes.

Relative to the orientation of the slopes, the majority of settlements are located on the northern slopes (66.6% of Paleolithic sites and 33.3% of Neo-Eneolithic ones), followed by the southern slopes (42.8% of Iron Age, 38.8% of Neo-Eneolithic and 16.6% of Paleolithic sites). The western slopes were used for Iron Age and Neo-Eneolithic sites (16.6%).

Conclusions

Firstly, our geomorphological analysis has highlighted the importance of cave dwellings. As mentioned above, the majority of dwellings from the Paleolithic Era are concentrated in caves, which is mainly explained by the climatic variations experienced during the Ice Age. Moreover, almost all of this domestic potential was employed in the Neo-Eneolithic and Iron Age periods, which sheds an entirely new light on the special area that is Cheile Dobrogei.

Even though in most cases these were considered sporadic dwellings, there are also instances of stable settlements with carefully built homes, such as those featuring hearth areas in the Cheia region.

Also of note, perhaps surprisingly, Bronze Age settlements have a very sporadic presence throughout the entire basin.

Regarding the values of the geomorphological parameters under review, these highlighted some similarities, but also some specific preferences, such as the lower values of the slopes in the case of the Neo-Eneolithic sites, and their southern exposure, in the case of Neo-Eneolithic and Iron Age sites.

With particular, but not exclusive, regard for these two periods, the existing geomorphological analysis must bear further and separate elaboration in the future for each culture and each chronological interval, respectively.

We appreciate the proposed GIS as being highly appropriate for the spatial analysis of prehistoric occupations in the Casimcea Valley Basin.

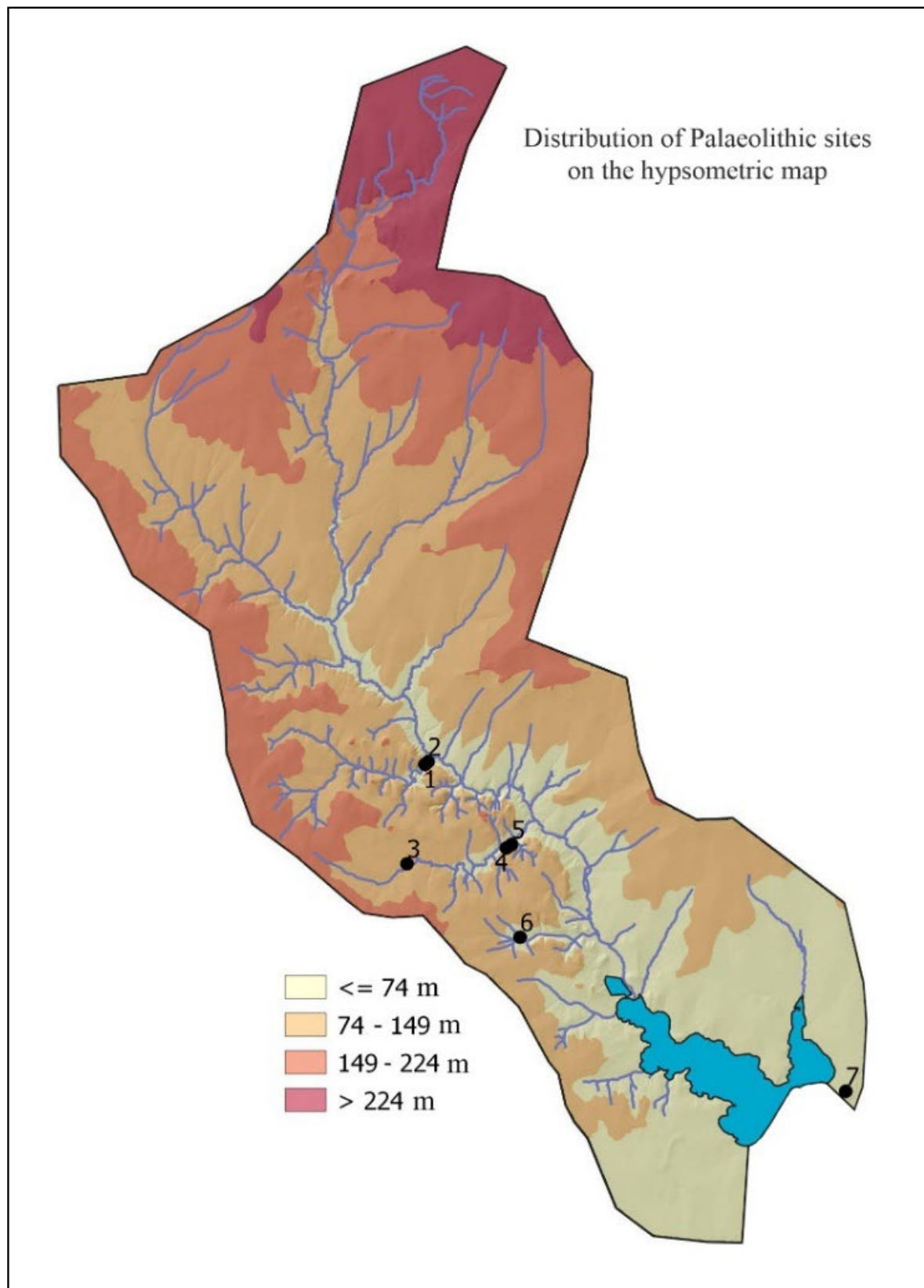


Figure 2: Distribution of Paleolithic sites on the hypsometric map.

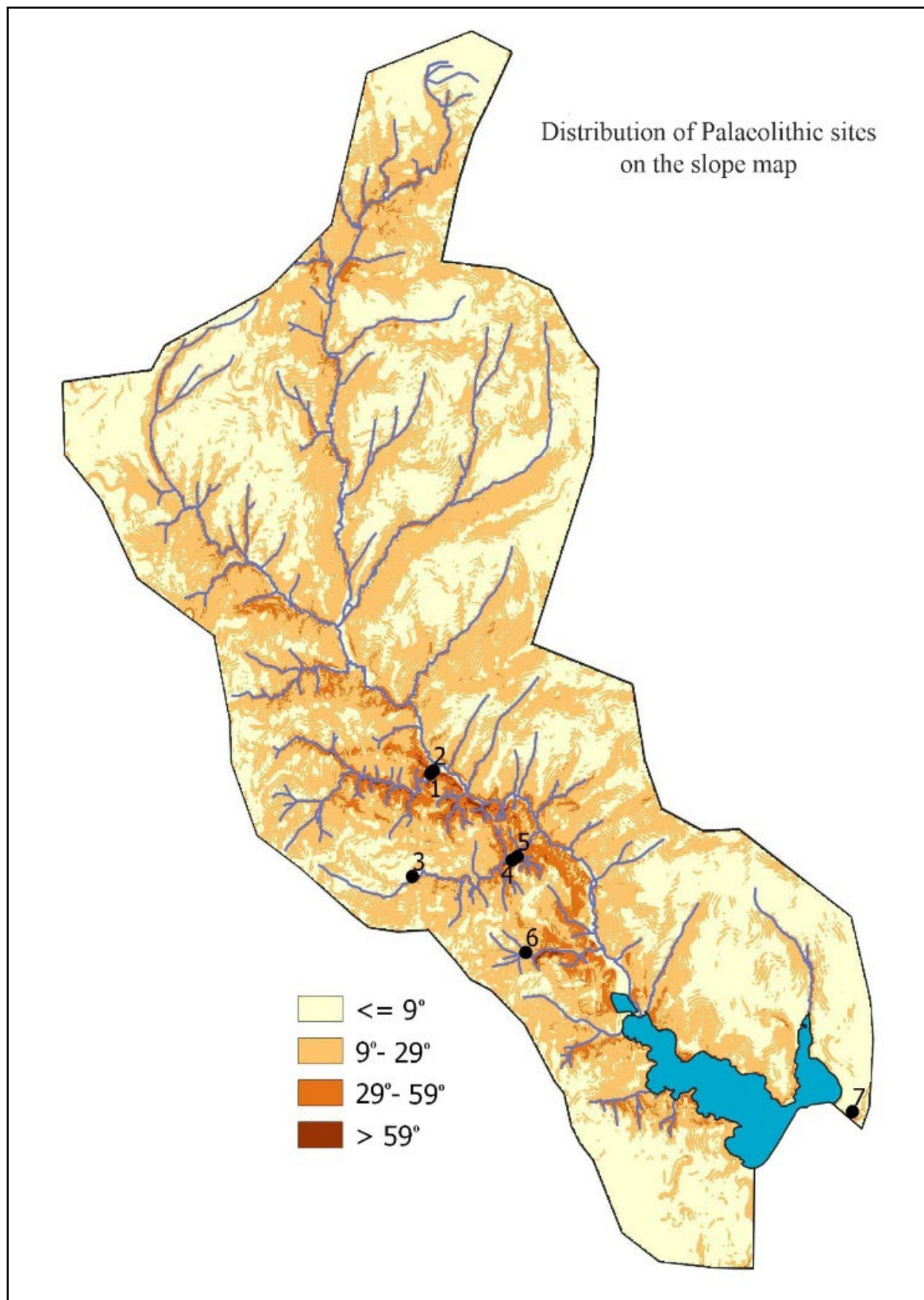


Figure 3: Distribution of Paleolithic sites on the slope map.

