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THE PONTUS-CAUCASIAN FRONTIER: THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE FORTIFICATION SYSTEM IN THE SOUTHEASTERN BLACK SEA LITTORAL¹

Abstract: The article is a review of Roman and Byzantine fortifications in the southeastern Black Sea littoral: the forts of Yücehisar and Theodoriada from the times of Justinian, the Roman and early Byzantine forts of Eskipazar, Canayer, Araklı, Kalecik and Trapezus, and the medieval fortifications built by the Byzantines and Trebizondians: Akçakale, Gelida Kalesi, Çesmeönü Kalesi and Eynesil Kalesi.

Keywords: Pontus, Caucasus, frontier, Roman and Byzantine fortifications

The Caucasus or Pontic-Caucasus border, established in the 70s CE, was intended to strengthen Rome's position in the South Caucasus and take better control of the North Caucasus. Earlier, under Nero, who prioritized an aggressive foreign policy over Augustus' domestic actions, the system of client kingdoms was disrupted. The Kingdom of Pontus was abolished and, together with Colchis, became the province of Pontus Polemoniacus in 63 CE (Suet. *Ner.* 18). Under the Flavian emperors Vespasian and Titus imperial authority in the region was entrenched. There were clear symptoms of a new wave of Roman expansionist foreign policy toward the East. The local population resisted Roman aggression, e.g. the people of Trapezus who rose against Rome in 69 CE (Tac. *Hist.* 3.47–48). The situation in the central part of Colchis was quite tense. The Alani problem was serious, and the kingdom of Iberia (in eastern Georgia) was methodically making inroads into the coastal zone. Rome had effectively lost Armenia, and there was an urgent need to concentrate more troops on the border with Maior Armenia, Syria, and along the entire eastern border (Tac. *Ann.* 2.6, *Hist.* 3.47; Joseph. *BJ* 7.220–222, 230–233; Suet. *Ner.* 18, *Vesp.* 8.4). This was followed by the establishment of strong military bases: Trapezus, Hissolimén/Hyssiporto, Apsarus, Phasis, Sebastopolis and Pityus.²

The site of Apsarus (modern Gonio) has been the main focus of archaeological research in Georgia. Meanwhile, there has been ongoing research, ever since 2002 also in the northeastern part of Turkey [Fig. 1]. The body of evidence, in terms of both architecture and material culture, re-

¹ This work was supported by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (SRNSF), grant no. 217910, title: "Georgian cultural heritage monuments protected in the central part of historical Chaneti (fortifications, churches, communication and domestic architecture)".

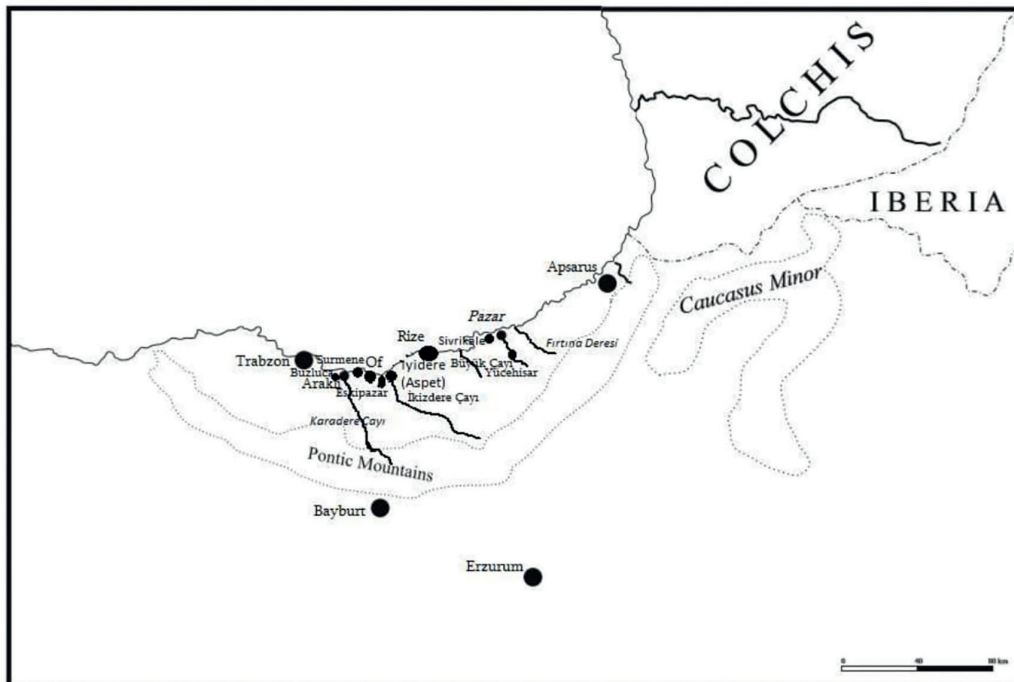
² MELIKISHVILI 1959, pp. 364–377; 1970, pp. 544–548; LEKVINADZE 1969, pp. 75–93; MITFORD 1977, p. 509;

