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Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Investigations in East Thrace

ABSTRACT

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The eastern end of Thrace, situated between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus and the Anastasian Wall, was in recent years the subject of Polish-Turkish archaeological investigations. The settlements on this territory formed Constantinople's immediate hinterland in the Byzantine period. Our studies focused on the beginning of the Via Egnatia. They included the famous suburb of Hebdomon and the city of Rhegion. A number of new sources were recorded as a result of our excavations, surface surveys, sonar prospections of water bodies, and queries of archive collections. They enabled us to examine the spatial and settlement structure of this area in the Byzantine period. The structure also included the settlement complex on the Firuzköy Peninsula on Lake Küçükçekmece, as well as settlements in Athyras, Selymbria, Melantias, Episkopia, Angurina, Schiza and Daphnusion. They were elements of Constantinople's communications and transportation system. The ceremony of *adventus*, i.e. welcoming the emperor, eminent guests or holy relics arriving in the capital, was also performed in this area. At present, these territories are undergoing a great deal of construction and infrastructure development, being part of the megapolis of Istanbul. This puts the archaeological heritage located there in danger.

Keywords: Byzantium, East Thrace, Via Egnatia, Firuzköy, Küçükçekmece, Athyras, Episkopeia, Angurina

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The eastern end of Thrace, situated between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus and the Anastasian Wall (the European part of Turkey; *cf.* Fig. 1), was in recent years the subject of Polish-Turkish archaeological investigations. The settlements on this territory formed Constantinople's immediate hinterland in the Byzantine period. Our studies mainly focused on the southern part of this area, along the

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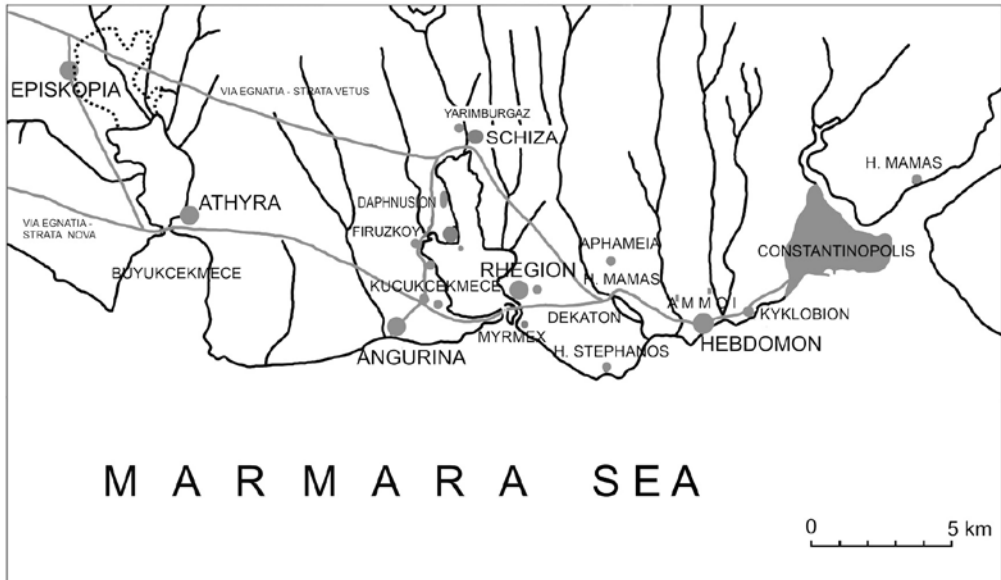


Fig. 1. A reconstruction of the Byzantine settlement complex located in the suburbs of Constantinople, on the East Thracian coast of the Propontis along the Via Egnatia, prepared on the basis of the latest findings (Prepared by B. Stanisławski, Z. Yıldırım)

Sea of Marmara – the Propontis and the Via Egnatia¹ – the main road to the capital of the empire, which ran through there.

The cities, settlements and sacred places located in this territory, as well as some events which took place there, drew the attention of chroniclers. Written sources recorded e.g. the suburban districts of Hebdomon (present-day Bakirköy – a district of Istanbul) and Rhesion (present-day Zeytinburnu in Istanbul), where the fortress called *Kyklobion* or *Strongylon* was built; the cities of Rhesion (present-day Küçükçekmece), Athyras (the city of Büyükçekmece), Chirowakchi (Turkish Çatalca), and Selymbria (Silivri); the settlements of Melantias, Episkopeia (present-day Ahmediye), Angurina (Beylikdüzü), Schiza (Yarımburgaz), and Daphnusion; and fortresses (Apamea, Ennakosia²), hamlets, villages, hagiomas (sacred springs), cisterns and ports established there.

¹ The Via Egnatia, which ran through the area in question, had two routes. The older, more northerly one, called the *strata vetus*, ran more closely to the centre of the territory, and the younger, the *strata nova*, built under Emperor Constantine, followed the route along the coastline of the Sea of Marmara (Mango 2000, 174–175).

² For the fortresses of Apamea and Ennakosia see von Hammer 1822, 8; Külzer 2008, 186, 252–253, with further literature.

We owe our knowledge about them to Procopius of Caesarea, the author of the *On buildings*, who wrote in the times of Justinian the Great (527–565; see below), and to the porphyrogene Anna Komnene, the author of the *Alexiad*, who lived several centuries later, in the times of the medieval empire (1083–1153; e.g. Athyras – *Alexias* II.6.10, 89 and X.9.2., 347). The information recorded in these works is supplemented by other authors from the Byzantine, Latin, Arab and Slavic civilisations.