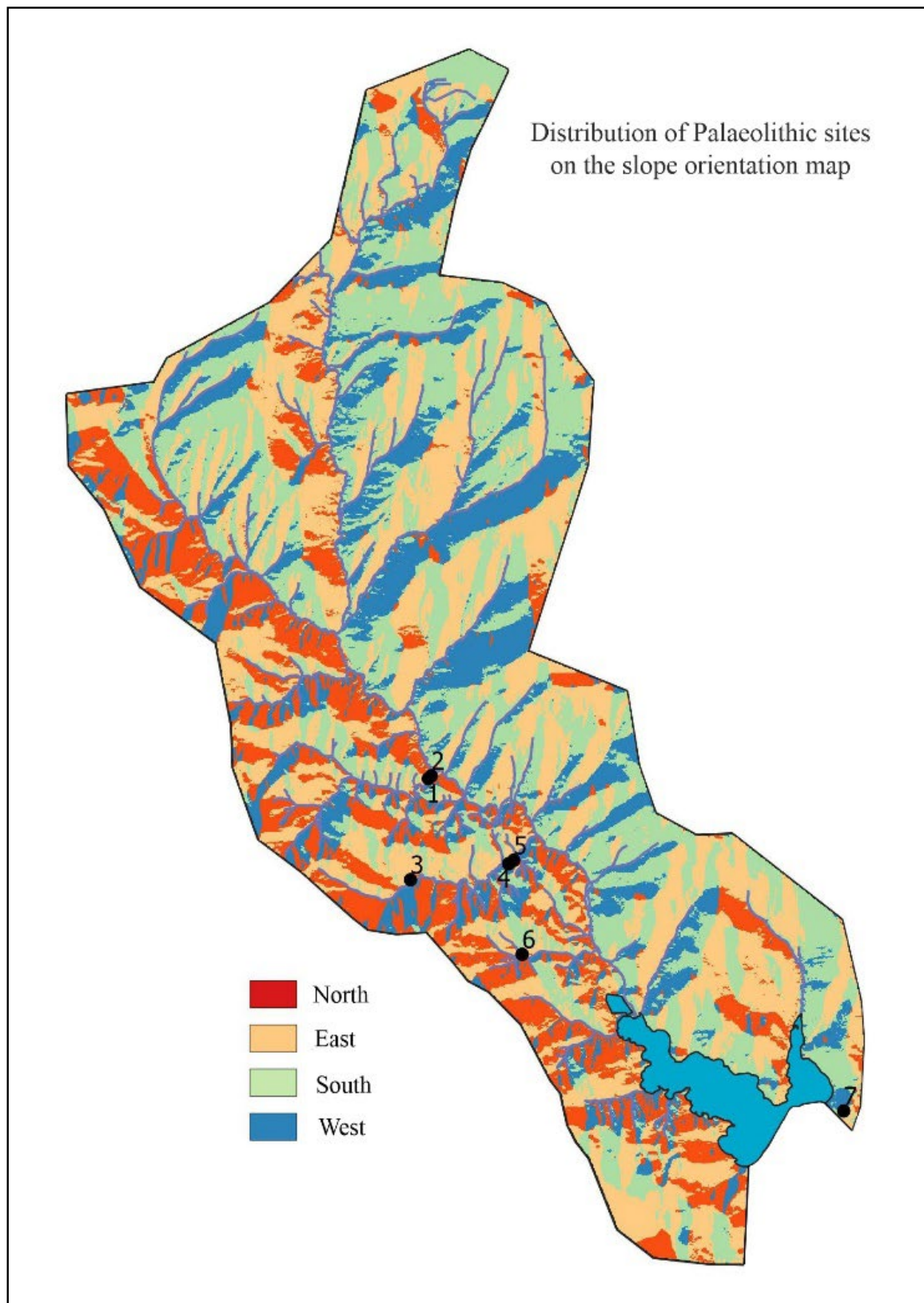


Figure 4: Distribution of Paleolithic sites on the slope orientation map.

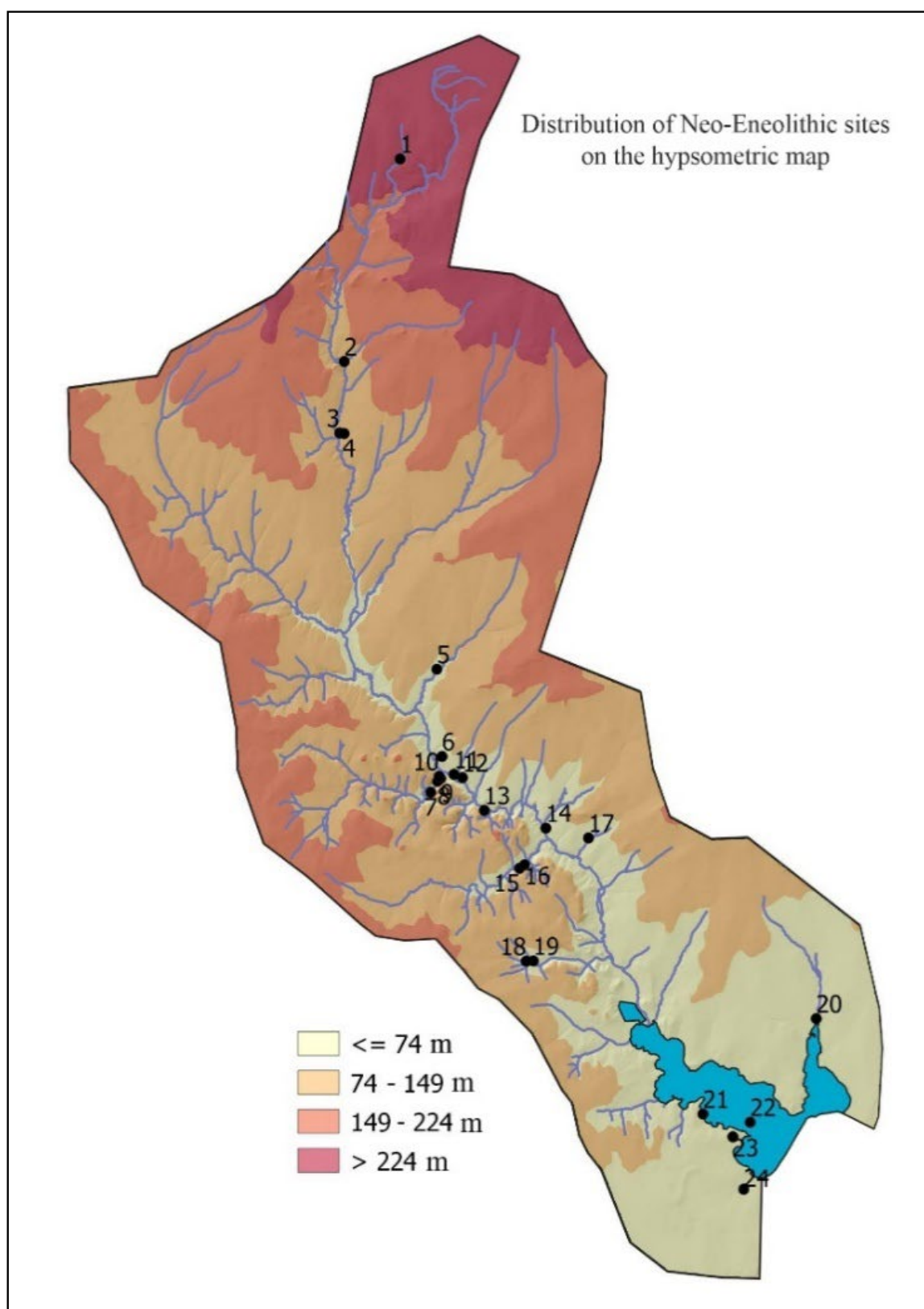


Figure 5: Distribution of Neo-Eneolithic sites on the hypsometric map.

