

IN THE LIGHT OF PROCOPIOS'S DE AEDIFICIIS AND ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDINGS, NEW OBSERVATIONS AND EVALUATIONS ON IUSTINIANUS PERIOD ACTIVITIES ON THE THEODOSIOPOLIS-TRAPEZUS ROUTE

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Abstract

In *De Aedificiis*, Procopius talks about the defensive construction activities carried out in Northeast Anatolia during the reign of Emperor Iustinianus (527-565). However, the locations of these defensive structures mentioned in Procopios are still debated today. The lack of sufficient information on this subject in ancient literary sources, the lack of Archeological findings were the main reasons for the uncertainty about the location of these defensive structures. This study has evaluated the recent survey data of some built-up areas reported on the line of Theodosiopolis (Erzurum)-Trapezus (Trabzon) in the light of archaeological findings and toponymical determinations, and made new suggestions.

Key Word: *Procopios, Iustinianus, Trapezus, Theodosiopolis, Route*

Öz

Prokopios'un *De Aedificiis* adlı eseri, Arkeolojik Buluntular, Yeni Gözlemler ve Gelişmelere göre Erzurum-Trabzon Hattındaki İustinianus Devri Çalışmaları

Prokopios, *De Aedificiis* adlı eserinde İmparator Iustinianus Dönemi'nde (527-565) Kuzeydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde yapılan savunma amaçlı imar faaliyetlerinden söz eder. Prokopios da bahsi geçen bu yapıların lokasyaonları günümüzde hala tartışılmaktadır. Antik edebi kaynaklarda bu konuda yeterli bilgi bulunmaması, arkeolojik verilerin yetersizliği bu savunma yapılarının yeri konusundaki belirsizliğin başlıca nedenleri olmuştur. Bu çalışma kapsamında, Theodosiopolis (Erzurum) – Trapezus (Trabzon) hattında olduğu bildirilen bazı yerleşimlerin son dönemde yapılan yüzey araştırmaları, arkeolojik bulgular ve toponomik tespitler ışığında değerlendirilerek yeni önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Prokopios, Iustinianus, Trapezus, Theodosiopolis, Rota*

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Introduction

The strategically significant region at the eastern territories of the Roman Empire bordering the Sassanid Empire was a scene of constant wars since 5th century A.D. The wars took place especially in the region of Armenia and in the lands of the Kingdoms of Lazica and Iberia. The wars ensued during the reign of Anastasius I (491-518) and in the early years of Iustinianus I (527-565)'s reign. However, this period ended with a temporary peace treaty in 532. Iustinianus, who wanted to benefit from the peaceful environment provided by this treaty, called Eternal Peace between Rome and the Sassanids, decided to make large-scale administrative rearrangements, especially in Roman Armenia. In this context, Roman Armenia was divided into four provinces, Armenia Prima, Armenia Secunda, Armenia Tertia, and Armenia Quarta. The geographic area covering the Northeast Anatolia Region remained within the borders of "Armenia Prima", the center of which was Theodosiopolis (Erzurum).¹ After the administrative restructuring of the region, Iustinianus I decided to fortify the most strategic points on the eastern shores of the Pontos and Armenia Prima, which were war-intensive regions, to prevent attacks from the Sassanids. To this end, the emperor ordered the start of several defensive construction activities in the lands under Roman control ranging from Theodosiopolis in the east of the Trapezus/Satala supply center to Trapezus proper.²

The most comprehensive information about these activities is given in Procopius's *De Aedificiis*. This work covers information about the buildings constructed or restored in this region during the Iustinianus period with their approximate locations. Some researchers tried to mark the locations of these structures and their routes in the area, generally based on toponymic data and the sites mentioned by Procopius.³ These suggestions, however, can be misleading unless supported by archaeological findings. Therefore, this study also takes archaeological findings into account. Among these archaeological findings, "Gümüşhane-Bayburt Provinces Survey Project", which was conducted in six-years with our partial participation, provides significant information in complementing the earlier studies. Besides written sources, this article intends to determine the routes in question with more precise data by interpreting various archaeological findings gathered about the defense structures, castles, and roads identified in earlier works.

The defense route in the Northeast Anatolia Region and the Castle locations

According to Procopius building activities in the border defense line in Armenia started from Theodosiopolis (Θεοδοσιούπολις), which was located at the center of the region.⁴ This region, which belonged to the Aršakids until the end of the 6th century, was incorporated to the Roman territory by the agreement between the Roman Empire and

¹ Nov. 31; Proc. *Aed.* III.2.2; also see Honigman 1970, p. 14; Adontz 1970, p. 134.

² Proc. *Aed.* III.

³ Bryer and Winfield 1985; Bryer 1966, pp. 174-195; Bryer 1967, pp. 161-168; Adontz 1970, pp. 49-43, Sinclair 1989, Intagliate 2019, pp. 427-438.

⁴ Proc. *Aed.* III.5. 2.