Written sources were also clearly the main basis for studies on settlement on this territory during the Byzantine period. The knowledge about the material culture of the people living there is, on the other hand, negligible. Only a handful of excavations have been carried out in this area. Additionally, the architectural artefacts discovered as a result, even as significant ones as the ruins of the famous Church of John the Baptist in Hebdomon (Fig. 2) or the relics of the city of Rhegion (Fig. 3), no longer exist. They were destroyed as a consequence of the massive urban development of Istanbul, one of the largest metropolises of the contemporary world with a population of about 20 million. This state of affairs is also becoming more serious, which results in the last

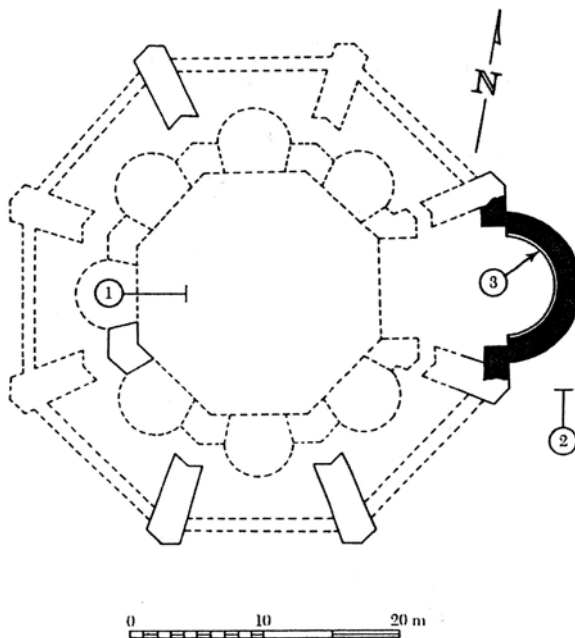


Fig. 2. The plan of St. John the Baptist's Church in Hebdomon (Source: Demangel 1945)

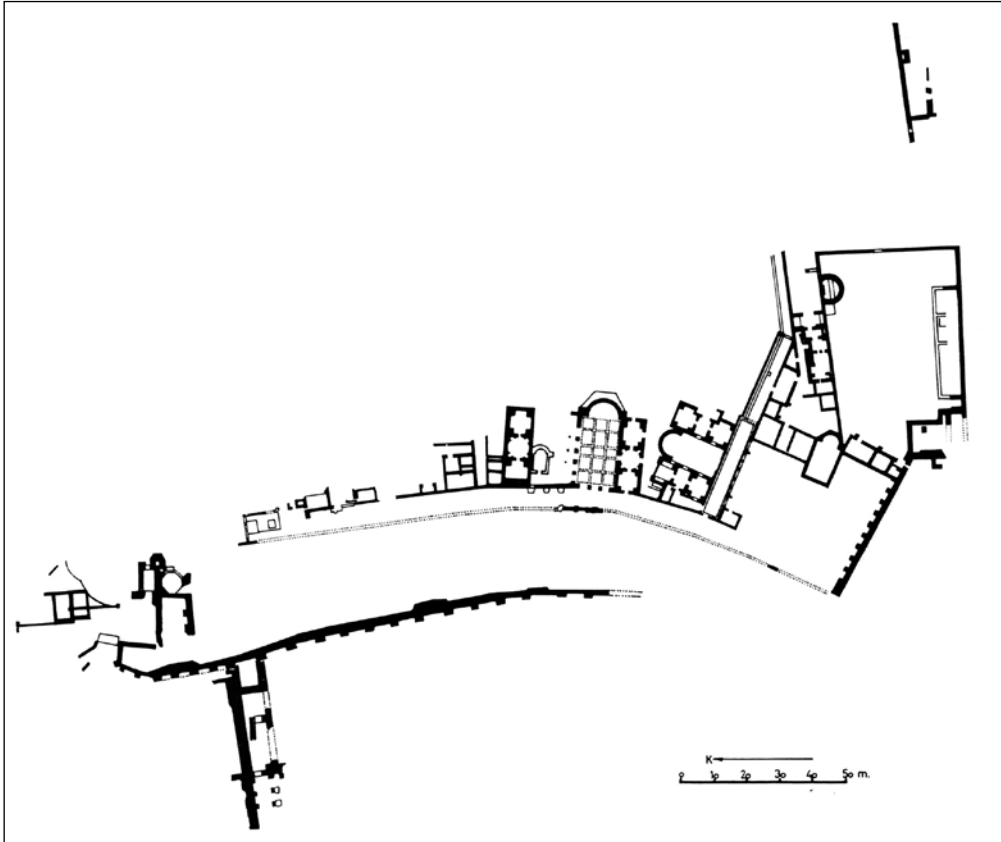


Fig. 3. Küçükçekmece-Rhegion: a map of architectural objects discovered in the acropolis as a result of excavations carried out in 1938–1942 (Source: Ogan and Mufid Mansel 1942)

still undeveloped places that hide relics of the Byzantine civilisation underground losing out to contemporary civilisation.

Moreover, so far East Thrace has not attracted a lot of attention of archaeologists, who have mainly focused on the nearby capital city. The most important works on settlement on these lands³ are fragments of monographs by historians R. Janin (1950; 1964) and A. Külzer (2008).