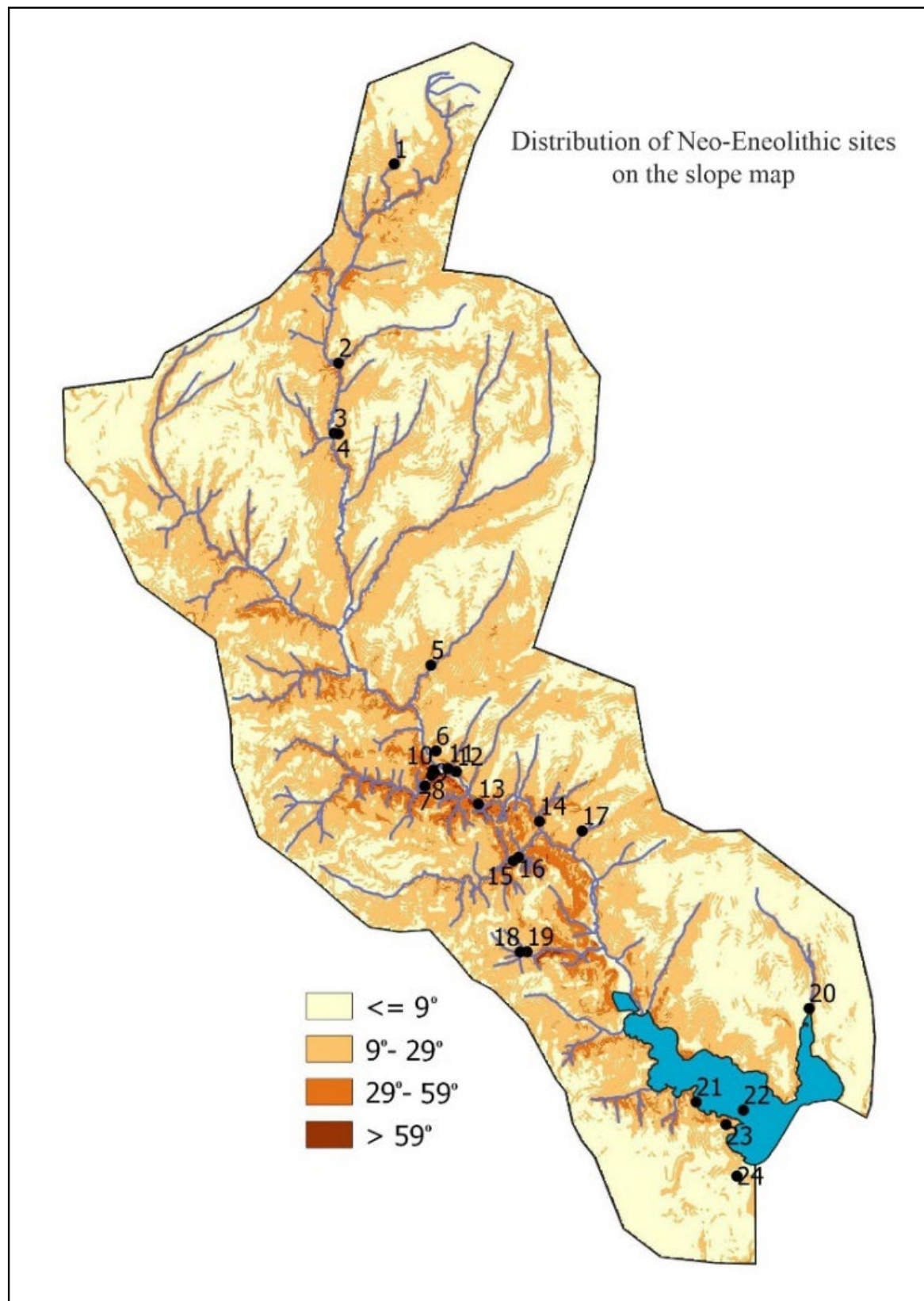


Figure 6: Distribution of Neo-Eneolithic sites on the slope map.

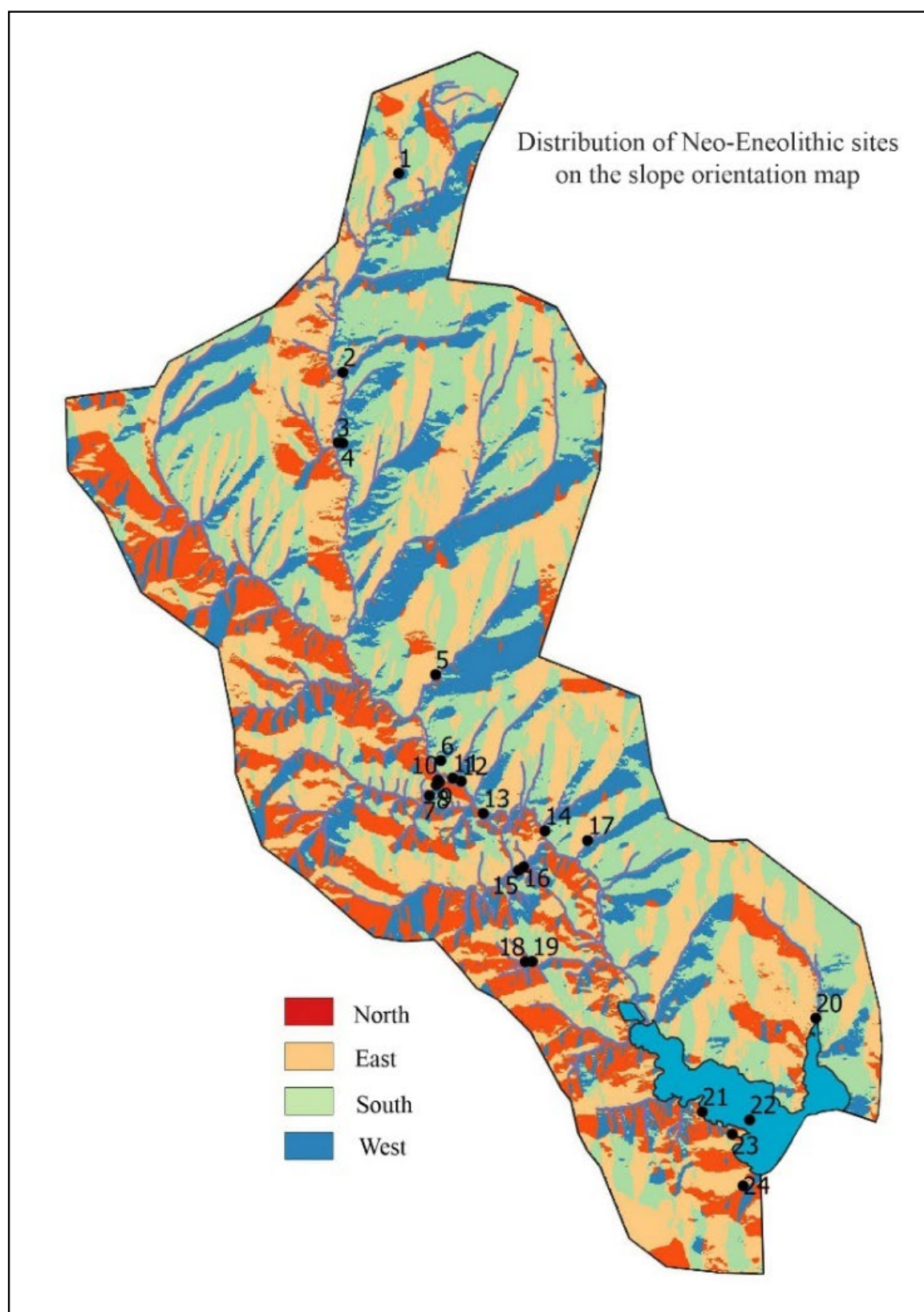


Figure 7: Distribution of Neo-Eneolithic sites on the slope orientation map.