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Sasanids in 387.⁵ In this region, which was called Karin (Կարին) or Karno (Կարն) in ancient Armenian sources,⁶ Karinitis (Καρινίτις) in Greek written sources,⁷ a city was built in Emperor Theodosius II era (408-450),⁸ and thus, the name “Karinitis” was changed into “Theodosiopolis”.⁹ As mentioned above, this new city became the center of Armenia Prima with the administrative rearrangements made during the Iustinianus period.¹⁰

Emperor Iustinianus, who thought the castle built in the city center during the Theodosius II era was defenseless and weak, ordered the castle to be reinforced. The castle walls were raised and made impregnable by digging great moats in front of the castle.¹¹

The Theodosiopolis Castle is located where Erzurum Castle stands today, bearing the same name with the city (Fig. 1/11).¹² The inner walls of Erzurum Castle, surrounded by a three-stage rampart, has remained strongly intact until today (Fig. 2, 3). The second and third line of outer walls, however, around the city have almost disappeared, and with only some ruins have remaining mained.¹³ In the excavations carried out in the citadel by Erkmen and his team under the direction of Erzurum Museum since 2000, ceramic pieces, green glazed vessels, and some small findings possibly belonging to the medieval period were unearthed, for which precise dating could not be made.¹⁴ Although no archaeological material directly dated to late antiquity could be identified in Erzurum Castle, its location on a hilltop overlooking the entire Erzurum Plain and of the lack of a possible castle structure in the immediate vicinity makes Erzurum Castle the likeliest replacement for Theodosiopolis Castle.

After telling about the Theodosiopolis Castle, Procopius described a place called Bizana (Βίζανα), which was defensive stronghold on the route. This settlement was later named Leontopolis, probably in memoriam Emperor Leo (457-474).¹⁵ Procopius described Bizana as a place open to enemy attacks, unsafe, insecure with fresh water pools abound. Hestated that Iustinianus did not engage in any construction activities there, probably because of its geographical features.¹⁶

⁵ Jones 1937, p. 225.

⁶ AŞX, S., V.22i; Smbat Spar. XXXVII; also see Hakobyan 1987, pp. 161-162.

⁷ Strab. XI. 14. 5; also see Manandian 1965, p. 20; Marciak 2017, p. 22.

⁸ For discussions about the founder of the city, see Garsoïan 2003, pp. 63-72.

⁹ Kürkçüoğlu 2007, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰ Hewsen 2003, pp. 40-41.

¹¹ During Emperor Anastasius's reign (491-518), new construction activities were carried out in the city. The hill above the Theodosios castle was surrounded by a wall, and then the city was named after him. However, Procopius (*Aed.* III.5. 4-5) stated that people did not easily give up familiar names, so the Theodosiopolis name was continued to be used even during and after the Anastasius period.

¹² Hewsen 1997, p. 5; Talbert 2000, p. 1275; Savvidis 2009, pp. 467-468.

¹³ Günaşdı 2015, p. 344.

¹⁴ Erkmen *et al.* 2008, pp. 491-493; Erkmen *et al.* 2009, p. 217 ff; see also Günaşdı 2015, p. 345.

¹⁵ Proc. *Aed.* III.5.13; see also Jones 1937, p. 225; Adontz 1970, p. 116; Sinclair 1989, p. 274.

¹⁶ Proc. *Aed.* III.5.13-14.

Although Bizana was known to be in the south of the Tercan Plain today, its exact location has not been fully determined.¹⁷ Although some researchers have located it in the modern Vican based on the toponymic analysis,¹⁸ no evidence has yet confirmed that (Fig. 1/10).¹⁹ The southern parts of the Tercan plains, however, seem fitting to the geographical position and features described by Procopius about Bizana. In the region the presence of large water pools formed by snowmelt was also observed.