CROW 1986, p. 77; SPEIDEL 1986, pp. 657–660; BRAUND 1986, pp. 31–49; 1994, pp. 39–44, 152–169; KIGURADZE *et alii* 1987, pp. 88–92; LORDKIPANIDZE 1989, pp. 347–348; GREGORY 1997, pp. 11–34; TODUA 2003, pp. 12–17; GAMKRELIDZE, TODUA 2006, p. 60; KAKHIDZE 2008, pp. 299–300.

sulting from this research is significant. In light of the extensive written sources that are available, comparative studies have led to important conclusions. The following review of the fortifications in the southeastern Black Sea littoral follows a geographical order starting from the east.



a



b

Fig. 1: a. The eastern part of the Mediterranean area; b. The southeastern shores of the Black Sea with the location of sites discussed in the text (map and graphics by M. Uzunadze)

The first site to be considered is the **Yücehisar fort**. It lies some 7 km inland from the city of Pazar, which is situated at the mouth of the large Hemşin Dere river. The fort overlooks the Fırtına river valley [Figs. 2–3]. The site is known to the local population as Kise Kale or simply Cihar. Anthony Bryer and David Winfield call it Jikhar Kale. They also note a destroyed church on

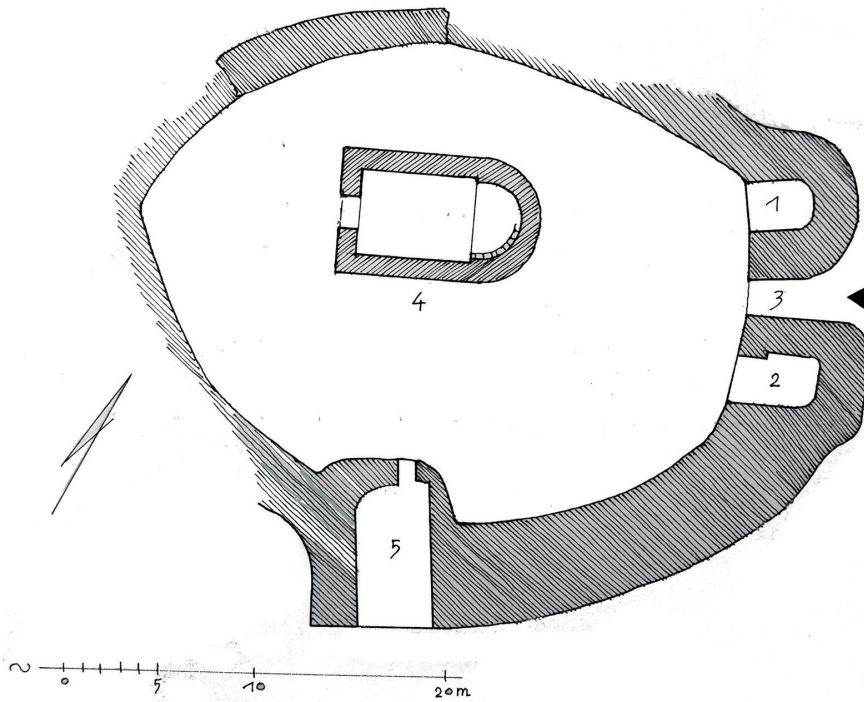


Fig. 2. The fort of Yücehisar (graphics by G. Kipiani)