³ Important contributions to learning the history of this area and its settlement were also made by C. Chastelain (1709), A.G. Paspates (1879), C.J. Jireček (1877), M. Gedeon (1935; 1938), A. Ogan (1939), J.B. Thibaut (1922), T. Makrides (1938; 1939), E. Stamulë-Sarnatë (1943), S. Eyice (1978), C. Mango (2000), T. Tuna and S. Şeker (2009), A. Külzer (2004; 2010; 2011), A. Taddei (2013), G. Simeonov (2016) and O. Węglarz (2017a; 2017b).

With the exception of the last few years, archaeological excavations were carried out only on the territory of two settlements: Hebdomon, examined by R. Demangel in 1920–1923 (Demangel 1945), and Rhegion, located in the contemporary city of Küçükçekmece, investigated by A. Müfid Mansel and A. Ogan in 1938–1942 and in 1948 (Ogan 1939; Ogan and Mansel 1942). Rescue works, carried out in connection with construction investment projects, also only on the territories of Hebdomon and Rhegion (2015–2016), complete the picture. The findings of the latter works have not been published yet.

In the context of the above, the archaeological investigations carried out since 2007 by Ş. Aydingün from the University of Kocaeli in the settlement complex on Firuzköy Peninsula on the western shore of Lake Küçükçekmece (Fig. 1) are one of a kind. The Byzantine settlement from this area has been examined since 2015, e.g. as part of a joint Turkish-Polish research project called “Constantinople/Istanbul – Küçükçekmece – the terminal port on the route from the Varangians to the Greeks, the centre of the Byzantinisation of the Rus’ people” (Stanisławski, Aydingün and Öviz 2016; Stanisławski 2017). The project was financed by the National Science Centre under the SONATA BIS Project No. 2014/14/E/HS3/00679. The project was undertaken as a result of discovering on the peninsula: 1) an enormous sea port (Fig. 4), which could have been intended for foreign ships; and 2) individual Eastern European imports (e.g. a cross-shaped amber pendant), which indicate that the Rus’ people – newcomers from Eastern Europe⁴ – may have been one of the groups of foreign newcomers who docked their ships in this port⁵. The presence of the Rus’ people in this area of the Propontis is also attested in written sources (in the context of their involvement in an internal military conflict which took place near the city of Athyras, located on Lake Büyükçekmece, in 1077; cf. Böhm 2012, 101; Fig. 1).

When we began our project, we assumed that the appearance of Eastern European imports on the Firuzköy Peninsula and the presence of the Rus’ people in Athyras, mentioned in written sources, may have been related to the existence of a Rus’ colony, recorded in the *Primary*

⁴ The problem of Rus’-Byzantine contacts was discussed e.g. by J. Shepard (1995; 2008), K.N. Ciggaar (1996), Yu.A. Petrosyan (1998), G.G. Litavrin (1993; 1999), J. Meyendorff (1989 with further literature).

⁵ The assumptions which formed the basis of this project were presented in separate publications (Stanisławski, Aydingün and Öviz 2016; Stanisławski 2017, with further literature).



Fig. 4. Port wharfs discovered on the Firuzköy Peninsula (Photo by H. Aydingün)

Chronicle. It was supposedly situated in or near a place dedicated to Saint Mammes. The author of the text recorded that it was somewhere outside Constantinople's walls, near the city.

The settlement on the Avcılar-Firuzköy Peninsula

The settlement complex located on the Firuzköy Peninsula (Fig. 1) was the basis and starting point of our studies. Administratively, at present this area belongs to the town of Avcılar, which is part of the agglomeration of Istanbul. Traces of human activity in the Stone Age, Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, as well as the Hellenistic, Roman and Ottoman times, have been recorded on this territory⁶. However, relics of Byzantine settlement are particularly numerous and dominant. At present, this is the most thoroughly archaeologically examined Byzantine settlement complex situated in the immediate hinterland of Constantinople.

⁶ The following basic publications were devoted to the results of archaeological studies on the Firuzköy Peninsula: Aydingün 2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2010; 2013a; 2013b; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; Aydingün and Öniz 2008; 2009; Aydingün, Güldağan, Heyd, Öniz and Planken 2009; Aydingün, Aslan and Kaya 2013; Öniz 2017; Sayar 2013; Tekin 2011; 2013a; 2013b; 2017. The results of the most recent studies were presented in the collective work entitled *Istanbul Kucukcekmece Gol Havzası Kaziliari, Lake's Basin's Excavations*, ed. by Şengül Aydingün (Istanbul 2017).

Research has shown that this used to be a massive port (Fig. 4). Its size (the sum of the lengths of its wharfs) exceeded the total of all the other ports in the capital of the empire. Both the size of this port and its location outside the city, but a relatively short distance away, were the basis of the preliminary assumption which we formulated. The port might have been intended for foreign ships, which did not have the permission, for various reasons, to dock at wharfs inside Constantinople. The foreigners might have included the Rus' people from Eastern Europe and the Scandinavians.

The archaeological investigations which we carried out on the peninsula included excavations as well as studies of all the architectural relics unearthed so far and the majority of mobile finds. As a result, the following findings were presented.

The stratigraphic method of archaeological excavation (previously not used on this territory), an analysis of settlement sequences in the site's profile, analyses of architectural relics, qualitative-quantitative analyses of collections of ceramic pots recorded within individual settlement sequences, 14C analyses, studies of coin finds as well as stamped bricks, decorated marble architectural elements and small finds, enabled us to examine the dynamics and character of the settlement on the territory of this complex. The following seven settlement periods were distinguished: I – Roman (3rd c.), II – late antique (4th–5th c.), III – early Byzantine (6th–7th c.), IV (end of the 7th, 8th and 9th c.), V – middle Byzantine (from the 9th/10th to ca. mid-11th c.), VI (2nd half of the 11th and 12th c.), VII (the 13th–early 14th c.). The buildings constructed on this territory were also synchronised, to the extent that it was possible, with the established chronological system.