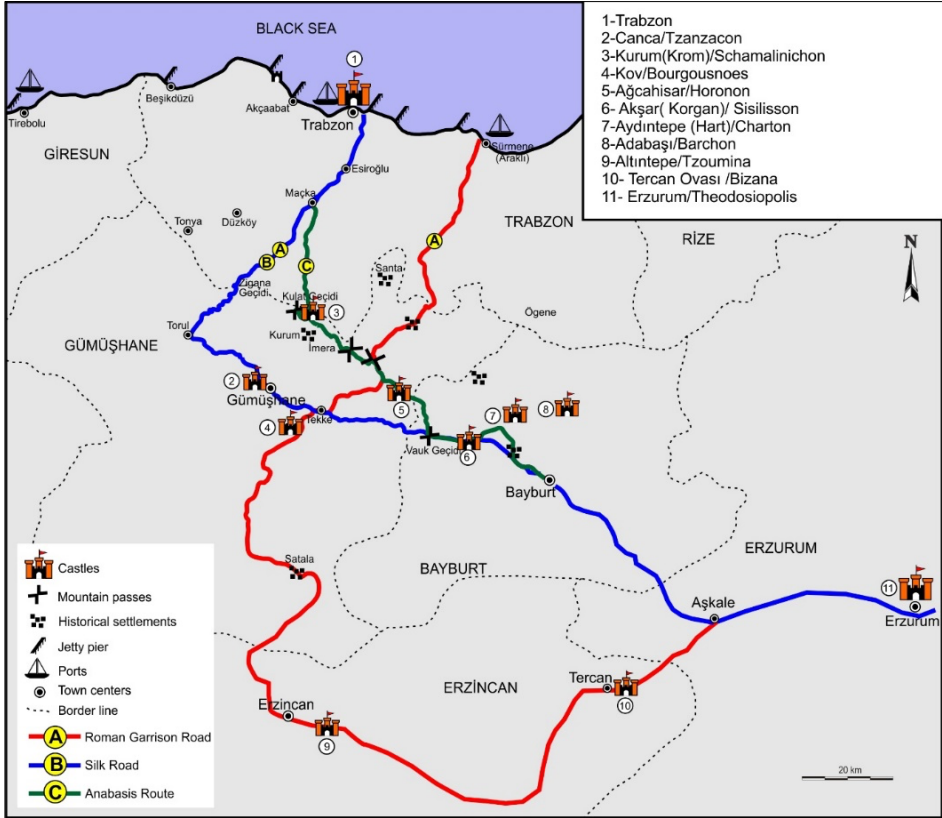


Fig. 1: Northeast Anatolia Region Ancient Road Routes

¹⁷ Talbert 2000, p. 1272.

¹⁸ Honigman 1970, p. 17; Bryer and Winfield 1985, p.37 fn. 191; Sinclair 1989, p. 274; Hewsen 1992, p. 18 fn. 21; Talbert 2000, p. 1272.

¹⁹ Proc. Aed. III.5.15.

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Fig. 2: Erzurum Castle



Fig. 3: Erzurum Castle

Procopius next mentioned a settlement called Tzoumina (Τζούμιννα), in about 3 miles distance from Bizana, and stated that Iustinianus had a city built there because of its convenient location. It was recorded that the name of Tzoumina, which was an extremely strategic site, was later changed to “Iustinianapolis” respecting the emperor, and the capitol of Armenia Prima was moved there from Theodosiopolis in 536.²⁰

Tzoumina was located at “Cumina/Cimin” in classical Armenia and it is known as the Üzümlü district of Erzincan today.²¹ In the vicinity of Üzümlü, the most suitable location where Procopius described the hilltop that Cumina was built upon was Altntepe, which was the site of one of the principal castle-cities in the region, especially during the time of the Urartians (ca. 861-585 BC)²² (Fig. 1/9). Altntepe Castle was situated about 15 km far from Erzincan, on a 400 m² volcanic area, and on a 60 m hilltop overlooking the Erzincan Plain (Fig. 4). With these geographical features, Altntepe is quite matching with the definition of Procopius.²³



Fig. 4: Altntepe Castle



Fig. 5: Altntepe Church

²⁰ Proc. *Aed.* III.5.15; also see Adontz 1970, pp. 116-117; Hewsen 2003, p. 39.

²¹ Adontz, 1970, p. 116, Sinclair, 1989, p. 274.

²² For the Tzuomina-Altntepe pairing, see Sinclair 1989, 532.

²³ Can 2010, p. 5.

The research carried out in Altntepe, located at a strategic point where trade routes intersect, has revealed that this settlement was inhabited from the Bronze Age until the end of the Middle Ages. Altntepe Castle, with its fortification walls, temple, apadana, chamber tombs, and open-air temple, is located at the westernmost part of the Urartu state.²⁴ However, the remains found in the excavations carried out by Karaosmanoğlu in Altntepe Castle since 2004 have shown that the castle had a forceful period not only in the Urartian period but also in the Late Antiquity.²⁵ The most significant findings from Late Antiquity are the ruins of a church (Fig. 5) and chapels on the eastern slope of the hill. Can,²⁶ dated the Altntepe Church between the 6th and 7th centuries based on the bone analysis of the Late Antiquity tombs discovered at the same site as well as the construction technique and materials of the church (Fig. 6).

Other architectural remains in Altntepe are the walls of Late Antiquity, which caused the destruction of a large part of the Urartian walls.²⁷ These durable fortifications built on the Urartian ruins and surrounding a large area demonstrate that the castle was also used extensively in Late Antiquity (Fig. 7). Building such a grand and valuable structure on such a strategic location must have been a product of both religious and political propaganda works that emerged in the Iustinianus Period. Therefore, with its walls, basilica-type church, chapels, and tomb complexes which are estimated to Late Antiquity, and its proximity to Erzurum, Altntepe is the likeliest location for Procopius' Tzoumina.²⁸



Fig. 6: Altntepe Tombs.



Fig. 7: Altntepe City Walls

After Tzoumina, Procopius documented the castles built in the Tzania²⁹ outside the territory of Armenia. In this context, first he recorded that, Iustinianus built a large and sturdy castle called Horonon (Ὅρονων) at a location where three roads between

²⁴ Korucu 2012, pp. 7-10.

²⁵ Karaosmanoğlu *et al.* 2016, pp. 183-190.

²⁶ Can 2010, 15; also see Karaosmanoğlu *et al.* 2015, p. 120.

²⁷ Karaosmanoğlu *et al.* 2016, pp. 131-134; 2017, pp. 234-239.

²⁸ Can 2010, pp. 11-12.

²⁹ For more information on the Tzani, see Genç 2020.