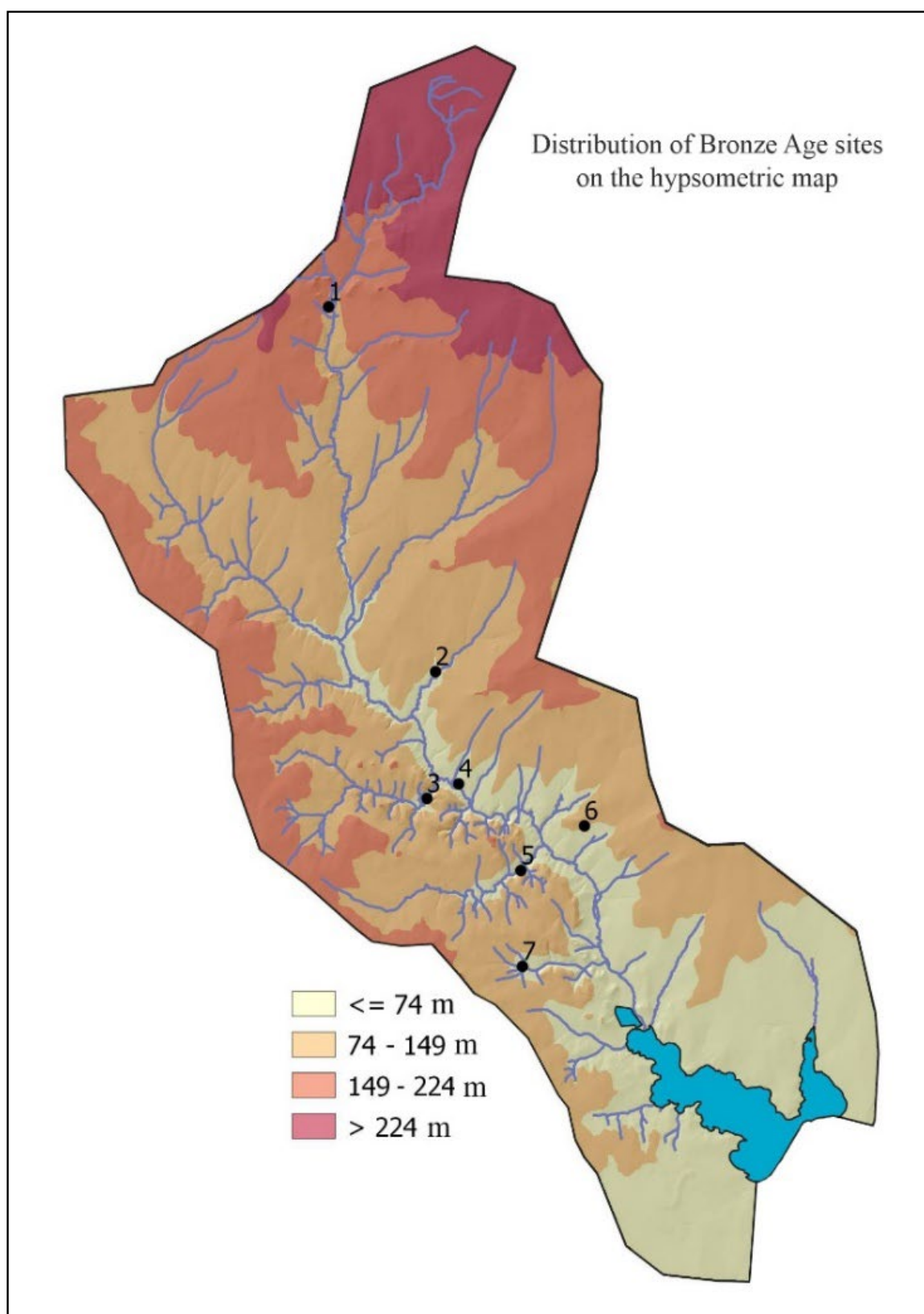


Figure 8: Distribution of Bronze Age sites on the hypsometric map.

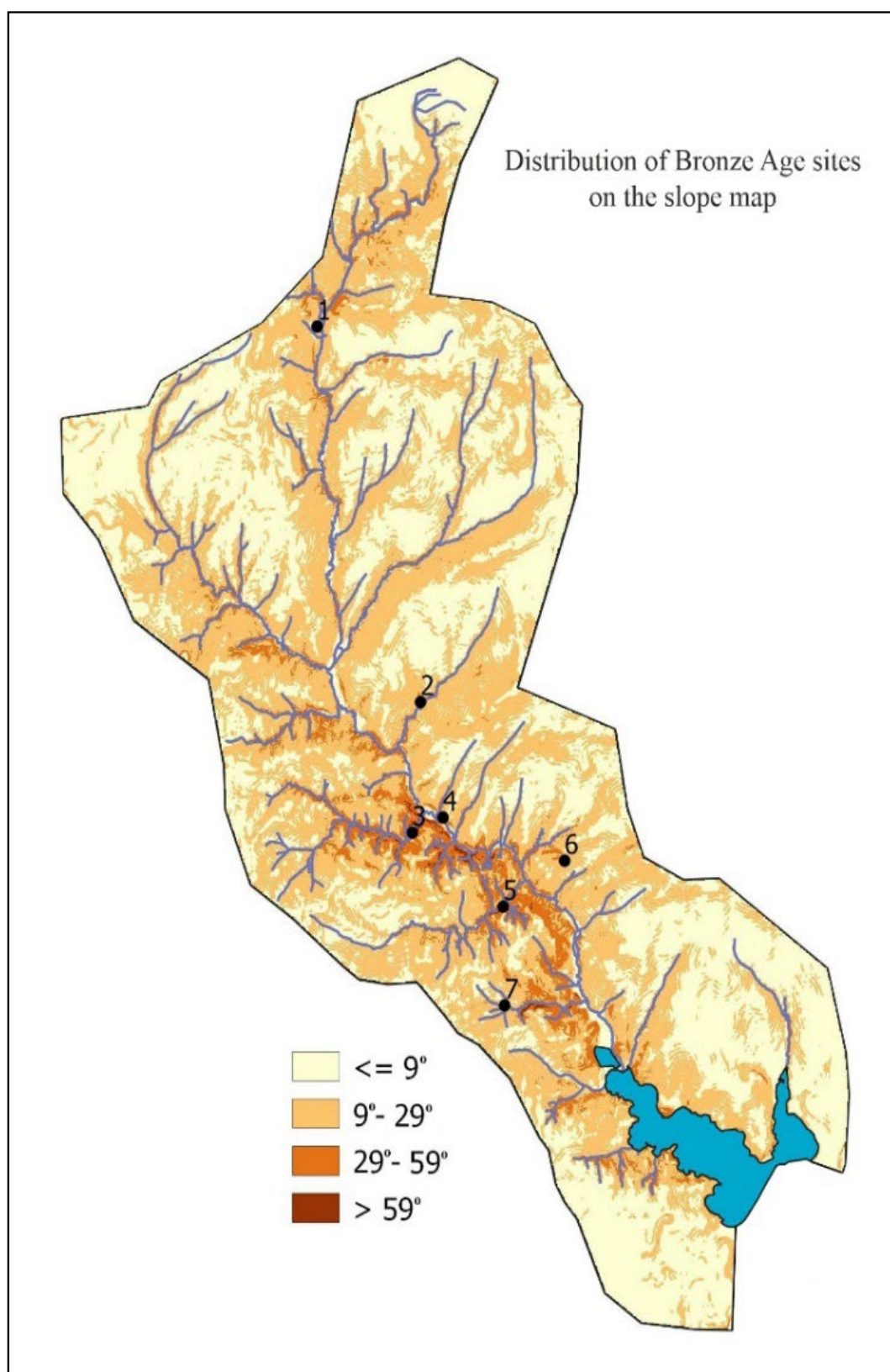


Figure 9: Distribution of Bronze Age sites on the slope map.