As a result, it was concluded that the examined settlement complex was not only an enormous port, but also an exceptional ecclesiastical centre. It included, among others, a martyrium with the tomb of a saint, a hagiasma, a ceremonial bath, a nosokomeion (Fig. 5), a type 2 central building, as well as a small church. A baptisterium might also have been situated near the latter. Additionally, a number of mobile finds had a religious character related to the Christian cult.

The first exceptional building was the martyrium. It was impossible to determine whose remains or relics were kept there. However, there are indications that the building might have been connected with the cult of Saint Theodore.

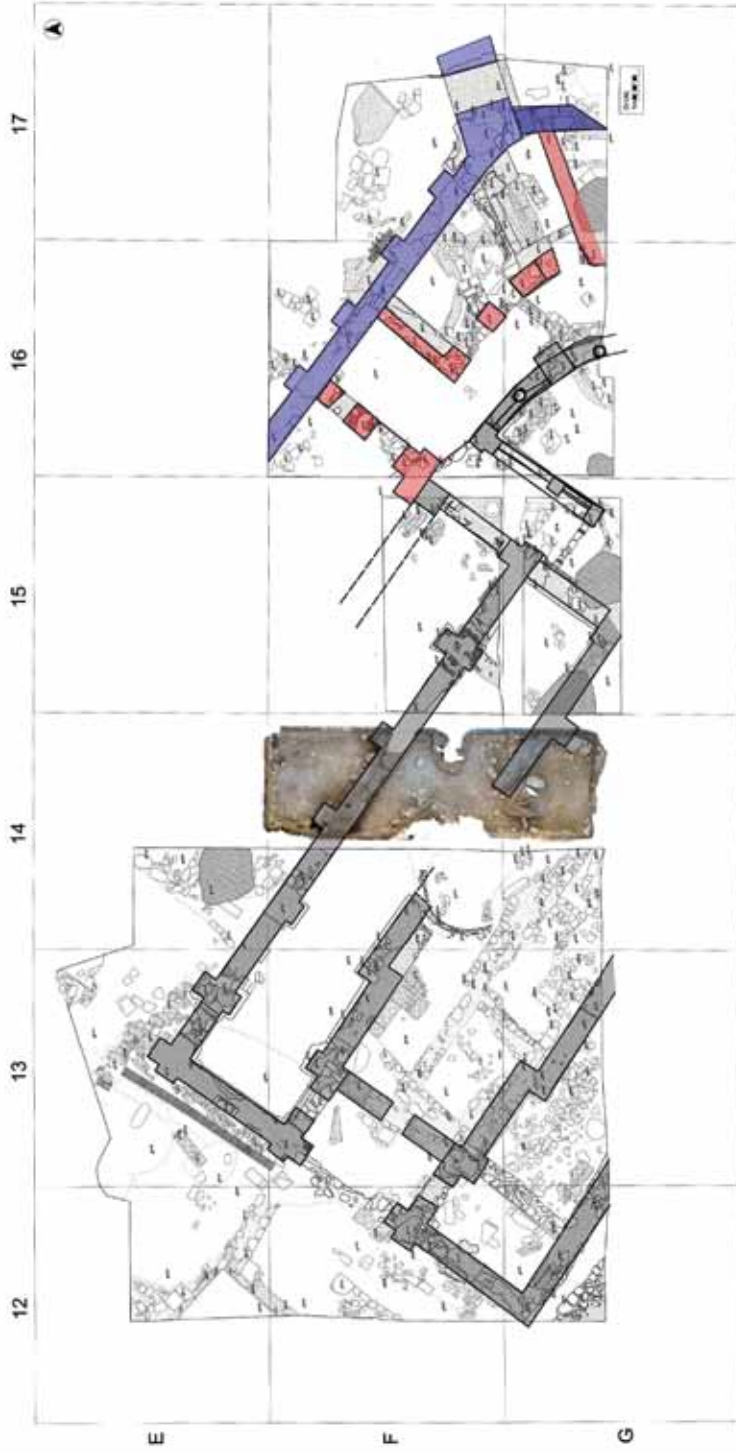


Fig. 5. The plan of a building interpreted as a nosokomeion and adjacent architectural objects discovered on the Firuzköy Peninsula (Drawn by A. Kubicka)

The nosokomeion was also an extraordinary structure. Its presence indicated that medical treatments were administered on the peninsula. Healing, in this case through incubation, although rooted in the tradition of ancient medicine and soothsaying, was incorporated in Christian rituals. The medical function of this building was also closely related to its location in the immediate vicinity of the martyrrium, to the presence of a sacred spring – hagiaσμα, and to the ceremonial bath which was fed water from it.

We interpreted a large paved forum located directly next to the port, connected to it by a stone paved road, as a possible marketplace. Trade might have defined another function of the examined settlement complex. That trade exchange with other communities and territories was performed there was mainly indicated by mobile finds. They included amphoras of foreign origin, glazed vessels, a weight, coins, shell money, writing scratched on an ostrakon, a lead seal, an amber cross, stone material, and bitumen.

Settlement in the basin of Lake Küçükçekmece

The reconstruction of the settlement structure which formed the immediate context of the settlement on the Firuzköy Peninsula was the next stage of our project. We conducted our studies around and within the basin of Lake Küçükçekmece (Fig. 6).