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Armenia and the Tzania borders met and where there were no castles beforehand. He also stated that, because of its strategic importance as the entrance to Tzania, a commander with the title of "dux" was assigned to the garrison.³⁰

The location of Horonon has yet to be discovered. According to Miller, however, Darucinte,³¹ situated on the ancient route from Satala to Trapezus on the Tabula Peutingeriana, might have been the former location of Horonon.³² This place is in Karakulak, situated within the borders of today's Erzincan province.³³ However, Bryer disagreeing with Darucinte and Horonon match, claimed that Horonon should be located at Salmalasso,³⁴ the next garrison from Darucinte in Tabula Peutingeriana, and Horonon must be the latter name of Salmalasso.³⁵ Although the current location of Salmalasso is not known, Bryer assumed that modern Gelengeç, within the borders of Erzincan province, located at the intersection of Erzincan-Gümüşhane-Bayburt provincial borders, could be the likeliest place.³⁶ Gelengeç is situated at a commanding junction in the north of the historical road network extending from Otlukbeli to Bayburt but existing research have shown no sound evidence of Horonon. Besides, the borders of this region do not correspond to the geographical definition made by Procopius for the Tzani lands.³⁷

Three significant pieces of evidence help defining the location of Horonon. The geographical structure of the Tzania, the Schamalinichon (Σχαμαλινίχων) Church built in the Tzani region, and the existing knowledge identifying Horonon's location on the border between Armenia and Tzania at the junction of three roads. In addition, while defining Tzani region's geography, Procopius reported that Tzani people were scattered from the high plateaus of Trapezus to the inner parts, and their lands were quite mountainous and covered with forests.³⁸ Based on this definition, the current research suggested that the lands inhabited by the Tzanis must be dispersed in an area covering Trabzon and Rize highlands in the north and Gümüşhane and Bayburt highlands in the south. This region is the likeliest area for the location and geographical features given by Procopius.

The second evidence for the location of Tzania and Horonon is the Schamalinichon Church, reported by Procopius as built on the Tzani territory.³⁹ Many researchers have identified the location of this church in the Krom/Kurum Valley, within the borders of Yağlıdere Village, about 60 kilometers north of the centrum of Gümüşhane.⁴⁰ Therefore,

³⁰ Proc. *Aed.* III.6.15-18.

³¹ Tab. Put. Segem. 11.10; Miller 1916, p. 676; also see Talbert 2000, p. 1273.

³² Miller 1916, p. 676; Talbert 2000, p. 1273.

³³ Talbert 2000, p. 1273; For a different view see Manandian 1965, p. 100; Adontz 1970, p. 51.

³⁴ Tab. Put. Segem. 11.10; Miller 1916, p. 676.

³⁵ Bryer and Winfield 1985, p. 35.

³⁶ Bryer and Winfield 1985, p. 35. Talbert 2000, p. 1278.

³⁷ Üngör and Özgül 2016, p. 275; Ceylan and Üngör 2018, pp. 197-198.

³⁸ Proc. *Aed.* III.6.1-7.

³⁹ Proc. *Aed.* III.6. 8-14.

⁴⁰ See Intagliata 2019, p. 432; Erüz and Erbaş 2020, p. 32.

considering its geographical structure and proximity to Schamalinichon, the location of Horonon should be sought in somewhere between Gümüşhane and Bayburt provincial borders. At this point, the third piece of evidence provided by Procopius for the location of Horonon is highly significant, which reads that “this place is between Armenia and Tzania and where three roads meet”. Three important historical routes connect Trabzon to Gümüşhane and Bayburt. One of the junctions where these routes intersect on the Gümüşhane-Bayburt provincial border is Akhisar/Ağcahisar (Fig. 1/5). The castle discovered in Akhisar through the surface surveys complies with Procopius’s description with its location, size, and structure, and eventually, it emerges as an ideal spot for Horonon (Fig. 8, 9).⁴¹ Although no Roman period archaeological material was discovered during the surface surveys in the Akhisar Castle, which looks like to have been a strong medieval castle, future archaeological excavations will reveal much more specific information on this issue.



Fig. 8: Akhisar Castle



Fig. 9: Akhisar Castle

Procopius next mentioned a castle fallen in ruins because of disrepair in an area called Charton (Χαρτόν), about two days away from Horonon, and stated that the emperor restored this castle turning it into a place that could be home to a big population.⁴² Today, modern researchers have located Charton in Aydıntepe, in one of the two districts of Bayburt (Fig. 10).⁴³ Aydıntepe is on the northwest of Bayburt proper, on the slope where the Soğanlı Mountains, which draw the natural border of Trabzon and Bayburt, and a branch of the North Anatolian mountain range meet the plains (Fig. 1/7).⁴⁴

The first reason why Charton was located in Aydıntepe is of toponymic nature. Aydıntepe was known as “Hart” in ancient times, a name which can be obviously related to Charton.⁴⁵ The strategic location of the place supports this assumption. Aydıntepe is located at the junction of historical roads connecting Trabzon to interior regions.⁴⁶ One

⁴¹ Emir 2020, pp. 6-7; for a similar view, see Erüz and Erbaş 2012, p. 40.

⁴² Proc. *Aed.* III. 6. 18-19.

⁴³ Bryer and Winfield 1985, pp. 17, 28, 49; Sinclair 1989, p. 261; Talbert 2000, p. 1230.

⁴⁴ Çiğdem 2013, p. 66.

⁴⁵ Intagliata 2019, p. 432.

⁴⁶ Emir 2020, pp. 1-22.

