

Urbanization of Kabyle in Late Roman Period

Ivan Valchev

The ancient city of Kabyle was situated about 7 km northwest from the modern town of Yambol, near the great bend of the Tundzha river. The settlement was known to the ancient authors and its first mention was in 342-341 BC in connection with the campaign of the Macedonian king Philip II in the interior of Thrace. The localization of Kabyle near Zaychi Vrah hill was confirmed at the end of the 19th century; however, the first regular archaeological excavations began only in 1972. Over the past 45 years structures and layers from the late Roman period of the settlement have been unearthed. However, there is no a comprehensive study of the history of the city for the time from the end of the 3rd to the third quarter of the 4th century.

One of the key issues remaining poorly illuminated by the archaeological and epigraphic documentation is the urbanization of Kabyle and its transformation from a military camp of a cohort with a civilian settlement nearby into a settlement with an urban status. The establishment of the military camp is securely dated on the basis of epigraphic monuments at the end of the reign of Emperor Hadrian – 135-136. At that time Cohors II Lucensium was stationed there, replaced at the end of the 2nd century by Cohors I Athoitarum. While the epigraphic monuments provide sufficient information about the military contingent in Kabyle, about the buildings built by and for the soldiers, as well as individual votive and funerary monuments of soldiers, officers and veterans, archaeological research has not yet established firmly where the military camp was situated. In earlier publications by N. Tancheva-Vassileva it is stated that the camp was situated in the northeastern part of the site, on a small hill called Hissarluka, where later a small castellum was built. The articles of N. Tancheva-Vassileva are of a general nature and the suggested interpretations are not justified with duly presented terrain situations, stratigraphic sections and precisely dated artifacts. The conclusions of the cited author are criticized by Ivailo Lozanov. According to him, the fortifications attributed to the military camp of the 2nd-3rd centuries were built

in the Late Roman period. His arguments are both the formal and typological features of the fortification itself and the stratigraphic observations during several drillings along the eastern fortress wall.

Archaeological excavations and geophysical surveys in sector XII of the last few years have revealed some monumental buildings, which, according to the investigators, could be related to the military camp of the last decades of the 3rd century. It is quite logical to expect that the earlier camp was located on the same place but this could be confirmed after future in-depth researches.

At the moment, the situation with the civilian settlement that existed in the vicinity of the military camp is also not clear. Roman period artifacts have been found in almost all sectors of the archaeological site, but in most cases they were transported or reused. The much more advanced studies of the Kabyle tumular necropolises testify the intense settlement life there in the 2nd-3rd centuries. Votive tablets and inscriptions suggest that in or near the settlement there were at least four pagan sanctuaries, but none of them has been localized on terrain.

The last mention of Kabyle as a military camp (*castra*) is on a pedestal for a statue of Emperor Aurelian. The same inscription states that the strength of the cohort was 1000 people, ie. it was a *cohors milliaria*. Unfortunately, the name of the military unit is not mentioned and it is not clear whether this was still *Cohors I Athoitarum* or that it was replaced by another unit in the course of the 3rd century. The geophysical surveys carried out in sector XII showed the presence of a linear anomaly, outlining a nearly rectangular space south of the late antique *castellum* and enclosing the buildings in the sector. The explanation of this anomaly as a fortification wall is very logical. The enclosed space has dimensions of about 130/140 x 130/140 m and corresponds to the parameters of the auxiliary camps from the Principate, such as *Sostra* and *Germania* in Thrace, for example.

Previous archaeological campaigns revealed entirely a peristyle building, interpreted as a *pretorium* and dated back to the end of the 3rd century. A second building with a very massive construction is assumed to be a *principia*. The investigations of the two buildings have not yet been completed and the data published are preliminary.

The military contingent remained in Kabyle after Aurelian's time, at least until the end of the 3rd and early 4th centuries, and possibly even until the Gothic Wars of Valens. The new reading and analysis made by Nicolay Shrankov of an inscription written on a statue pedestal shows that the con-

struction of the fortress wall of Kabyle from the very end of the 3rd century was under the supervision of a centurion, Aurelius Ulpian. The inscription in question is particularly important because it documents the new status of Kabyle – in the text the settlement is defined as a city. When exactly Kabyle received its city status is not clear. With reason, N. Sharankov suggests that this happened at the beginning of the Tetrarchy, and the construction of the fortified walls mentioned in the inscription was related to the formation of the new urban core of the settlement. The city status of Kabyle is also noted in another inscription, also reviewed and interpreted by Sharankov. The text, dated 309-310, mentions the construction of a weaving workshop in the settlement. In addition, the eponymous magistrate – logistes (curator civitatis) is mentioned. The inscription also contains the names of two of the Kabyle's decaprottoi, and under decaprottoi the city's first ten councilors have to be understood.