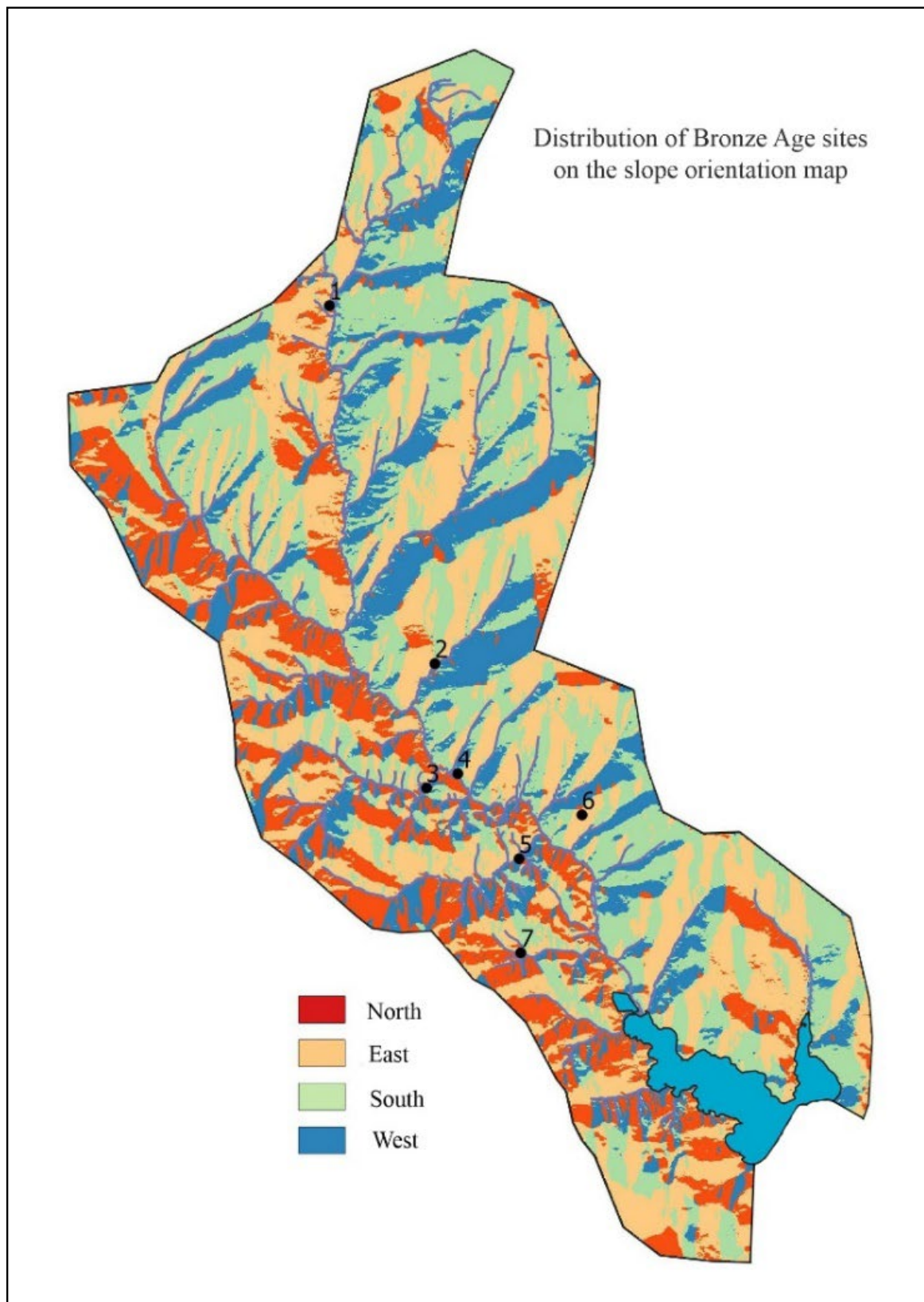


Figure 10: Distribution of Bronze Age sites on the slope orientation map.

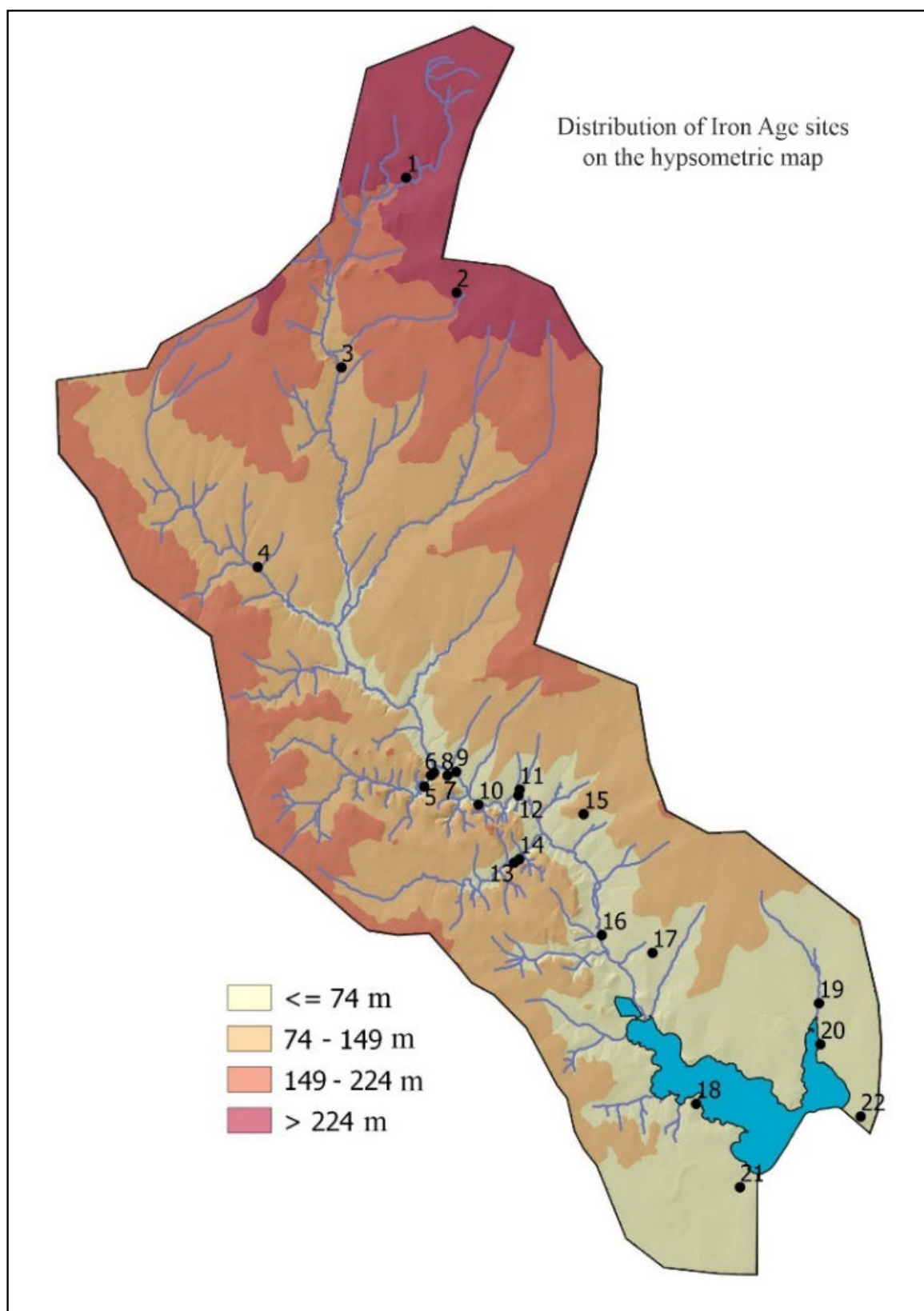


Figure 11: Distribution of Iron Age sites on the hypsometric map.