A special place in this region was a settlement situated on the northern shore of the lake, which can probably be identified with Schiza⁷ (Figs. 1 and 6). This centre was located by the more northerly route of the Via Egnatia. Architectural and archaeological relics of Byzantine settlement were discovered there. They included, among others, the remains of a wall built using the *opus mixtum* technique. It runs for 500 metres along the N-S axis. Its length and construction may indicate that these are the remains of a line of fortifications surrounding a settlement – a city or a fortress – situated in this area. Ancient tombs were also discovered in this region. The layout of the relics of settlement recorded in this area was presented by S. Eyice (1978, 96). The remains of other walls located within the lake's basin close to the shores were recorded as a result of underwater sonar surveys which were carried out on this spot by H. Öniz. They are most likely the remains of a port wharf.

⁷ On Schiza see Külzer 2008, 632–633.

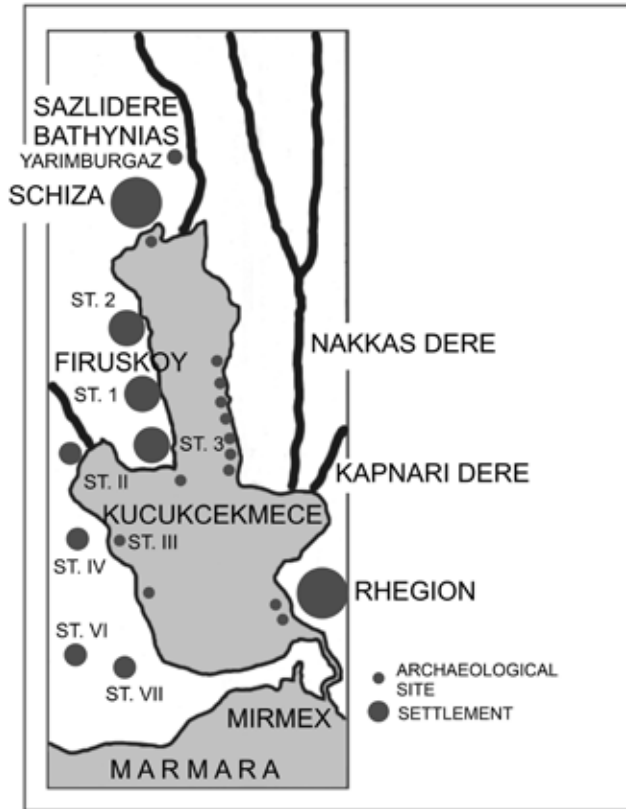


Fig. 6. A reconstruction of the mesoregional context of the settlement complex located on the Firuzköy Peninsula, including areas in its immediate vicinity, spread around Lake Küçükçekmece (Drawn by B. Stanisławski)

Yarımburgaz Cave is also located near Schiza, approximately 3.5 km north of the Firuzköy Peninsula (Fig. 7). Inside, a cave monastery, carved and in use in the Byzantine period, was found. Inside one of the chambers niches, modelled after the shapes of church apses, were carved into the walls. It is highly likely that this was a centre of a monastic community, which gathered there to pray. Reportedly, towards the end of the 20th c. architectural details of the interior and traces of wall paintings were still visible. Members of the monastic community lived in the small caves peppered around the main one.

On the western shore of Lake Küçükçekmece, we recorded seven settlement points (in one of which we identified, on the basis of



Fig. 7. Niches in the shape of church apses carved out inside Yarımburgaz Cave (Photo by H. Aydingün)

archival aerial photographs, an early Byzantine basilica – Fig. 8). The layout of the settlement points indicated that they may have been connected by a local road, running west of the lake, more or less perpendicularly to it, along the N-S axis. The existence of a local tract connecting Schiza and Rhegion had been suggested by A. Külzer (2011, 246). This road would have connected the complex on the Firuzköy Peninsula and the settlement points, joining the older branch of the Via Egnatia in the north in the vicinity of Schiza, and the younger branch of the Via Egnatia, running along the coastline of the Sea of Marmara, in the south.

Underwater sonar surveys showed the presence of sunken relics of port wharfs, located in various parts of the lake. They were found both near some of the above-mentioned settlement points and along the eastern shore of the lake, as well as at its south-eastern end near the city of Rhegion. Additionally, six ship anchors were discovered in that area. We concluded on the basis of the above surveys that the lake's basin was an enormous port, whose wharfs were located in its



Fig. 8. An early Christian basilica located on the western shore of Lake Küçükçekmece, shown in an archival aerial photograph

various areas. It cannot be ruled out that harbours and quays located deep within the lake's basin may have been elements of one massive port together with the port in Rhegion.

The communications and transportation structure along the Via Egnatia

The route of the road connecting the two branches of the Via Egnatia described above, as well as our findings concerning the port in the lake's basin, indicated the existence of a relation which functionally connected the complex on the Firuzköy Peninsula with the spatial and settlement structure located along the Via Egnatia, which performed an important role in handling Constantinople's transport and communications.

The connection of the Firuzköy settlement with handling communications and foreigners coming to the capital is additionally indicated by a building discovered there, which we interpreted as a nosokomeion (Fig. 5). Buildings of this type performed medical

functions and were usually an element of a larger place called *xenodochial xenodochium* (the term comes from the Greek word *xenos* – foreigner). *Xenodochia* were connected with providing services to foreign travellers.