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of these historical routes is called the “Karakaban Road”, also known as the “Anabasis Road”. This road originates from Trabzon, reaches Karakaban Mountains via Maçka-Hortokop (Gizenenica)-Naldöken-Meşeiçi direction, and then reaches Kolat Strait (Bylae), known as “Pontos Gates”. From here, one branch of the road goes down to Gümüşhane, while the other branch reaches Aydıntepe from the direction of Anzarya Hanları and Deve Boynu (Fig. 1/C).⁴⁷ Another historical route to Aydıntepe beginning from Araklı Harbor reaches Kostan Mountains via Çatak-Yağmurdere. From here on, one branch joins Sadak (Satala) via Arzular-Tekke, Kelkit, and another branch is connected to the Aydıntepe-Bayburt road (Fig. 1/A).⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, the existence of these roads from Aydıntepe to Trabzon must have created the need to build a castle in this area where the Hart Plains and high mountains meet.



Fig. 10: Aydıntepe Castle



Fig. 11: Aydıntepe Underground System

Other evidences supporting the Aydıntepe-Charton correspondence are archaeological findings. Many structures and archaeological materials regarded as belonging to Late Antiquity have been discovered both in Hart plains and in and around the Aydıntepe Castle.⁴⁹ The strongest evidence was the abundance of Late Antiquity pottery excavated from the Aydıntepe mound. In addition, a square tomb with a barrel vault was found in an area near the hill where the castle was situated. This plan typology is common among the Early Christian tombs called *hypogea*. In the tomb, destroyed by illegal excavations in the past, a skeleton and a piece of stone (0.2 m x 0.2 m) inscribed “TPONE” and considered to belonging to Late Antiquity, were unearthed.⁵⁰ Findings from other tomb excavations in and around Aydıntepe between 1989 and 1991 also revealed that the region was intensely inhabited in Late Antiquity.⁵¹ Apart from these

⁴⁷ Bryer and Winfield 1985, p. 48.

⁴⁸ Emir 2020, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Çiğdem, 2013: 67-68.

⁵⁰ Uslu, 1980: 66-67; ayrıca bkz. Sinclair, 1989 II: 261-262

⁵¹ Özkorucuklu, 1992: 237-238; 1993: 103-127.

archaeological findings, an underground system was also discovered in Aydıntepe.⁵² The excavations made in this system of many rooms and tunnels and the pottery collected during the recent surface survey witnessed a dense settlement in the area in Late Antiquity (Fig. 11, 12, 13).⁵³ All these findings demonstrate that Aydıntepe is the likeliest match in the region corresponding to Charton.



Fig. 12: Aydıntepe Ceramic Samples



Fig. 13: Aydıntepe Ceramic Samples

Procopius recorded that further of the east of Charton, there was a steep valley towards the north, and a castle was built there, named Barchon (Βαρχών).⁵⁴ Based on the Charton-Aydıntepe match, the most suitable location for this description of Procopius is Koyaklar Tepe Castle, located within the borders of Adabaşı Village, approximately 18 km northeast of Bayburt proper. The fortification walls of this castle, which were built on a steep and rocky hill overlooking the Düzüker Plains, 3 km west of Adabaşı Village, can be partially traced at the foundation level (Fig. 14, 15). This slightly graded land on the riverbanks is protected by the river on the west side, and by rocky cliffs and a hill crest on the northern and eastern sides.



Fig. 14: Koyaklar Hill Castle

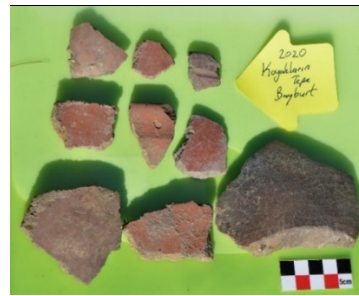


Fig. 15: Koyaklar Ceramic Samples

⁵² Erkmen, 1999: 313 vd; Ünsal 2006: 191-192

⁵³ Çiğdem, 2013: 68 vd; ayrıca bkz. Ünsal 2006: 192.

⁵⁴ Proc. Aed. III. 6. 20.

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Koyaklar Tepe/Adabaşı Castle is located in the borderland between Trabzon and Bayburt Provinces and is very close to the historical route from Trabzon to Aydıntepe.⁵⁵ On this route, Sürmene-Kava Plain-Aşot-Limansuyu-Aydıntepe road holds the shortest distance from Trabzon to Bayburt and Erzurum. The travelers who came to the region in the 19th century declared that the road mentioned was a busy road used by the locals until the early 20th century.⁵⁶ During archaeological surface surveys we conducted in the region, we found a 1 m height milestone, the lower part of which was mostly covered with soil, approximately 200 m south of the castle, close to the Koyaklar Hill (Fig. 16). This milestone, which possibly belonged to the Ottoman Period, was recorded as supporting evidence for the road's active use in those times.