The urbanization of Kabyle did not occur entirely at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century. The data from the archaeological excavations in sector V show that the street network with the accompanying infrastructure could be dated in the end of the first or rather in the beginning of the second quarter of the 4th century. At the same time were constructed two buildings studied in the sector. The street roadway lies directly on layers of the Hellenistic epoch with a date in the middle and the beginning of the second half of the 2nd century BC. This indicates that at least this part of the archaeological site remained uninhabited for several centuries and was included in the well-developed part of Kabyle around the beginning of the sole rule of Constantine the Great (after 324). At the same time, the adjacent horreum was dated to the end of the 3rd century, and in the foundations of a building east of it a treasure of few gold coins dated between 293 and 311 has been found. At present it is not sure whether there was a deliberately left unoccupied space between the fortress walls of the military camp and the horreum or the date of the warehouse should be reconsidered.

The construction of basilica 1 in Kabyle is dated in the last years of Constantine's rule or the initial years of his sons'. At the middle of the 4th century Basilica 2 was also built, although the arguments in support of its dating are quite uncertain and debatable. The traces of buildings revealed under Basilica 1 show intense occupation of the southern parts of the site during the 3rd and first half of the 4th century before the construction of the Christian temple. The discovery of a large number of pottery kilns suggest the existence of a craftsmen quarter there. Unfortunately, a large section of the city,

occupying the area between sector V and basilica 1, remains uninvestigated, and at present, the architectural environment in which the church was located is not clear – whether it was built on the outskirts of the urbanized area of Kabyle or at a certain distance from the well-developed parts of the settlement. Isolated from the well-developed parts of the city were the small baths dated too generally in the Late Roman period.

The information about the urban development of the north-eastern part of Kabyle, the so-called *castellum*, is quite controversial with regard of the architectural remains and, above all, as a chronology. For these reasons, I will confine myself to marking only a few facts. The construction of the fortress walls in this area was dated to the beginning of the 4th century, but the data from the above-mentioned inscription specifies the date in the last years of the 3rd century. Undoubtedly in the late Roman period still functioned or maybe even was built the big bathhouse complex. In the second or third quarter of the 4th century Basilica 2 was constructed, but with a vague date between the time of Constantine the Great and Valens. The *terminus post quem* of the so-called barracks buildings is at the end of the 3rd century when the fortification wall was built, but they could be dated in the early Byzantine period as well.

In the 4th century the northern central part of the site was inhabited too – remains of two buildings have been discovered there. The whole northwestern part of the Hellenistic city, however, probably remained uninhabited in the late antiquity. The drillings in the northern foot of the Zaychi Vrah hill in the fortified area during the Hellenistic epoch shows the lack of a Late Roman period layers. Furthermore, geophysical surveys conducted on a wide area have not indicated the existence of monumental architectural remains.

The rise of the civilian settlement near the military camp of Kabyle in a city status took place sometime in the last quarter of the 3rd century, probably during the Tetrarchy. Its city status was already a fact in 297. The city core of that time probably covered the eastern parts of the archaeological site, fortified by walls surrounding an area of about 5 hectares. Later, at the beginning of the second quarter of the 4th century, the settlement grew to the west and the built-up area reached 10-11 hectares. The data of possible attempts to restore Hellenistic fortifications are very uncertain, and perhaps the expanding neighborhoods have remained unprotected. The first Christian cult building, Basilica 1, was built in the southwest periphery of the city, while the later Basilica 2 is in the fortified part of the settlement. There is no data on the construction of public buildings related to the new urban

status of Kabyle, such as agora with its adjacent facilities, for example. On the other hand, archaeological and epigraphic finds testify the existence of buildings with economic functions. These were the state weaving factory and the public warehouse. The last building, the so-called horreum, was an almost obligatory element of all newly established urban centers in the late Roman epoch, and they were the only public buildings before the appearance of the Christian temples a little later.

The Gothic wars of Emperor Valens from the 70s of the 4th century were decisive for the urban development of Kabyle. In all sectors of the settlement thick burnt layers with the latest coins of Valentinian I and Valens have been documented. As far as I know from the publications and the inventory books of the excavations in Kabyle, there are no coins of Emperor Theodosius I and his sons. The renovation of the life in the settlement dated back to the first half of the 5th century, but Kabyle probably had already lost its city status and disappears from the written sources forever.

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