Fig. 3. The fort of Yücehisar (photo by G. Dumbadze)

a hill opposite the fort to the northwest.³ The only certain information about this fort to be found in historical sources is that in the fifteenth century, when the Ottomans first invaded the area, it was in the realm of one Arkhakil, chief of the Hemshi tribe, who also ruled over Zil Kale, Varoş and, perhaps, Athenai (modern Pazar).⁴ There is some reason to think that it may be the Lamgo to Longini Fossatum or Burgus Novus mentioned by Procopius (*Aed.* 3.6.24–26). The identification is still under question, with Bryer and Winfield⁵ locating it in Zindanlar Araz, ancient Chaldea (modern Gümüşhane, north of Trabzon) and Nicholas Adontz placing it further east, closer to the Pontus-Caucasus frontier.⁶

The fort was seemingly rebuilt a number of times. There was an earlier settlement here, but the finds, mostly domestic pottery wares and fragments of Solen-type grooved tiles, are typical of an early Byzantine horizon in the sixth century CE when the fort (and church) were built here to control the coastal strip as well as roads to Erzurum and İspir. Arched bridges, which have survived to the present day, stand in proof.

The port of Kordilon lay — according to the ancient sources (Plin. HN 6.4 [11]; Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.10; Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 39) — east of the Büyük Çayı river (formerly Kibledağı Deresi, ancient Adineos) and after Çayeli (formerly Maparva). This must correspond to Sivrikale, called earlier Tordovat, located on Cape Laroz, near Pazar. It should be the Theodoriada of Justinian's time, the toponym being associated with the Tzani-born⁷ commander Theodore, whose claim to fame was his victorious command of battles against the Persians and Misimianoi (a northern Colchian tribe) in 553–555, and who in 556 suppressed an anti-Byzantine rebellion staged by his Tzani compatriots (*Agath. Hist.* 5.1). Locally, it is referred to as the Genuese Fort, Rum Kale, Kalecik and Zileghi Kale. The main part of the fort was destroyed in 1957 during road construction, leaving little beyond part of the south wall [Fig. 4] of the central tower and the outer fortifications.⁸ The state of preservation is even worse today.



Fig. 4. Remains of the Tordovat fort (photo by G. Dumbadze)

³ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 340 (Section XXVI).

⁴ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 337 (Section XXVI).

⁵ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, pp. 311–312 (Section XXII).

⁶ ADONTZ 1970, p. 50.

⁷ Tzani or modern Lazi are the local population of the southeastern Black Sea region; they speak the western Georgian or Zanian language.

⁸ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 334 (Section XXVI).

The **Eskipazar** fort is located between the rivers İkipidere Çayı (formerly İyi Dere, ancient Kalos Potamos) and Baltacı (ancient Kiphalos), in the eastern district of Eskipazar. The ruins of this fort [Fig. 5] are said to correspond to the Καλή παρεμβολή mentioned by an anonymous *periplus* (Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 39). Interestingly, Arrian mentions Καλὸς ποταμός but says nothing about a fort in that location (Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 8). The anonymous author of the *Periplus* is known to have recorded in a reliable way the realities of his time without slavishly repeating his sources word for word.

The fortification stands on a flat terrace at the far end of the slope south of the building of a high school in Eskipazar. It appears to be of fairly early date, presumably from late antiquity, although it may have also housed a Roman garrison earlier on.

The fort at **Canayer** [Fig. 6] overlooks the cities of Araklı and Sürmene. It is located 3 km from the seashore, in the village of Buzluca. Local inhabitants know it under the name of Zanayer. It has been claimed to be the Hissolimen/Hissoporto of the ancient sources, making it thus a late first century CE fortification akin to Apsarus.⁹



Fig. 5. Remains of the Eskipazar fort (photo by G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 6. Remains of the Canayer fort (photo by G. Dumbadze)

⁹ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, pp. 328–329 (Section XXIV); GREGORY 1997, pp. 28–30.

From the looks of it, Canayer is apparently a typical Roman fort that seems to have survived into later times. It is not to be excluded that it was actually built later as a back-up for the “real” Hissoporto” (see the fort of Araklı below). Of interest in this regard is the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (X 3), which notes Caena as well as Kaini Paraolid of the “Martyrdom of Orentius”, dated to the time of Diocletian,¹⁰ alongside Καινή παρεμβολή (new camps) garrisoned by the Cohors I Lepidiana in the late fourth century CE and early fifth (*Notitia Dignitatum* Or. 38). Niko Lomouri believes that Καινή παρεμβολή should be sought somewhere between Trabzon and Rize, but David Braund and Thomas Sinclair are probably more correct to place this location at the site of Canayer.¹¹