One more fact indicated the possible connection between the settlement on the Firuzköy Peninsula and the spatial and settlement structure located along the Via Egnatia. The Ayamama Deresi – Saint Mammes – River flows along the stretch of the Via Egnatia between Rhegion and Hebdomon (Fig. 1). Its name is confirmed by several old maps of Constantinople which use old Greek place names, whose tradition may possibly go back to the Byzantine times⁸. This is the only toponym connected with the cult of Saint Mammes in the area around Constantinople whose location we can pinpoint. The locations of other places connected with the cult of Saint Mammes outside the city walls, about which we have information only from written sources, have been impossible to confirm by means of material finds so far⁹. On the nearby Firuzköy Peninsula, we discovered bricks with a stamped inscription of +MAMA+, i.e. Saint Mammes' name. These are the only archaeological sources discovered outside the walls of the Byzantine capital which are related to the cult of this martyr. The bricks with Saint Mammes' name and the toponym mentioned above may indicate that the saint's cult functioned on the territory in question, and his name was blended with the tradition of newcomers from Eastern Europe staying outside Constantinople's walls!

The studies aimed at reconstructing the spatial and settlement structure along the beginning/end section of the Via Egnatia were carried out in several places, using various methods and sources. Firstly, they included surface surveys on the sites of Beylikdüzü-Angurina, located directly on the coast of the Sea of Marmara, and in Athyras-Büyükçekmece and Ahmediye/Episkopeia, as well as a settlement of

⁸ The basis for the documentation of the above source are the “Carte Générale des Environs de Constantinople” (Kubilay 2010, 230–231) and the “Karte der Umgegend von Constantinopel, unter Benutzung der älteren Aufnahmen (1888–1893)” (Goltz 1897).

⁹ For the cult of Saint Mammes in Constantinople see contributions of C. Chastelain (1709, 863), A.G. Paspates (1879, 41), F.I. Uspenskiy (1892), A. van Millingen (1899, 89–90; 1912, 106–107), M. Gedeon (1935, 14), J. Pargoire (1904; 1908), T. Macridy (1938; 1939), R. Janin (1950, 432), J. Shepard (1995, 253), Yu.A. Petrosyan (1998, 54), G.G. Litavrin (1999, 427, 454), A. Külzer (2008, 185, 209, 228, 512), F. Androshchuk (2012), A. Musin (2017), B. Stanisławski (2017), K. Szymański (2017), with further literature).

an unidentified name, situated in northwest Büyükçekmece (Fig. 1). The last three sites were located on Lake Büyükçekmece. H. Öniz carried out underwater sonar surveys along selected fragments of the coast of the Sea of Marmara and in the basin of Lake Büyükçekmece. Additionally, we completed queries of: finds discovered on the territories of Hebdomon and Athyras, which are kept in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul; archival documentation of rescue studies and reconnaissance which took place in the 20th c. on the Ayamama Deresi River, as well as in Hebdomon, Yeşilköy-Hagios Stephanos and in Rhegion; archival aerial photographs; and publications of the findings of the excavations carried out in Hebdomon and Rhegion. At the same time, K. Szymański, O. Węglarz-Pełech and T. Pełech completed queries as well as translations and analyses of Byzantine and Latin written sources containing information about the area in question.

As a result, the area of our studies included the coastline of the Sea of Marmara stretching from the Golden Gate to Lake Büyükçekmece (Fig. 1). The Golden Gate was the main entrance to the capital. The region of Lake Büyükçekmece, located west of Lake Küçükçekmece, was important to us for several reasons. At its base on the southwestern shore the city of Athyras was situated (Fig. 1), which appears in written sources in the context of the presence of ships from Rus' there. Additionally, large areas around the lake are undeveloped and therefore archaeological sites located there are still available for investigation, unlike in the case of centres located on the territories absorbed by contemporary Istanbul's suburban districts.

Hebdomon¹⁰ is one of Constantinople's suburbs (*proasteion*), located seven Roman miles away from *Milion*, approximately 4km outside the Theodosian Walls (11 km from the centre of Constantinople), right on the coast of the Sea of Marmara. There were a number of buildings in Hebdomon, which included: the *Campus Tribunalis* – a drill ground, a port, a giant column of Theodosius II, churches of St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, Saints Menas and Menaios, St. Theodotus, and St. Samuel (Janin 1950, 408). A. Külzer noted that a church of St. Agatha the Martyr could still be found on the territory east of Hebdomon in the early 20th c. (Külzer 2008, 394). The suburb was also the location

¹⁰ On Hebdomon see: van Millingen 1899, 326–237; Glück 1920; Thibaut 1922; Demangel 1945; Janin 1950, 405, 408–411; Mango 1991; Tuna and Şeker 2009; Taddei 2013; Simeonov 2016, 121–138.

of imperial summer palaces – the *Jucundianae* and the *Magnaure* (although it cannot be ruled out that this was one palace complex). There were also five cisterns there. It is likely that another column, dedicated to Emperor Justinian, stood on the local forum.

Most of these buildings are only attested in written sources, since no material relics have been recorded so far. This is the case, for instance, of the churches of St. John the Evangelist, Saints Menas and Menaïos, St. Theodotus, and St. Samuel.

The scope of the excavations in Hebdomon was very modest in comparison to the significance of this area in the Byzantine period. Systematic excavations were carried out in 1920–1923 under the supervision of R. Demangel (1945).