Fig. 16: Adabaşı Milestone

Another significant piece of information about the Barchon Castle is Procopius's mention about the local people called *Okeniteli Tzanoi*, who lived on the foothills just beyond this castle.⁵⁷ In par with the location stated by Procopius, in the north of Koyaklar Tepe, where we have located the Barchon Castle, this region behind the mountains, is today known as the Çaykara District of Trabzon City. This place was called "Ogene/Okene" (اوگنه) in the Ottoman cadastral record books dated 1583 and the Population Registers of 1834-1846.⁵⁸ This name is still used today as "Lower and Upper Ogene (Aşağı ve Yukarı Ögene)" (Fig. 1). Although the lack of archaeological data

⁵⁵ Emir 2012, p. 3 ff.

⁵⁶ Erüz and Erbaş 2012, pp. 48-50.

⁵⁷ Proc. *Aed.* III.6.21.

⁵⁸ Tuncer 2017, pp. 222, 252; Öztürk 2005, pp. 902-903.

proves difficult to establish a relationship between the villages of Okenite *and* Ogene, the toponymic similarity makes it possible to posit this claim. Based on the Okenite-Ogene toponym and the Ogene's strategic location and roads, the Charton-Aydıntepe match and Barchon-Koyaklar Tepe/Adabaşı match proves highly reliable. Therefore, the likeliest spot for the location Barchon Castle appears as the Koyaklar Tepe Castle.

After providing information about the Barchon Castle, Procopius mentioned a place called Cena (Κενά) just behind the hills beyond the plains where Charton is located, and a castle named Sisilissôn (Σισιλισσῶν) to the west of this place. He stated that this abandoned castle was repaired during the Justinianus period and turned into a Roman military garrison like many other castles.⁵⁹ Behind the hills to the west of Aydıntepe, where Charton was located through our surface surveys, we can propose some castles that could be the Castle of Sisilissôn. Among these, Korgan Castle, also mentioned by Procopius, is on the mountain range about 2 km southeast of Akşar Village in Bayburt. It appears as a more likely spot than the others, considering the common criteria such as distance from other castles, location, structure, and the number of medieval age artifacts (Fig. 1/6). This castle extends from north to south on a 21x35 m land built on an approximately 100 m high natural hill is at a point overlooking the plains. At the foundation level, the remains of stone masonry mortarless walls, sometimes cyclopean, can be seen (Fig. 17). Late-period ceramic samples were also found in the area (Fig. 18).⁶⁰ All these signs imply that Korgan Castle is a notable alternative for the location of Sisilissôn castle.



Fig. 17: Korgan Castle



Fig. 18: Korgan Ceramic Samples

Procopius mentions that a large castle named Bourgousnoes (Βουργουσνόης), also known as Longinos' Encampment (Λογγίνου φουσαῖτον) by the locals, was built to the

⁵⁹ Proc. *Aed.* III. 6. 22.

⁶⁰ Çiğdem *et al.* 2020, p. 141

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northwest of Sisilissôn Castle. He stated that in ancient times, the Roman general Longinus set up headquarters there when he went on an expedition against the Tzanis, and this place was called Longinos's Encampment.⁶¹

One of the suggested locations for the Bourgousnoes Castle is the Zindanlar Arazı/Murathanoğulları archeological site, which is at the junction of the Harşit and Yağmurdere streams in Gümüşhane, close to the Bayburt provincial border.⁶² This area is at a strategic point where the summer routes from Trabzon intersect. Providing information about the region, Bryer and Winfield stated that the castle found here had the characteristics of a small but regular Roman headquarters which were frequently encountered elsewhere in terms of their plans and layouts but very rare in this region. Based on this assumption, Winfield matched this place with the Encampment of Longinus, namely Bourgousnoes, albeit skeptically.⁶³ During our investigations in the Zindanlar Arazı/Murathanoğulları site, we could not identify a castle structure matched with Bourgousnoes, and no archaeological findings dated to the Late Antiquity in this region. Therefore, our suggestion for Bourgousnoes is Kov Castle, located 22 km southeast of Gümüşhane city center and 6 km north of the Gümüşhane-Erzincan highway (Fig. 1/4).⁶⁴ The east-west extension of the northern facade of this castle, built on 130 m-height bedrock, is 70 meters. This rectangular castle walls are supported by angular, round and triangular bastions. The castle's outer walls are 1.50 m thick, and the interior walls are 0.90 m thick (Fig. 19, 20). Based on the building materials and architectural features, Bryer and Winfield suggested that this building was a medieval castle⁶⁵ because numerous medieval and recent-era pottery fragments were found during the archaeological surface studies inside and around the castle.⁶⁶ In addition to its location and structure, Kov Castle matches with the route we have identified. As Procopius mentioned, it was located in the northwest of Sisilissôn, with which located the Korgan Castle. Procopius also mentioned that Justinianus had two castles built near this place, one of which was called Schamalinichon (Σχαμαλινίχων) and the other was called Tzanzacon (Τζανζάκων).⁶⁷ Today numerous researchers agree that Tzanzacon matches Canca, located on a rocky hill about 2 km northwest of Gümüşhane.⁶⁸ This makes the Kov Castle, which is about 14 km east of Canca, even a more likelier structure to be Bourgousnoes. In addition, Kov Castle's location is close to the intersection of Gümüşhane and Erzincan provinces on the ancient route from Trapezus to Satala, as

⁶¹ Proc. *Aed.* III.6.23-24.

⁶² Sinclair 1989, p. 133.