The location of **Araklı**, in a position to control access to the city of Bayburt located inland and the Chorokhi river flowing down the Kara Dere (ancient Hissos) valley, made it of utmost strategic importance for the Byzantines during their conflict with the Tzani people in the sixth and seventh centuries CE and again between 949 and 1080, when they recaptured Theodopolis (Erzerum) from the Arabs before losing it to the Seljuks. During the Ottoman period, it became an important thoroughway for the three cities of the so-called triangle of cities: Batumi, Trabzon and Bayburt.¹²

This fort is believed to be the Hissoporto fort that was manned by a cohort and 20 horsemen in the second century CE (Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 4 & 8). According to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, an Apuleia civium Romanorum cohort served there as early as 406–408 CE (Or. 38). The *Itinerarium Antonini* also mentions Hissolimen as Nisilimen (col. 648, 652, 681), while the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (X 3) refers to Hisileme. Hissoporto is also mentioned alongside Apsarus, Phasis and Sebastopolis as one of the stops on the missionary journey of the Apostle St Andrew.¹³

According to the anonymous *Periplus* (38), Hissolimen/Hissoporto was already blocked then by ancient Susarmia. The same is implied in the *Martyrdom of Orentius*¹⁴ and by Procopius of Caesarea (*Bella* 8.2.16). However, in the seventh-century *Chronicles* of Eusebius, Kausolimen is mentioned again (can. P. 190). Most likely, Hissolimen/Hissoporto and Susarmia, modern-day Sürmene, are different localities. It is possible that Hissolimen was renamed Heraclea (from which comes the Turkish Araklı) by the emperor Heraclius in tribute to his newborn son, during the Caucasus campaign of 622–623.¹⁵

The remains of the fort are located in the center of the city, near the sea and on the bank of the Kara Dere River, between modern high-rise residential buildings occupying the inner space of the complex [Fig. 7]. Ancient wall foundations and associated habitational levels are scattered all over the area.

On the right side of the road leading from Araklı to Trabzon, just outside the city, at the end of the Araklı Burnu cape which juts out into the sea, lies the fort of **Kalecik** [Fig. 8]. It is sometimes called locally Ciho or Aha Kale.

While it may have already existed in Roman times, it was definitely an early Byzantine fortification and continued to exist in medieval times, when, according to Bryer and Winfield, it replaced the Canayer fort.¹⁶ To be more precise, it was incorporated into a network of defenses consisting of the Araklı fort, the nearby Hissolimen/Hissoporto from the first and second centuries CE, and the slightly later Canayer located some 3 km inland, in the area of the village of Buzluca. Its favorable location on a peninsula makes Kalecik a good candidate for a harbor, with Araklı and Canayer serving as the main localities for garrisoning units of legionaries.

¹⁰ KEKELIDZE 1957, p. 301.

¹¹ TALBERT (ed.) 2000, p. 87.

¹² BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 324 (Section XXIV).

¹³ KHALVASHI 2011, pp. 10–19.

¹⁴ KEKELIDZE 1957, pp. 300, 319.

¹⁵ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, pp. 327, 329 (Section XXIV); SINCLAIR 1989, p. 150.

¹⁶ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 328 (Section XXIV).



Fig. 7. Remains of the Arakli fort (photo by G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 8. The fort of Kalecik (photo by G. Dumbadze)

Trapezus, modern-day Trabzon, played an important role in the Black Sea region due to its geographical location. For the Romans it became an important transit point, the first stop en route to Armenia, Syria and the Euphrates. Under Vespasian new roads were built, leading inland to Persia and Mesopotamia, and under Hadrian Trapezus became the capital of the province and the main naval port for the Black Sea fleet, centralizing the logistics of army supplies for Roman troops in the Black Sea region.

The old city fortifications can still be seen today.¹⁷ The fort had three parts. Of these, the upper fort, which collapsed in the seventeenth century, is now built over with multi-storeyed residential houses. Some parts of the western fortifications built by Alex II (1297–1330) during the Trebizond Empire still remain. Ruins of the Roman walls with associated layers from the first and second centuries CE can also be traced.¹⁸

The Roman-period defense wall is very well preserved in the lower fort, which lies in the Iskender Pasha district, one of the most busy in Trabzon today [Figs. 9–10]. The west wall follows the lie of the land, which slopes down to the northwest. There is a rectangular tower in the center of this stretch of the wall, which rises to an average of 8–10 m. The earlier, Roman and the later, medieval construction phases are evident here. The Roman bondwork, which is especially well discernible at the corners of the enclosure wall, consists of horizontal courses of well-dressed slabs. The medieval masonry is not as regular. The wall initially could have reached north all the way to the port, which seems to be in the same location as Hadrian's harbor. Residential houses incorporate part of this wall into their structure, while the rest is in a military zone and hence off-limits to investigations.

