

# NEW FINDINGS REGARDING THE ECONOMIC PART OF BARGALA

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## **Abstract**

The excavations conducted on the archaeological site Bargala in the period 2007 – 2011 supplement and partially conclude previous knowledge about the Episcopium sector. In the light of the the new excavations, the authors analyze the defined newly researched areas, and in particular the usage of certain buildings located by the fortification wall. Because of the character of the discovered buildings, these essay suggests that this area is an integral part of the economic area of the town, which was in the service of the Episcopal center. Based on the conclusion from the research of this area, the authors suggest that only two chronological building phases can be differentiated.

## **Keywords:**

excavations in Bargala, economic area,  
towers and building's purpose.

## **Theme/s:**

Classical Archaeology, Ancient Architecture

## NEW FINDINGS REGARDING THE ECONOMIC PART OF BARGALA

The town of Bargala had at its disposal a number of diverse economic and craft production related buildings. This has been confirmed with the latest research.

The latest findings about the economic part of the early Byzantine town of Bargala, which result from the excavations in sector Episcopium of the town in the period between 2007 and 2011, are the focus of this paper<sup>1</sup>.

### Location and history of the excavations

The town Bargala is located in the Eastern part of R. Macedonia, about 17 km from Shtip, in the foothills of the mountain Plachkovica. It is in the area of the village Goren Kozjak, on the right bank of the Kozjachka River.

The oldest information about the town are given by I. Venedikov after the discovery of an epigraphic writing between the areas of Karbinci and Kozjak. This writing gives information about the renewal of the city gate in 371 and the position of the town as an administrative unit of the province Mediterranean Dacia (Венедиков Ы. 1948, 86.). The church of St. George is also mentioned later by Mihajlov (Михајлов С., 1949, 4-19), whereas Grujikj gives information about some archaeological remains in the location called Kale (Грујиќ Р., (1955, 212 – 215).

The oldest historical sources, witnessing the existence of the town, are the clerical articles from the church council of Halcedon from 451, where one of the participants was the episcope Dardanius from Bargala (Папазоглу Ф., 1957, 82) Also, in Hierocles' Sinekdem from 527, Bargala is listed as a town from the province Macedonia Prima (Папазоглу Ф.,

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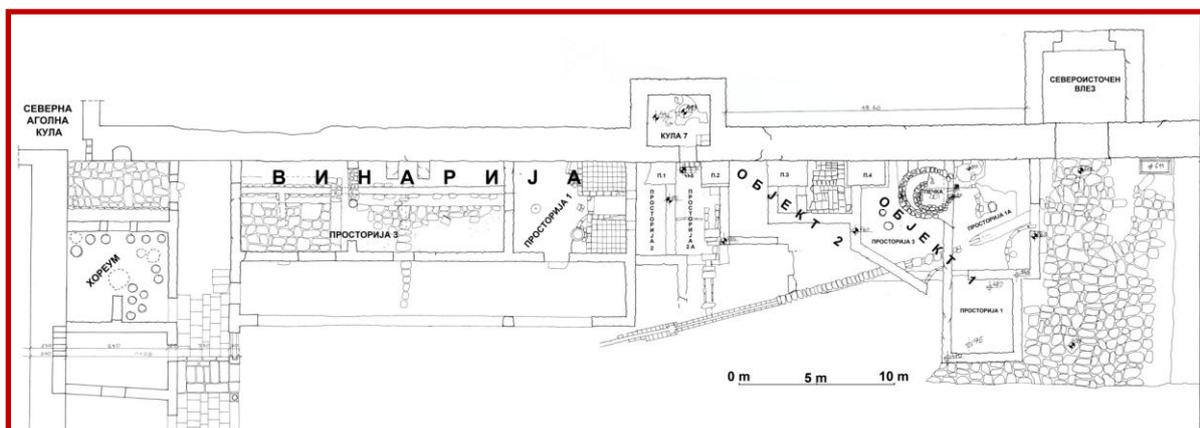
<sup>1</sup>The director of the research project was Trajce Nacev, PhD. The director of the excavations in the Episcopium sector in the period 2009 – 2011 was Ilinka Atanasova from Museum of Macedonia – the museum unit from Kochani. The technical documentation was done by Ljubica Kljonkova, architect and conservator, and the photography was done by Kire Spasov and Stefan Atanasov.