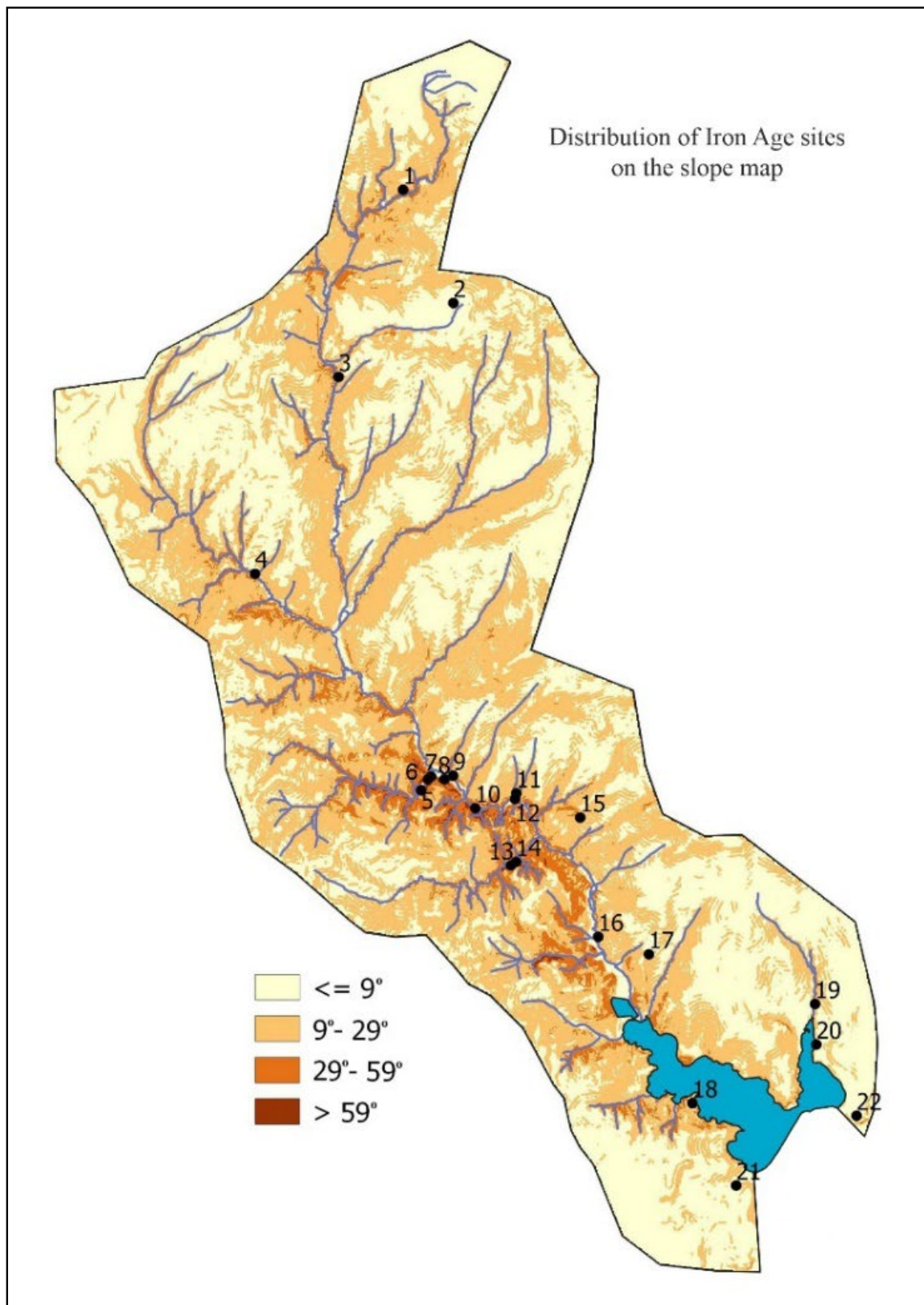


Figure 12: Distribution of Iron Age sites on the slope map.

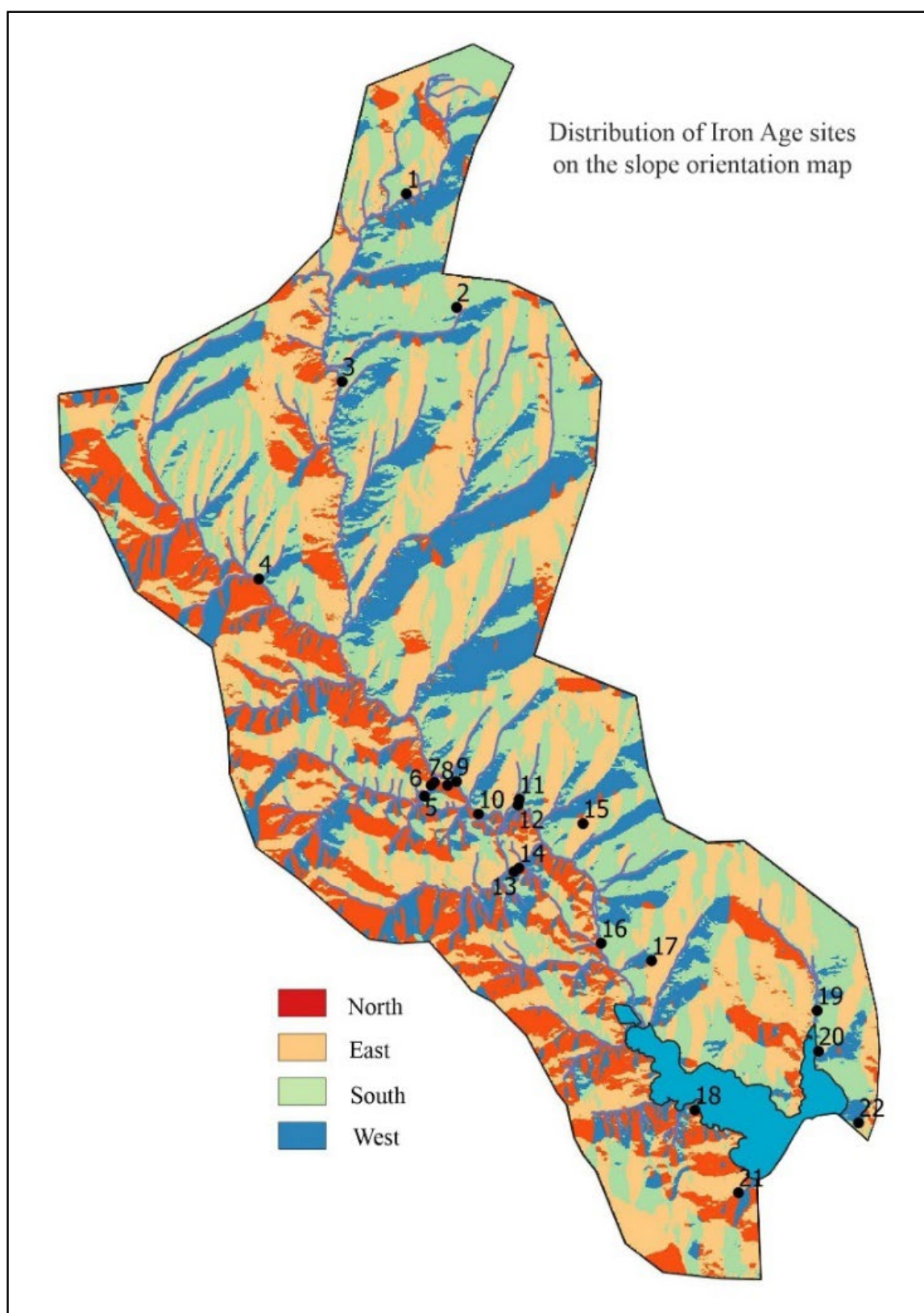


Figure 13: Distribution of Iron Age sites on the slope orientation map.