West of Trabzon, about 11 km from Cape Yoros¹⁹ and just before reaching the town of Akçaabat (formerly Hermonassa, Platana), there lies **Akçakale**. From a strategic point of view, the position of this fortification is exceptional, allowing it to control the sea as well as a vast land area. It has been identified with Kordyle I,²⁰ a locality first mentioned by Arrian (*Peripl. M. Eux.* 24) and appearing also in later sources (Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.6.6; Anon. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 36; *Tab. Peut.* X 3).

The fort [Figs. 11–13] stands on a hill jutting out into the sea, located to the north of a highway connecting Trabzon and Giresun. It is a rather large structure, which is well adapted to the topography.²¹ Much of it is quite well preserved, so the plan is perfectly legible. The northern wall and part of the western one are in particularly good condition, up to 12–15 m in places; less so the southern and eastern sides. The gate entrance was located at the southern end of the west wall. Two towers are built into the well preserved parts of the enclosure wall, a square one near the northern end of the western wall and a narrow rectangular one slightly off center on the north wall. The northwestern tower was probably a three-storeyed structure, now standing to a maximum height of 12–14 m. It was accessed from the fort through a centrally positioned doorway and each of the floors was reached through a doorway in line with the one in the basement. The second floor had up to seven observation niches and windows. The niches acted also as piers between the storeys.

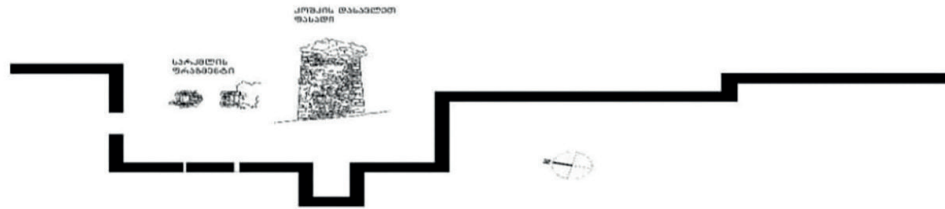
¹⁷ MITFORD 2018, pp. 385–386; MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2019, pp. 20–21.

¹⁸ MITFORD 2018, p. 387.

¹⁹ According to BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, p. 158, and SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105, there was a rectangular Byzantine-period watchtower there. Today, only a fragment of the western wall is preserved, which is built of well-dressed dark basalt in a regular masonry bond, bonded with mortar made of lime, fine sand and crushed ceramics (MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2019, p. 18).

²⁰ *RE* 11, p. 1373, s.v. “Kordyle, 1” [W. RUGE]; BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 158 (Section XVII); SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105. There is another Kordyle to the east, close to Pazar; see: MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2014, pp. 35–36.

²¹ MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2019, pp. 18–20.



ბიზნა მ 1:50
ფორმატი A1

a



b

Fig. 9 a–b. The lower (Roman) walls in Trabzon (graphics by T. Asabishvili, photo by G. Dumbadze)

The other tower is relatively small. The three outer walls are much better preserved, the maximum height averaging between 4 m and 7 m; the inner one is demolished down to the foundations. Well-dressed middle-sized stones in a horizontal masonry bond were used in the construction. Parts of the enclosure wall directly next to the towers are particularly well made using different-size, well-dressed stones of a squared oblong shape. Overall, the enclosure wall is 1 m thick.