⁶³ Bryer and Winfield 1985, pp. 311-312; Intagliate (2019, p. 431) states that interpreting this archeological site as a fortress and its association with Bourgousneos are meaningful but states that there is no enough data to use more precise statements here.

⁶⁴ Sinclair 1989, p. 147.

⁶⁵ Bryer and Winfield 1985, p. 31.

⁶⁶ Çiğdem 2012, p. 74.

⁶⁷ Proc. *Aed.* III.6.26.

⁶⁸ Bryer and Winfield 1985, pp. 309-310; Sinclair 1989, p. 124; Talbert 2000, p. 1237.

stated in *Tabula Putungeneria* (Fig. 1/B).⁶⁹ Even though Kov Castle is a likely alternative for *Bourgousnoes* due to its strategic location, it also corresponds with *Saloneninca*, one of the milestones in *Tabula Putungeneria*. It is a fact, however, that more systematic archaeological excavations here to be made in order to reach more precise conclusions about the Kov Castle.



Fig. 19: Kov Castle



Fig. 20: Kov Castle

Canca Castle, which several researchers have presumed that was *Tzanzacon* mentioned by Procopius, is located in a strategic place like other castles. This place is on the main road from Trabzon to interior regions (Fig. 1/2).⁷⁰ The tools of toponymy was used in locating this place. In addition, the fact that this castle has a medieval structure implies that it was dated to the 14th century together with the other castles (Kov Castle and Keçi Castle) (Fig. 21, 22).⁷¹ The castle consisted of three successive sections in the east-west direction, and its perimeter defense was reinforced with 1.50 m thick fortification walls. The castle entrance is from the west, and beyond the first fortification wall there is a small area. In the northern corner of this area, there is a small chapel situated on the rocks. On the east side of the castle, there was a double-decked, 4.20x3.00 m building. The frescoes inside demonstrate that this building was also a chapel with a single nave. Most of the chapel walls have been destroyed but the surviving parts have traces of fresco paintings, which possibly depicted Christian saints.⁷² Although the ruins of this stone castle reveal that the place has been inhabited since the middle ages,⁷³ the strongest evidence in determining the time period of these buildings lie in the fact that these two 13th-14th century chapels have structural stylistic features.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Tab. Peut. segm. 10.2-5; also see Miller 1916, p. 682; Bryer and Winfield 1985, pp. 311-312; Talbert 2000, p. 1233; Mitford 2018, pp. 355-356; Doğancı 2020, p. 143; Emir 2020, p. 17.

⁷⁰ Erüz and Erbaş 2012, p. 32.

⁷¹ Bryer and Winfield 1985, p. 310.

⁷² Özkan and Yurttaş 2012, p. 24.

⁷³ Çiğdem 2012, pp. 70-71.

⁷⁴ Bryer and Winfield 1985, pp. 309-310; also see Sinclair 1989, pp. 133-134.

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Fig. 21: Canca Castle



Fig. 22: Canca Castle

The location of Schamalinichon Castle is highly controversial. Bryer and Winfield argued that it was in Leri i.e. today's Kabaköy, due to the existence of a church there from the 6th century.⁷⁵ This location, however, is quite far from Canca Castle, which Bryer and Winfield associated with Tzanzacon. In addition, Howard-Johnston⁷⁶ proved this match wrong, stating that the church there was of Armenian origin and the place being too small for a establishing a Roman military facility. Notwithstanding, Krom Valley seems like a much better alternative for the castle's location (Fig. 1/3).⁷⁷ because Kipert's map, Karte von Kleinasien, situated a village named "Schamanandon" in this region.⁷⁸ Today, this region is known as "Şamanlı", and there is a church named "Şamanlı" in the same place (Fig. 23, 24).⁷⁹

The main supporting evidence for Chrome Valley appears as the likeliest area for Schamalinichon's place comes from toponymy. The toponymy of Schamalinichon-Schamanandon-Şamanlı is quite remarkable. In addition, this region is very close to the Canca Castle, which we assume Tzanzacon was located at and it is also on the route that Procopius recorded in his work. Furthermore, as well as over 15 churches survived to this day in the Chrome valley, there are historical structures such as castles, inns, and caravanserais in the region.⁸⁰ The presence of these structures demonstrate that the region was an important place of settlement in the past.

⁷⁵ Bryer and Winfield 1985: 313; Kilise hakkında daha fazla bilgi için bkz. Yılmaz 2015: 131.

⁷⁶ Howard-Johnston 2006: 225 fn. 12

⁷⁷ Intagliate 2019:432.

⁷⁸ Kiepert, 1904-1907.

⁷⁹ Özkan 2003, p. 118.

⁸⁰ Özkan and Yurttaş 2012, pp. 2 ff; Erüz and Erbaş 2012, p. 32.