## New Findings Regarding the Economic Part of Bargala

1957, 246).<sup>2</sup> The town is also mentioned in the hagiography “The 15 Martyrs of Tiveriopolis” from Teofilactus (АлексоваБ., 1967, 11).

The location of this Late Antiquity and Early Christian episcopal center is defined by B. Aleksova in 1967, when the first excavations in the northern part of the fortification, on the Episcopium sector were conducted. Since 1995 the excavations are focused on defining the fortification(Нацев Т., 2008), and since 2007 they were also expanded in the central part of the town where another sacral building, the Civil Basilica, was discovered(Нацев Т., - Фрков Ј., 2009, 151-156.)

The total fortified area is 4,85 ha and has a trapezoid plan. It is positioned in the Northwest – Southeast direction and consists of orthogonal street system.



Plan 1

### The Episcopium Sector 2007 – 2011

The activities in this sector were concentrated in a 15 meters wide belt, parallel and adjacent to the North – East defense wall (on its interior side), from the Northeastern gate towards Tower 6. A strengthening of the wall was visible at the beginning. At the place spreading from Tower no. 7 to the North – East entrance, four platforms were added using the *opus incertum* technique (crushed and shaped stone with mortar). The platforms have dimensions from 1.5 to 2.5 meters (Plan 1). Several of the discovered buildings were built attached to the fortification wall, using it as a forth side. All of them were buildings with economic purpose.

<sup>2</sup>Most researchers believe it is supposed to be Macedonia Secunda

The North – East entrance, through which the town communicated with the suburb(Нацев Т., 2011, 275), was closed in the later building phase<sup>3</sup>, for which re-used materials, like column bases, stones with inscriptions etc were implemented<sup>4</sup>. This entrance used to lead to the street *Via Decumana* which here widens into a little square with 10 meters width and 15 meters discovered so far length.<sup>5</sup> The street is paved with big, irregular stone plates. South from the wall, a watering trough was discovered, which was actually a reused sarcophagus with rich and finely executed carved figural decoration, made from fine white marble(Photo 1, 1a). The side with figural decoration was facing the defense wall.<sup>6</sup> South – East from the sarcophagus another watering trough from roughly carved stone was discovered, which can be related to the surrounding buildings from an earlier phase. Both of the watering places match perfectly with the city's infrastructure and the water supply system(Нацев Т., 2011, 273- 282).



Fig. 1, Detail from the street with a part of the water supply infrastructure

Fig.1a, watering place

### **Building 1 (Metal workshop?)**

North from the entrance is the Building 1, consisting of three separate but linked rooms. A shared wall links the three rooms, passing through the center. In the room 3 which is in the middle part of the building, for now defined as a metal workshop<sup>7</sup>, a round oven was discovered. (Plan 1, Building 1).

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<sup>3</sup> It was probably done in order to transform it into a residence part

<sup>4</sup> The inscription is still not analyzed

<sup>5</sup> The discovery of the street is a result of the latest research, although its existence was obvious given the known orthogonal street system

<sup>6</sup> The first location of the sarcophagus is still unknown, since it was brought here to fit the existing infrastructure

<sup>7</sup> Because of the large amount of metal remaining discovered

Room 3 has an entrance to the South, towards the Episcopal Basilica. Big round oven with a diameter of 4 meters was discovered in the Eastern part of the room. It is on a 30 centimeters distance from the fortification wall, stabilized with two supportive walls built from stone and yellow clay, with a width of half a meter. The supportive walls are glued to the wall under an angle of 90 degrees, with a distance of 1.70 meters in between (Photo 2, 2a).