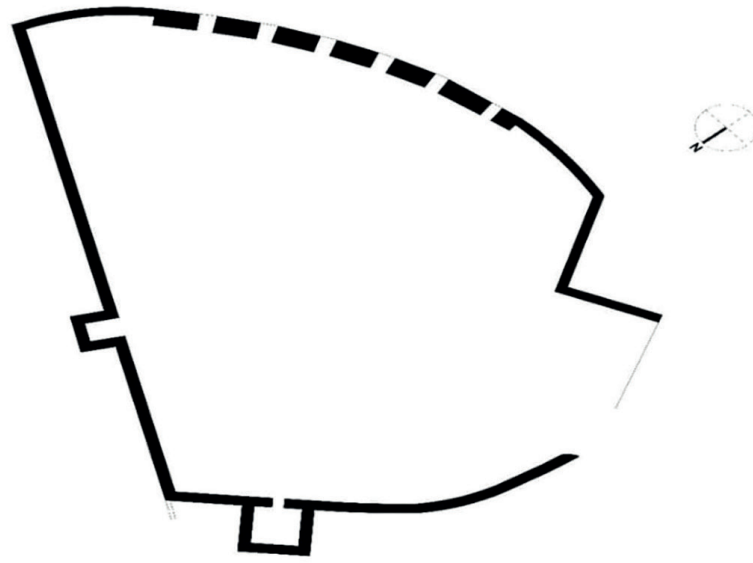
a



b

Fig. 10 a–b. Part of the fortification system at Trabzon (photos by G. Dumbadze)

ახრან-ქალღმის ციხე



ზომის შ 1:200
ფორმატი A1

a



b

Fig. 11 a–b. The fort of Akçakale (graphics by T. Asabishvili, photo by G. Dumbadze)



a



b

Fig. 12 a–b. The fort of Akçakale (photos by G. Dumbadze)



a



b

Fig. 13 a–b. The fort of Akçakale (photos by G. Dumbadze)

Some parts of the walls appear to be of early Byzantine era date, but for the most part, the construction is later in time. However, the surface collection of sherds, which includes a Solen-like roof tile, an amphora and fragments of various vessels, suggests the sixth to seventh centuries CE as the earliest dating for this fort. In recent years, Turkish archaeologists have apparently conducted a small-scale excavation in the northeastern part of the fort.

Gelida/Klita Kalesi lies east of Yalıköy and west of Yoros Cape, about 10 km away from modern Kale Köy, known in antiquity as Makrimanos.²² On the *Digital Map of the Roman Empire*,²³ it is referred to as Kerasous, a colony of Sinope;²⁴ it has been identified with Fol Pazar, the modern Vakfikebir, by some researchers²⁵ and with the modern Giresun by others.²⁶ According to Byzantine sources from the fifth–sixth centuries CE, there were two localities of the name Kerasouses/Kerusouses existing at the same time.²⁷ The site appears to be a purely military fortification,²⁸ this in view of the absence of any urban-related activity in its vicinity. The identification proposed in the *Catalogue of Ancient Ports and Harbours*, the “Ancient World Online” electronic index resource completed in 2016 (ISSN 2156-2253), should be made more precise, placing Kerasous (No. 2731) on the bank of the Kerasoun Dere Su river close to Kirazlik, about 3.5 km west of Yalıköy.²⁹ The Gelida fort would have controlled the approach routes to this settlement.³⁰

Gelida Kalesi is a typical tower fort of relatively small size [Figs. 14–16], located on a rocky crescent-shaped promontory, providing ample space set back from the seashore with access solely from the south. The semicircular bay is conducive to the location of a harbor. Incidentally, the old Giresun bay was well protected at both ends of the crescent, with forts built on rocky promontories: Eynesil Kalesi to the south (see below) and Kale Köy to the north. A small stream flows to the west of the fort, by the road from Vakfikebir to Trabzon.

The original foundations can still be seen, reused for the later fort built on top of them. A curtain wall cut off the promontory. Steps led up to the first terrace inside the southeastern end of the fort. The gate was protected by a small tower on a rectangular plan (2.5 m by 3.2 m). Section A of the western wall is partly preserved for a total distance of 24.10 m, the relatively well preserved original north wall for 22.60 m. The eastern enclosure wall is 12.5 m long and the south one 14 m, in the latter case surviving only as a foundation course. The walls are 1.10 m thick. The inner space they enclose is 22.60 m long by 19 m wide. It is divided into two terraces separated by a transverse wall currently 18.70 m long. There are no confirmed remains of ancient structures, which, however, may be concealed under a layer of slabs laid during “maintenance” works. Stairs led from the first terrace down to the second. Another set of stairs in the extreme northwestern corner of the second terrace led outside and down to the seashore. This postern was guarded by a square tower, three sides of which are still preserved.