The most famous and largest church in Hebdomon was a church built by Justinian, dedicated to St. John the Baptist. It was in this church that coronation ceremonies were held for the emperors proclaimed on the *Campos*. Traces of the temple were discovered as a result of the excavations carried out by H. Glück (1920, 20). However, the archaeologist misinterpreted them as the remains of a church from the 6th c. The remains of the building from Justinian's times were discovered during French excavations conducted in 1921–1923 under the supervision of R. Demangel. On their basis it was possible to examine the layout of the church. It was concluded that the building had an octagonal shape (Fig. 2). During the excavations, the following finds were discovered in the immediate vicinity of the church: a mosaic floor, made using the *opus sectile* technique, from the 6th c.; capitals; the remains of a pulpit (Demangel 1945), a fragment of a meticulously decorated marble frieze, and a fragment of a figurative mosaic. All the relics of the temple discovered at the time were, however, destroyed in 1965, during the construction of the Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu hospital, which is located on this spot at present.

During the investigations, a number of photographs were also taken, which are now the only sources of information about the ruins of the buildings which were still there in the early 20th c. and which were destroyed later as a result of contemporary construction projects on this territory.

Some information also resulted from the discoveries made during the construction work connected with contemporary investments in recent years. As a result, a large area was revealed in which an extensive

complex of ruins was recorded. It cannot be ruled out that these are the remains of a palace.

At the mouth of the St. Mammes River (Fig. 1), St. Mammes' hagiaσμα and probably a church or a monastery were located. There was also a stone bridge over the river, which marked the route of the Via Egnatia there. By the bridge, on the western side, the two routes of this road, the northern and southern ones, most probably converged, and from this point on the eastern side of the crossing only one tract led towards Hebdomon and the Golden Gate. Our knowledge of the material relics of Byzantine heritage is limited to the results of the reconnaissance carried out in this area in the 1960s and the 1970s, when the riverbed was engineered. As a result of this investment, the majority of the architectural objects there were flooded. At present, this area is inaccessible, as it is located on the territory of the Istanbul airport.

The city of Rhegion (Figs. 1, 3, and 6) was a large urban centre the closest to the settlement complex on the Firuzköy Peninsula. The site identified with Rhegion is situated on the south-eastern end of Lake Küçükçekmece, in the present-day suburb of Küçükçekmece. Its history probably goes back to the time when Constantinople was established. It was located by E. Mamboury on the basis of written sources and excavations carried out in the first half of the 20th c. (Eyice 1978, 63). Rhegion first appeared in the text of the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, which was written after Constantinople was established (324; Bechtel 1913). The author of the *Tabula Peutingeriana* – a map from the 4th c. – recorded Rhegion as located ca. 18 km west of Byzantion (*Tabula...*). Rhegion appeared e.g. in Procopius of Caesarea, in Book IV of his *On Buildings* (Procopius, IV.8., 284–285). Procopius included a description of repairs of a road leading to Rhegion and a bridge over a narrowing of Lake Küçükçekmece, carried out by Justinian the Great in the 6th c. There was a port, palace, baths and imperial villas, fortifications, a bridge and churches dedicated to Saints Strattonikos, Kallinikos and Theodore (the latter inside the city or in its vicinity) and a number of other buildings. Excavations in the city showed that it consisted of two parts. The first, the acropolis, was located on a high hill. The other part was situated at the foot of the hill on the side of the lake and the sea. Rhegion was surrounded by two rows of walls. The first one was recorded in the part on the hill, the other one in the area at the foot of the hill.

Archaeological excavations were first carried out on this site in 1938, 1940–41 and 1948, under the supervision of A. Müfid Mansel and A. Ogan (Ogan 1939; Ogan and Mansel 1942). They were focused on one part of the site, located on top of the acropolis. Numerous relics of buildings were found as a result. The entire complex excavated at the time, including the recorded architectural relics, was destroyed in the late 20th c. At present, a parking lot is situated in this area. Excavations were carried out again in recent years (2015–2017). The archaeological works were rescue excavations and were related to the construction of a new railway on the territory situated at the foot of the hill on the lake's side. The excavations covered a very large area. They resulted in a discovery of a building complex. However, the results of these works have not been published yet. They are known to us only from direct observation. In 2015–2017 underwater sonar surveys were also completed in Lake Küçükçekmece, in the area adjacent to the discussed settlement complex. The work was carried out by H. Öviz. It resulted in recording architectural relics under the surface of the water.

Another site is located directly on the coast of the Sea of Marmara, in Beylikdüzü, between Lake Küçükçekmece and Lake Büyükçekmece (Fig. 1). It is identified with a place (*chorion*) called Anguria, mentioned in written sources (Küzler 2008, 251). The preliminary reconnaissance was carried out in 2011–2012 (Öviz, Kaya and Aydınğün 2014), and then in 2016–2017. The site has not been excavated yet. The surface surveys resulted in the discovery of a port. Marble architectural elements decorated with reliefs and fragments of marble floor tiles also occur on the surface. Additionally, sherds of ceramic vessels, olive lamps, glass objects and bones were also recorded. On the basis of the amphoras found it was estimated that the site was in use from the 4th to the 10th c. The port was most probably an element of a larger settlement, whose relics should be present inland. The area is largely undeveloped at present.

Athyras¹¹ is located on the territory of the contemporary municipality of Büyükçekmece, on the eastern shore of Lake Büyükçekmece (Fig. 1). This was another centre situated on the Via Egnatia, on its younger southern route, running from Silivri in the west to Rhegion in the east. Athyras was mentioned in written sources, for instance by Procopius in the context of Justinian the Great's construction activities (Procopius IV.8., 288–289). Athyras was also mentioned by Michael Attaleiates

¹¹ On Athyras see Jireček 1877, 54, 58, 81, 102.