References:

- Babeș, M., "Spațiul carpato-dunărean în secolele III-II a.Chr.", in Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 501-531.
- Bem C., 2000-2001, "Noi propuneri pentru o schiță cronologică a eneoliticului românesc". *Pontica*, 33-34: 25-121.
- Bem, C., 2011. "Vision d'ensemble de l'occupation Gumelnița en Dobroudja". In Carozza, L., Bem, C. & Micu, C. (eds.), *Société et environnement dans la zone du Bas Danube durant le 5ème millénaire avant notre ère*. Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", pp. 131-197.
- Berciu, D., 1966. *Cultura Hamangia. Noi contribuții*, I, Bucharest, Editura Academiei RSR.
- Comănescu, L., 2004. *Bazinul morfohidrografic Casimcea*. Bucharest, Editura Universității din București.
- Doboș, A. & Ioviță, R., 2015. "Paleoliticul Inferior din România: o reevaluare din perspectiva descoperirilor din situl Dealul Guran". *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice* (New Series) XI: 5-17.
- Dumitrescu, V., Bolomey, A. & Mogoșanu, F., 1983. *Esquisse d'une préhistoire de la Roumanie*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Hartuiche, N., 1971. "Date privind evoluția culturii Gumelnița în N-E Munteniei și N Dobrogei". *Peuce*, II: 29-34.
- Ielenicz, M. & Săndulescu, I., 2008. *România. Podișuri și dealuri*, Editura Universitară, București.
- Jipa D., 1970. "Cercetări sedimentologice în depozitele proterozoice superioare (șisturi verzi) din Dobrogea." *Analele Institutului de Geologie* 38: 37-51.
- Marinescu-Bîlcu, S., 2001. "Cultura Gumelnița". In Marinescu-Bîlcu, S. (coord.), *O civilizație necunoscută: Gumelnița*, cIMeC, Institutul de Memorie Culturală, CD - ROM.
- Mihai D., 2013, *Sisteme informaționale geografice. Îndrumar de lucrări practice*, Bucharest, Editura Ex Terra Aurum.
- Păunescu, A., 2001. "Paleoliticul și mezoliticul pe teritoriul României". In Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 67-110.
- Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M., 2001. "Eneoliticul timpuriu". In Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor*

- îndepărtate, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 148-154.
- Petrescu-Dîmbovița M., 2001. "Eneoliticul dezvoltat". In Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 154-169.
- Pișota, I. & Zaharia, L., 2001, *Hidrologie*, Bucharest, Editura Universității din București.
- Posea, Gr., Zăvoianu, I. & Bogdan, O., 2005. *Geografia României*, vol 5, Bucharest, Editura Academiei Române.
- Tufescu, V., 1974. *România. Natură, om, economie*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică.
- Ursulescu, N., Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Monah, D, 2001. "Neo-eneoliticul". In Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 111-209.
- Voinea, V. & Neagu, G., 2008. "Archaeological research at Hamangia III settlement from Cheia (2004-2008)". *Pontica* 41: 9-34.
- Vulpe, A., 2001. "Istoria și civilizația spațiului capato-dunărean între mijlocul secolului al VII-lea și începutul secolului al III-lea a.Chr.". In Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M., Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 451-500.
- Vulpe, A., Petrescu-Dîmbovița M. & László, A., 2001. "Epoca Metalelor". In Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. & Vulpe, A. (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, vol I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, pp. 211-395.
- <https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/>, *Cartographic Server for the National Cultural Heritage*, consulted on June 20, 2022.

Carolina López-Ruiz, *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean*

Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2021

426 pp., 26 ill., 5 maps.

ISBN 9780674988187

\$45.00

This book naturally expands on the concluding remarks drawn a few years ago by Sebastián Celestino and Carolina López-Ruiz in a work on the interactions between the Tartessians and Phoenicians in Iberia: “we hope that this volume will stimulate scrutiny of the Orientalizing phenomenon in similar scenarios throughout the Mediterranean, and our different assumptions about what it means in each culture”¹. The creation of a globalized Mediterranean world in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, where proto-urban elites from Greece and Etruria to Sardinia and Iberia became enmeshed in the expanding Phoenician and Greek trade networks and appropriated unifying cultural elements from the more prestigious societies of the Near East, is a historical perspective briefly exposed in the previous volume², but only examined in full in this new book. More interestingly, the comparative “exploration of the Orientalizing phenomenon” (p. 314) is only conducted in the second part of the new book, “Follow the Sphinx” (p. 91-317). The first part, suggestively called “Beware the Greek” (p. 21-89) is devoted to a deeper inquiry into another idea previously expressed in a cursory manner: our modern views on Orientalization are still being distorted by a Hellenocentric approach based on the Greek and Roman quasi-monopoly on the literary information on this phenomenon, the high prestige of Classical culture and its fundamental role in shaping modern Western identity³. The result of this approach is that López-Ruiz is able to not only describe and assess Orientalization in different Mediterranean contexts, but to vigorously maintain that its primary agents were the Phoenicians, a conspicuous outcome that had not been anticipated in her previous contribution. The importance of the Phoenicians resides not only in the fact that they were the principal carriers of Orientalizing elements throughout the Mediterranean, but also that they created the synthesis – “the Orientalizing kit,” in the words of López-Ruiz – that the Mediterranean local elites were ready to selectively embrace as being illustrative of the prosperous and technologically advanced Near East.

In the *Introduction* (pp. 1-19), in addition to listing the elements of this Orientalizing kit – symbolic and decorative motifs; pottery technologies, shapes, and decoration; ivory carving and metalwork; techniques, motifs, and votive use of terracottas; monumental stone sculpture; masonry techniques and architectural innovations; burial forms and rituals; industrial developments and farming innovations; alphabetic writing; mythological themes and literary models (pp. 3-4) –

¹ Celestino & López-Ruiz, 2016, p. 307.

² Celestino & López-Ruiz, 2016, pp. 137-148.

³ Celestino & López-Ruiz, 2016, p. 307.

López-Ruiz also deals with the topic of describing and defining the Phoenicians themselves. She aptly shows that they hold an ambiguous place in modern studies, “lost among disciplines” such as Classics and classical archaeology, Near Eastern archaeology, Mediterranean studies and colonization studies (pp. 4-9), as well as in ancient accounts (e.g., although the Phoenicians play a significant role in Herodotus’ “Histories”, they do not receive an ethnography and a history of their own, like other Eastern peoples). However, she finds no proper ground for denying the existence of a Phoenician ethnic identity, similar to that of the Greeks, as maintained in the past few decades by several notable scholars, and most recently by Josephine Quinn⁴ (pp. 15-19).

This polemic discussion allows López-Ruiz to delve into another issue where double standards were used by modern scholars who dealt with the Greek and Phoenician agency in the Iron Age Mediterranean: the colonizing movement. In Chapter I, “Phoenicians Overseas” (pp. 23-43), she deconstructs the ideological reasons and the academic mechanisms that artificially transformed Phoenician colonization into a contrasting category to the Greek one, by consolidating the stereotypes of the exclusive commercial and naval dimension of the Phoenician enterprises and the limited cultural influence that the Phoenicians exerted over the indigenous communities encountered on Mediterranean shores. The author pleads for admitting the existence of stronger Phoenician settlement on an “axis running from Phoenicia to Iberia”, with most of the evidence coming from the latter region, deftly arguing “that Greeks and Phoenicians constituted comparable networks of merchants, migrants, and colonists” (p. 32).

In addition, in Chapter II, “From Classical to Mediterranean Models” (pp. 44-62), López-Ruiz denounces the additional double standards set up when assessing the agency and presence of the Greeks and Phoenicians in places such as Al Mina, Lefkandi, Pithekoussai, Eleutherna, Corinth and Perachora. She polemicizes vigorously against classical views promoting Greek exceptionalism as the key driving force behind the creation of a Mediterranean *koinē*, such as those of John Boardman and Robin Lane Fox⁵. A mild polemic is carried out against post-colonial network-based Mediterranean perspectives, too, advocated by Peregrine Horden, Nicholas Purcell⁶ and their followers, which overwhelmingly emphasize connections and transfers but, generally,

⁴ Quinn, 2018.

⁵ Boardman, 1999; Lane Fox, 2008.

⁶ Horden & Purcell, 2000.

underestimate agency – and Phoenician agency, in particular.

Chapter III, “The Orientalizing Kit” (pp. 63-82), contains a sophisticated discussion on the value of the concept of ‘Orientalization’, whose history is briefly sketched, from its first appearance in the 19th century to the remarkable contributions of Walter Burkert, Sarah Morris and Martin L. West⁷ in the 1990s and the more recent art historical works of Thomas Brisart, Ann Gunter and Martin Feldman⁸. López-Ruiz states that the term is valuable if separated from modern notions of Orientalism and used to describe the process whereby many local Mediterranean groups – not only the Greeks – selectively adopted Levantine-inflected cultural traits mainly by contact with the Phoenicians. A recurring idea throughout the book asserts that the outcomes of the process are determined by the different choices made by indigenous groups from the “Orientalizing kit” promoted by the Phoenicians. Although “Phoenicianization” is a valid option for describing the process, given the conspicuous role played by the Phoenicians, “Orientalization” is still preferred for its allusiveness.