Fig.2, furnace - first phase of excavations



Fig.2a, furnace – second phase of excavations

The oven is glued to the common wall between room 3 and 1A, with bricklayer and clay, slightly widening towards the wall. Traces of intensive burning were spotted in this area and ash and metal slugs were discovered. The oven's wall are preserved in a 90 centimeters height. They are built from secondary used fragmented bricks, layered one upon another, forming a wall with half a meter width which tightens toward the top. The base of the oven's side walls are built with rough stones and bricks. The base of the oven is with several layers: first a substructure of big stones, then a thick layer of clay with red color<sup>8</sup>, then a thin layer of crushed bricks with a little of yellow compact clay, and the last layer is of perforated floor ceramic tiles. The last layer is only visible by the side lines of the oven (Photo 3, 3a). A tightening area is spotted in the Northern part of the oven, built in the

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Fig.3, furnace – inner look



Fig.3a, inner look of the furnace

same technique which forms an empty space where a lot of ash, metal remains and burning traces can be seen. This part seems to be the chimney.

In the same room, west from the oven, two big storage pots were discovered, with remains of wheat in one of them.

<sup>8</sup>Конески К., 1999; supposedly with big elastic force

The oven is also connected to the room 1A through an opening of two stones with a height of 60 centimeters, slightly constricting towards the top. The width of the opening is 50 centimeters. There is a work platform on the right side of the opening and a hole filled with ashes. The work platform stands on a substructure of yellow, compact clay glued with river stones, covered with stone tiles from red sandstone, which is a common material used for layering in the Late Ancient period in the Bregalnica valley.<sup>9</sup> They were probably re-used secondarily from the Episcopal Basilica (Photo 4). A lot of pottery fragments were discovered around the area of the work platform.



Fig.4, working platform in front of the furnace



The discovered pit is in the Northern corner of room 1A, between the working platform and the fortification wall, with a layer from stones in a round form, with a diameter of 90 centimeters. It continues along the fortification wall, forming like a canal with a depth of about 60 centimeters (Photo 4a).

Fig.4a, furnace with waste pit

During the excavation, traces of burning, ashes and big amounts of ceramics (architectural and utilitarian) were visible throughout the entire area, especially in front of the oven. This room is connected to the room 1 through one stair entrance, which is 90 centimeters wide. It was probably used for storage, because of the amount of fragmented ceramics found, originally from large clay pots. The room 1A is also connected to Via Decumana through an entrance which is 1.80 meters wide. Good water supply system is established in the whole building in general, and one of the main water canals passes through it, oriented East to West (Nacev T., 2011, 275)

We couldn't identify comparable examples in the literature, except for one oven with similar appearance and plan, discovered in Taor, which on the basis of the accompanying artifacts is defined as bread baking oven and is dated in the Early Medieval period by the

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<sup>9</sup> A note from one of the authors, figured upon the excavation

excavators (Ристов К. 2006, 220-221, сл.6) However, we think that the oven discovered in Bargalafind closer analogy in the five ovens, defined as metal processing ovens, in the newly discovered building in Sozopol, R. Bulgaria.<sup>10</sup>

We believe that the whole building was probably destroyed in a fire, because of the large amount of burning traces and ashes evidenced during the cleaning of the upper layers.

### Building 2

Building 2 was discovered when we continued the excavation up North. The research on this area has not been finalized, although the excavation should continue in the South – Western part. The building contains several rooms (Plan 1, Building 2). Some decorations were discovered with fish motifs on the front wall from the outside(Димитрова Е., 1995, 49-66; ).<sup>11</sup> The wall is built with stones and good quality mortar, with a later intervention on the entrance part (Photo 5). The entrance is 1 meter wide, leading to a room paved with irregular stones, but it was later blocked. The room it leads to, has the following dimensions: 1.70 x 1.20 meters, linked to another room with dimensions: 3 x 3.40 meters. The floor of the room that was last mentioned is paved with unequal clay bricks, probably used secondarily. A little unpaved part which is like an extension to the room 3 is an exception (Photo 5a). The use of this building, with total dimensions 7.5 x 5 meters is still undefined.