(ca. 1030/1035–ca. 1085) in his work *The History*. The information was related to a rebellion which took place during the reign of Michael VII in 1077, which was started by Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder. The chronicler recorded that Rus' ships (*rosia de ploia*) were sent against the rebels, which contributed to the capture of Athyras, taken by Nikephoros' followers, and consequently to suppressing the usurpation (Attaleiates 31. 12, 462–465; Böhm 2012, 101).

The place is relatively poorly examined archaeologically because a large part of this area is flooded by the dam lake at present. Some breakthrough in this regard occurred in 2014, when – after a prolonged drought – the water level markedly lowered. As a consequence, several dozen metres of the lake's shore were revealed. Ş. Aydingün carried out archaeological rescue works at the time (Aydingün, Aydingün and Özdemir 2015). As a result of the works, remains of port wharfs stretching over several dozen metres were recorded. There were also architectural relics and mobile finds found on the bottom of the lake. The majority of the recorded artefacts were of Hellenistic and Roman origin. A less numerous group of finds was dated to the Byzantine period (Aydingün, Aydingün and Özdemir 2015). The territory also has two stone bridges, still operational, which were built in the Ottoman times. Their structures include elements of older, medieval bridge constructions, however.

Another site is located on the western shore of Lake Büyükçekmece, in Ahmediye (Fig. 9). However, its location does not reflect the topographical situation in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, when the settlement complex in question was not situated immediately on the lake. The present state is a consequence of damming the lake in the late 20th c, which led to the flooding of vast areas of land and doubled the lake's surface. As a result of building the dam, large portions of the site in question were also flooded. The settlement is identified with Episkopeia, known from written sources (Küzler 2008, 239–240, 352). Episkopeia was mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea because it was also a stage for Justinian the Great's building activities. As the chronicler wrote, the emperor erected a rather unusual fortress there (Procopius, IV.8.18–25, 288–291).

The territory of the entire settlement complex in question is undeveloped at present and makes one enormous archaeological site (Fig. 9). So far, no archaeological excavations have been carried out



Fig. 9. The settlement complex in Ahmediye (Photo by B. Stanislawski)

there, although there are remains of a number of architectural objects in ruins and a wealth of mobile artefacts on its surface.

The site was surveyed three times during our project, between 2016 and 2018. At that time, we completed surface surveys and photographic recording of relics of the surviving architectural objects, we took aerial photographs and carried out sonar surveys of the bottom of the lake in the area the closest to the discussed settlement complex.

As a result of the investigations, we recorded the presence of four large buildings of unspecified purpose, remains of a massive gate and a wide road paved with stones, running from the gate to the north for over a dozen metres. The buildings were, for the most part, preserved only in the form of the cores of their walls, which were made of unprocessed mortar-bound stones. They all probably used to have exteriors and interiors cladded with cut blocks of stone, traces of which have survived in a few individual fragments of the walls. The finds on the site's surface indicated that white marble, characteristic of the Sea of Marmara region, was also used in construction locally. Several

column fragments and decorated elements made of this material were discovered. Bricks were recorded only sporadically. All the above-mentioned architectural objects were probably of Byzantine origin. Traces of a cemetery were discovered in the western part of the site.

As a result of underwater sonar surveys, it was concluded that some flooded relics of buildings were present in the areas of the lake adjacent to the site. Large parts of the discussed settlement complex were, therefore, flooded as a result of building the dam.

At this stage of the investigations it can be said that this was a large Byzantine centre with an older Roman tradition, surrounded by defensive walls, located near the northern route of the Via Egnatia, which still functioned in the 12th and 13th c.

A conflict of civilisations

The Byzantine settlement complex located on the Firuzköy Peninsula, its immediate settlement context comprising settlements situated along the shores of Lake Küçükçekmece, as well as the spatial and settlement structure located along the beginning/end stretch of the Via Egnatia, have been partially examined and reconstructed as a result of the conducted studies. These sites present a great challenge in terms of interpretation, since cities, settlements and cult centres located along the discussed stretch of the Via Egnatia performed important functions – not only transportation and communications related, but also social and religious ones. This was reflected in the ceremony of *adventus*¹², i.e. welcoming (Izzi 2010, 132, 135–136, 138–139), which accompanied the ceremonial entrance to the city of the emperor returning to the capital (the ruler was welcomed in Rhegion), of prominent guests (there is information about welcoming the pope in Hebdomon and papal legates in Selymbria), of sacred relics, and of representatives of foreign peoples. The ceremony also played an important social role – by integrating various groups, including the foreigners visiting the city (Dudek 2013, 29, 32; Tycner-Wolicka 2009, 165; Izzi 2010, 103). The function of the objects discovered on the Firuzköy Peninsula suggested that the examined settlement complex could have been an element of this structure.

¹² For the ceremony of *adventus* see MacCormack 1972; McCormick 1986; Mango 2000; Tycner-Wolicka 2009, 153–165; Dudek 2013.



Fig. 10. The megapolis of Istanbul (Photo by H. Aydingün)

The settlement in this area also constitutes unusual and, so far, poorly examined cultural heritage. It is, however, endangered at present due to the fact that these territories are located in the immediate vicinity of Istanbul, one of the largest agglomerations in the contemporary world. The area is characterised by extremely rapid construction development. The ongoing construction of hundreds of skyscrapers, motorways, massive bridges, transport hubs, underwater tunnels, a gigantic airport, a dam, and the recently initiated “new Bosphorus” – i.e. a shipping canal linking the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara (Fig. 10) – means that relics of the Byzantine civilisation have no chance of competing with the contemporary one. The next few years will therefore be the very last moment when these monuments can still be documented and examined before they cease to exist forever!

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