The particular cases examined in the six chapters of the second part of the book – Iberia, North Africa, Sardinia, Sicily, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and partially even the Levant itself – are typically structured in short geographical and historical descriptions of these Mediterranean regions, considerations on the nature and the extent of the Phoenician presence in the respective areas and reviews of the elements adopted by each culture from the Orientalizing kit.

Chapter IV, “The Far West”, focuses on the complex interactions between southern Iberian groups – particularly the Tartessians – and the Phoenicians who intensively colonized this geographical region (pp. 93-116). According to López-Ruiz, the quality and quantity of archaeological evidence, freed from Hellenocentric bias because of the quasi-absence of Greek colonies, renders Tartessos a privileged case for rightly assessing the importance of the Phoenicians in the process of Orientalization. The Tartessians were eager recipients of most elements of the Phoenician “Orientalizing kit”, from pottery making, metalworking, and ivory carving, to funerary and religious practices, monumental sculpture and alphabetic writing. They stand out in marked contrast with the North African tribes that, oddly, rejected their integration into the pan-Mediterranean networks and were consequently only touched by “Orientalization” late into the second half of the first millennium BC (pp. 116-120).

Among the central Mediterranean regions in focus in Chapter V,

⁷ Burkert, 1992; Morris, 1992; West, 1997.

⁸ Brisart, 2011; Gunter, 2009; Feldman, 2014.

Iron Age Sardinia (with a significant and exclusive Phoenician presence on its western and southern shores, both in colonies and *enoikismoi*) developed a hybrid culture that was similar in many ways to that of Tartessos, but with notable exceptions in ivory carving or alphabetic appropriation (pp. 121-131). A much more complicated situation developed in Sicily, where an authentic middle ground for bipartite and tripartite interactions between the locals, the Phoenician and the Greek colonists that ultimately resulted in Orientalization, particularly in the field of religion and religious architecture, was only established in the 6th century BC (pp. 131-141). Special consideration is afforded to Etruria (pp. 142-171), where strong Orientalization in art, industry and religion is deemed to have taken place through the mediation of Phoenician individuals and small groups established in Etruscan communities. Thus, the established view that the Greeks played a more significant role is contradicted.

The chapters on the Phoenician influence exerted over the Greeks – Chapters VI, “The Aegean” (pp. 173-225) and VII, “Intangible legacies” (pp. 226-248) – are valuable both for their succinct and accurate description of the current state of the art in the fields of material culture and of intangible items such as the alphabet and mythology, and for their clever and courageous suggestions, like those on the existence of a significant and direct Phoenician influence found in formerly unexpected areas, such as in monumental religious buildings and monumental sculpture (*kouroi*), where an Egyptian origin had been advanced before. A wholly deserved special attention is paid to the decorative motif and the mythological character of the sphinx – created in Egypt, reinterpreted in the Levant and later transmitted across the whole Mediterranean, and in Greece in particular – as it epitomizes the operational model of Phoenician-mediated Orientalization (p. 218-225).

In the chapter dedicated to Cyprus (Chapter VII, pp. 249-280), the author partially adheres to the autochthonist perspective on the Iron Age Cypriot culture. She rejects, however, the preeminence of the Greek element in the local melting pot until late in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, instead emphasizing the local entanglements with the Phoenician culture, which deeply rooted in the southeastern area of the island, mainly through the Tyrian colony of Kition. A very compelling case for the Phoenician impulse is made through reference to the appearance of the monumental Cypriot limestone statues, which until recently have been considered a result of Egyptian influence (pp. 272-279).

The underlying idea of the final chapter (IX, “The Levant”, pp. 281-313) is that the role played by the Phoenicians in the Mediterranean reflects the important and singular role they played in the broader Levant

as well. As proud heirs of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite cultural capital in a region dotted by new Aramaic and Israelite states, prosperous and having been freed from the grip of external empires for several centuries, the Phoenicians emerged as the bearers of the most prestigious culture in the Levant and south-eastern Anatolia. They were thus enabled to negotiate a privileged status for themselves with the Assyrian Empire, and instill the desire to emulate their prosperity and cultural achievements in the Mediterranean proto-urban elites. The author ingeniously employs a variety of pieces of evidence to reinforce her point, from the spread of alphabetic writing to the use of Phoenician as a *lingua franca* in the Iron Age Levant; from the Biblical information on the relations between Tyre and the Israelites to the ubiquity of the volute ('pre-Aeolic') capitals, considered a typical Phoenician architectural achievement.

This volume will assuredly prompt both laudatory and contrarian responses. The scope of its investigation is so broad, and there are so many contested topics discussed throughout the book, that it is virtually impossible to avoid negative comments on specific details, as already admitted by the author herself (p. 315). Attributing some artefacts to Phoenician workshops, maintaining that some objects display a certain degree of Phoenician influence or advocating the Phoenician presence at certain sites may easily come under academic fire. It will, of course, be grossly unfair to judge the volume based on such disputed issues, or on minor inaccuracies (e.g., Amasis II did not move Greek mercenaries to Naukratis in the mid-6th century BC, as stated at p. 35, but to Memphis – cf. Hdt. 2.154.3, 178.1; the Carthaginians did not almost bring the Roman *Empire* to its knees, as maintained at p. 315, but the Roman *Republic*) and typographical errors (e.g., “*oinichoe*” p. 154).

For a synthesis of this kind, it is more just and productive to assess whether its main underlying ideas are more convincing after reading it, and whether they warrant further investigation. On both accounts, my assessment is positive. I agree with the view that the creation of an interconnected Mediterranean in the 8th and 7th centuries BC is indissolubly tied to the gradual Orientalization of many local groups, from Cyprus to Tartessos. I also concur that the Phoenicians were the main driving agents of this phenomenon, at least before the Greeks themselves built complementary solid networks. Moreover, it is tempting to envisage the Greeks as the finest of learners among the local groups that accepted Orientalization – a consequence of several concurring factors among which their geographical proximity to the Near East played no minor part – and, subsequently, as agents of Orientalization themselves. The advice to “Beware the Greek” should be followed: it is undeniable that our

massive gaps in the available evidence on the Phoenicians, coupled with the “unfair competition” on the part of the Greeks and Romans, obscured the essential role played by the former in the creation of a connected and partly Orientalized Mediterranean. However, I would add the *caveat* that certain other agents, such as the Neo-Hittite states in northern Syria and southeastern Anatolia whose existence was brutally brought to an end by the Assyrians before their own memory could have received a place in Greek traditions, are in an even more disadvantageous historiographical position than the Phoenicians. In truth, it is possible they could also account for part of the Orientalizing influence exerted upon the Greeks. Moreover, the Anatolian connection, through Phrygia and Lydia – themselves powerful Oriental kingdoms that, at times, emulated the Assyrian Empire and developed close contacts with the Greeks – should likewise not be ignored.

In the end, this synthesis deserves a positive assessment not only due to its fruitful historical and historiographical ideas, but also because it is both an implicit and explicit argument for a broader methodological and theoretical approach, as throughout its pages as well as in its Epilogue (pp. 315-316) it consistently promotes “building bridges between scholarship on the Levant, Classical studies, and the Western Mediterranean” and “the diachronic study of interactions [...] in the Mediterranean”.

Liviu Mihail Iancu
The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and
Civilization

References:

- Boardman, J., 1999. *The Greeks Overseas. Their Early Colonies and Trade*. 4th ed., London & New York, Thames and Hudson.
- Brisart, T., 2011. *Un art citoyen. Recherches sur l'Orientalisation des artisanats en Grèce proto-archaïque*. Brussels, Académie Royale de Belgique.
- Burkert, W., 1992. *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*. Cambridge, MA, London, Harvard University Press.
- Celestino, S. & López-Ruiz, C., 2016. *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Feldman, M., 2014. *Communities of Style: Portable Luxury Arts, Identity, and Collective Memory in the Iron Age Levant*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Horden, P. & Purcell, N., 2000. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford & Malden, MA, Blackwell.
- Lane Fox, R., 2008. *Travelling Heroes: Greeks and their Myths in the Epic Age of Homer*. London, Allen Lane.
- Morris, S., 1992. *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Quinn, J. C., 2018. *In Search of the Phoenicians*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- West, M. L., 1997. *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