Fig.5a, object 2, detail

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<sup>10</sup> This information is not published yet, but we express our gratitude to our colleague Veselin Hadzi – Angelov from the Historical Museum – Samokov for sharing it with us

<sup>11</sup> The building phase dates from a previous period, so the decorations are probably connected to the Episcopal Basilica

## Glass workshop<sup>12</sup>

In the next area following the wall, a glass workshop was discovered. Its dimensions are 12.6 x 6.3 meters, with several rooms (Photo 6). The place where the oven is located is



with dimensions 3.90 x 3.20 meters. It is in the Eastern corner of Tower 7 (Photo 6a). Its dimensions are wider in the basis, and tighter up the top. It is strengthened with stone walls from the both sides, where not only stones with secondary use are applied, but also relief decorative elements with floral ornaments. In front of the tower, in the direction of

the entrance are the other two stone platforms which strengthen the walled area P1 and P2. In the Western corner of the building is a rectangular room with floor and walls layered with hydrostatic mortar, without area for communication. It is probably a tub where some objects were being made. It is concluded that the area was destroyed in fire or on purpose. In the Southern corner of the room 2A is the conjunction to the town water canal (Plan 1).



Fig.6a, , furnace for glass

## Winery

The winery is located in a building which was the most representative one, defined in the literature as North – Easter living area (Нацев Т., 2008, 87-89, пл.7, сл.80), with three connected rooms. It was connected to the other part of the town through several entrances, through an open porch on the Western side and a closed porch on the North – Western side. The building is attached to the fortification wall, whose outer face (Kurtina E) is layered with mortar and decorated with fish representation, probably as Eucharistic symbols (Нацев Т., 2008, 57, сл.43a.) The floors of two of the rooms were layered with irregular stone slabs, with well organized water supply system. This area was later transformed, as it was adapted for a

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<sup>12</sup> We will present this part shortly due to another paper devoted to this subject only

## New Findings Regarding the Economic Part of Bargala

winery. Three rooms were adapted with total area of 152 square meters, aligned as the production process requires (Plan 1).

The central room (Room 1) is rectangular, with dimensions of 7.15 x 5.75 meters. The entrance to it is through the porch, 1.50 meters wide. Its inner space is in two levels: on the higher level, which is by the South – Eastern wall, are two bricked tubs, and on the lower one are two large stone pots, of which only one is preserved (Photo 7), and from the other only a fragment from the base.



Fig.7, deposition dish



Fig.7a ,winery – vine presses

Press 1 (Photo 7a, left) is rectangular with dimensions of 3.10 x 2.20 x 0.20 meters. It is in the Eastern part of the room. Press 2 (Photo 7a, right) is also rectangular, with dimensions of 2.60 x 2.40 x 0.20 meters. It is in the Southern part of the room. It's shorter than Press 1 because of the room's entrance. The space between the presses is 1.20 meters, used for communication.

The floor of the room is of yellow beaten clay, which also enters the base under the fortification wall.

The foundation of the presses is made from broken stones and clay, very similar to the substructure of the oven. Upon it is a layer of stone and mortar, and after that, walls from brick and hydrostatic mortar, built in the technique *opus testaceum*, 0.40 meters high. The basis of the presses is from river stones and mortar, 0.20 meters wide, and a layer of hydrostatic mortar and clay bricks on it. There are openings for the liquid to flow easier in the pots, found at the front walls at both presses, without spilling over the walls of the pots. The side walls are above the presses, layered with hydrostatic mortar up to some point.