Fig. 23: Krom Valley



Fig. 24: Krom Valley

Another significant piece of information on Schamalinichon's location came from Procopius' record: "Located behind this hometown is Trapezous on the Black Sea coast".⁸¹ The Chrome Valley, where we consider Schamalinichons was situated, is close by the foothills of the mountains beneath Trabzon. This location is on both summer and winter routes that connect Trabzon to the hinterland. The summer route that originates from the Trabzon Harbor continues to South along the Değirmendere (Pyxites) Valley and reaches Maçka (AD Vicesimum, Dikaisimon, Magnana). Then, the road arrives at Kararaban Mountains via Hortokop (Gizenenica?)-Naldöken-Meşeiçi direction and then reaches the Kolat Strait (Bylae?). From there, while an auxiliary road goes down to Canca (Tzanzacon?) via Yağlıdere (Istavri/Stavros), and another road descends to the Krom Valley via İmera-Tefil from the east (Fig. 1/B).⁸² This path is also consistent with the military route in *Tabula Peutingeriana*,⁸³ a significant source of Roman period paved roads and milestones, and it represents one of the routes that Xenophon might have used to reach Trabzon.⁸⁴ In addition, Mitford argued that Roman general Corbulo transferred the supplies of the Armenia expedition, which he received from the Trapezous Port in 58 AD, through this route, and again, Roman Emperor Hadrianus could have reached Trapezus by using the same course, via Melitene (Malatya) and Satala during his eastern journey between 128-132 AD.⁸⁵ Some significant Roman artifacts have been identified in the excavations carried out on this road, which was repeatedly emphasized in the works of travelers⁸⁶ who came to the region, especially in the 19th century. Late Roman brick fragments found in the Zindanlar Arazi and Hortokop castles and pillars of the Bağdat Bridge are just a few samples of these findings.⁸⁷ The route of the defense structures,

⁸¹ Proc. *Aed.* III.7.1.

⁸² Erüz and Erbaş 2012, pp. 48-49.

⁸³ Miller 1916, p. 681; Mitford 2018, p. 349. For an evaluation on the subject, see Emir 2012.

⁸⁴ Mitford 2000, p. 128; Köse 2013; pp. 19 ff; Erüz and Erbaş 2012, p. 23.

⁸⁵ Mitford 2018, p. 349.

⁸⁶ Southgate 1840, pp. 157-164; Blau 1858, pp. 214-215; Taylor 1868, pp. 287-289; Curtis 1911, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁷ Mitford 2018, p. 349.

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which we identified based on the statements of Procopius, is compatible with this historical summer road from Aydıntepe onwards. The likeliest location for Schamalinichon seem to be the Krom valley considering all these findings.

Conclusion

In this study, we tried to identify the locations of the Iustinianus period defensive structures spread between Erzurum and Trabzon based on ancient sources, archaeological data from surface surveys, and toponymy. Given the current situation, we observed that this location identification process is problematic in practice. There are not sufficient contemporary secondary sources that would confirm each others' identification. Among the limited number of written sources available, the most prominent one is *De Aedificiis* of Procopius. Although Procopius described the defensive structures built in the region during the Iustinianus period and identified their locations, this is insufficient to confirm these structures' exact locations. Moreover, almost no written records were found at the castles and watchtowers of the region to support Procopius.

In an effort to compensate the inadequacy of the ancient sources we utilized the results of the surface surveys and their archaeological findings. To this end, we marked the most approximate locations of the castles and settlements in the region mentioned by Procopius. In identifying these structures, the route defined by Procopius was taken as the criterion. However, the presence of many castles and watchtowers on the route identified in the region and the absence of a distinctive structural feature that can distinguish them from each other left us in a difficult position to date these structures. Except for Altintepe, Aydıntepe, and Erzurum Castles, no systematic archaeological research was conducted about the location of these places which we have suggested for the defensive structure locations that Procopius described. This caused problems in identifying the construction dates of the buildings. Nevertheless, by compiling the analysis of the ancient sources by other researchers, and the findings of the surface surveys that both we and other researchers conducted we were able to determine a certain route on which the defense strongholds identified by Procopius. In this context, Erzurum for Theodosiopolis, Altintepe for Tzoumina, Ağcahisar for Horonon, Aydıntepe for Charton, Adabaşı for Barchon, Akşar for Silission, Kov for Bourgousnoes, Canca for Tzanzacon and Krom for Schamalinichon appear as the likeliest locations. Among these locations, while there was consensus on the locations of Erzurum, Aydıntepe, Canca, and Krom in previous studies, the other locations that we identified were not mentioned. While identifying these possible locations, our conclusions relied on Procopius' descriptions, the strategic positions and the architectural features of the buildings and archeological findings. . We also utilized toponymic analysis. The matching of Charton-Hart, Tzanzacon-Canca, Schamalinichon-Schamanandon that were put forward in previous studies was confirmed by our toponymic analysis. Uniquely enough, Ökeniti-Ögene toponymy was proposed for the first time in our study.

Evaluating all the findings, we reach the conclusion that the reconstruction activities during the Iustianus era in the region was directed towards security of the borderlands.

These borderlands were known as the lands that the Roman Empire could not establish full political and cultural hegemony, instead dominated by the local power bases. The estimated locations of the strongholds and garrisons were at the strategic junctions of important trade routes. By reinforcing these strongholds and garrisons Iustianus' objective was first to consolidate the military and political authority of the Roman Empire at the borderlands in its campaigns toward the Sassanids, and second to ensure the security of the trade routes by controlling the crossroads. It should also be taken into account that new studies to be carried out in the region may yield different results regarding the settlement areas and castles in question. Last but not least, this study does not claim to have said the final word on this issue, which future studies can reach different conclusions with new findings.

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