The stone sedimentation tanks were attached in front of the openings and only the one in front of the Press 2 is completely preserved. It is made of stone, with round shape and dimensions: height 0.70 meters, width 1 meter and the thickness of the walls 0.10 meters. The

garland of the pot is flat. Its capacity is 100 liters. The space between the sedimentation tank



Fig.7b, decorative plastic with vines

and the wall of the room is connected with relief decorative stones, florally ornamented with grape vine elements(Димитрова Е., 1995,137-141) (Photo 7b). Both of the sedimentation tanks are connected with a small wall made from stone and mud, 0.70 meters wide. In front of the Press 1 only the basis is preserved, and it is in accordance with the one from the other tank, although the stone decorative plates are also missing.

On the North – Western wall of the room, an entrance 1 meter wide can be seen, that was probably closes in the later period and it was used to connect the room to the room 3. It is the largest one in the winery, its dimensions are: 16.85 x 5.75 meters. It was divided in two parts with separate entrances, and double arch on the side columns and on central column with Ionian capital (НацевТ., 2008, 87, сЛ.80/6, 80/7). Its original look is preserved, as a part of a luxurious, episcopal residence, before adapting it for the winery. It was connected to the outside with an entrance which is 1.40 meters wide, leading through a closed porch.

The floor is made from irregular stone slabs, with open irrigational canal going across the whole room, and then connecting to another one which continues outside. In its original use, the building had several entrances that were closed in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. There wasn't any significant mobilearchaeological material found during the excavation. Its connection to the room 1, its surface and the good irrigational system, as well as the well paved floor indicate that this area was probably used in the process of the fermentation of the wine(Нацев, Т. Folia balkanica br.2.).

The last room which can be observed in the same context as the Winery is the room 2, connected to the glass workshop. Its dimensions are 5.75 x 1.85 meters. There are some openings in the common wall between the rooms 1 and 2, above the presses, which indicates that this was the place from where the grapes were transferred and poured into the presses.

The walls of this room are mortared with hydrostatic mortar, up to 0.70 meters height, as is also the floor surface. We have not acquired enough information yet in order to compare the winery with other architectural complexes, but based on the typological division made by R. Frankel (Frankel R., 1999.) regarding the discovered presses for oil and wine production in the area of Palestine, the presses from Bargala can be considered as type 1, which are simple wine presses with floor for stomping and a sedimentation tank. Some other similarities can be seen in the wine presses found in Stobi<sup>13</sup>, Pelagonija (Кепески Л.- К., 2006, 425-438), and a little further, also on the territory of Italy (Rossister J.J. 1981, 345-361), the wine presses carved in stone on the territory of Anatolia and the areas of Western Phrygia (Yunus E.K., 2003, 11-18), Lycia, Cilicia and Caria (Diler A., 1994, 505-52, and also on the territory of Palestine (Frankel R., 199, 51-59).

### Horeum

The last one of the palette of economic buildings is the wheat storage (Plan 1, Photo 8) where 16 large pots were kept, lined one after another (Нацев Т., 2008, 86, 80/1, 80/2).



This room has almost a square plan with dimensions of 6.5 x 6 meters. It is connected to other rooms with two entrances which are 1.5 meters wide. One is on the North – Eastern wall, which leads to a room with floor paved with stone slabs, and the other one, which goes through the South – Eastern wall, leads to the open porch outside.

Fig.8, horeum detail

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<sup>13</sup> This information is not published yes, but we thank Silvana Blazevska, MA for acquiring this information for us to include it

**Final insights**

The excavations which were conducted in the period 2007 – 2011 supplement and partially conclude our knowledge about the Episcopium sector. After the newly researched areas were defined, the use of the buildings that are located by the fortification wall and the Tower 6 is more obvious and clear. Because of the character of the discovered buildings, we include this area in the economic area of the town, which was in the service of the Episcopal center. Only two chronological building phases can be differentiated based on the conclusion we got from the research of this area.