The building material used for the construction of the fort consists of middle-sized stones with dressed, flattened sides, set in a horizontal bond. It is not excluded that it was built in the early Byzantine era.³¹

²² http://acikerisim.giresun.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/359/EVL%C4%B0YA%20%C3%87ELB%C4%B0%20SEYAHATNAMES%C4%B0NDEN%20.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y;http://atom.doaks.org/atom/uploads/r/image-collections-and-fieldwork-archives-dumbarton-oaks-research-library-and-collection-2007-present/5/5/55415d-c4a4d0ab466c5293e643a32b9343b35fd5b2119b-2c8a15443468b9c8b4/doaks_icfa_PHBZ001_inventory.pdf; MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2019, pp. 16–18.

²³ <http://dare.ht.lu.se/places/29563.html>.

²⁴ On this site, see KAČARAVA, KVIRKVELIÁ 1991, p. 127.

²⁵ HAMILTON 1842, p. 158; LEPER 1908, p. 314; *RE* 11, coll. 264–265, s.v. “Kerasus” [W. RUGE]; MAKSIMOVA 1956, pp. 72–73; HIND 1969, p. 68.

²⁶ KAČARAVA, KVIRKVELIÁ 1991, p. 127.

²⁷ DRAKOULIS 2012, p. 86.

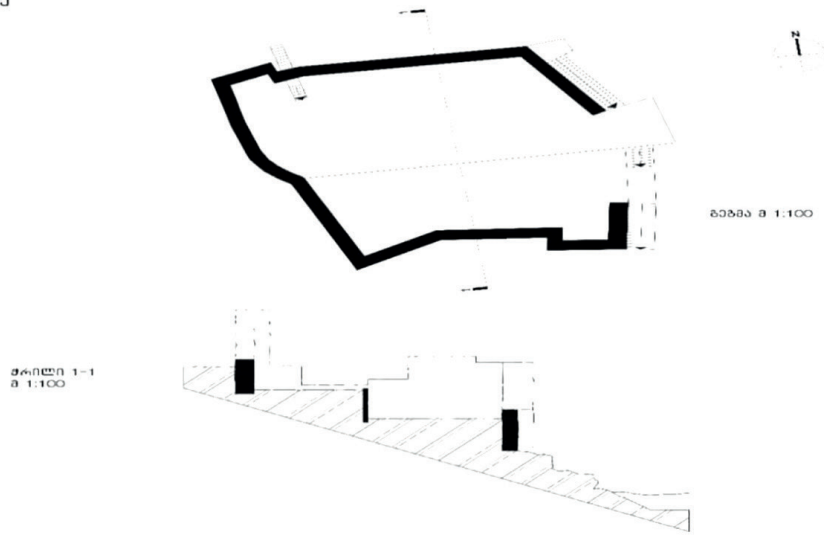
²⁸ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, p. 158 (Section XVII); SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105.

²⁹ <https://www.ancientportsantiques.com/the-catalogue/bosphorus-black-sea/>

³⁰ SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105.

³¹ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, fig. 33 (Section XVIII); SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105.

კალეჟორის სიხე



ფორმატი A1

a



b

Fig. 14 a–b. The fort of Gelida (graphics by T. Asabishvili, photo by G. Dumbadze)



a



b

Fig. 15 a–b. The fort of Gelida (photos by G. Dumbadze)



a



b

Fig. 16 a–b. The fort of Gelida (photos by G. Dumbadze)

Çesmeönü Kalesi is located about 8 km east of Cape Görele. It should be identified with Yavabolu/Yobol, the ancient Libiopolis first mentioned by Pliny (*HN* 6.4 [11]), which has until now been located inaccurately in Vakfikebir or further to the west.³² The AWOL index now positions the Çesmeönü Kalesi in Beşikdüzü Liman.³³ A 2015 digital map of the Roman Empire produced by Lund University in Sweden places Yuvabolu (should be Yavabolu) in place of Çesmeönü,³⁴ but the toponym is in fact about 5 km west of Beşikdüzü.³⁵

The fort is located on a small cape, about 1 km west of the Akhisar river. The fortification is almost completely destroyed, but its remains can still be identified. The walls are 1-m thick, made of rubble bonded with mortar mixed with pebbles and potsherds. Two square towers seem to have flanked the gate. To the east of the cape one finds a roughly oval pit, now filled with pebbles, 2 m deep and with a diameter of 1.5–2.0 m. It may have served as a bin to store grain.

Some authors have suggested that the columns of St Basil's Church originated from Yavabol (Libiopolis?), which would link the latter site to classical times. Çesmeönü Kalesi, however, is dated to the Middle or Late Byzantine era (Empire of Trebizond).³⁶

Eynesil Kalesi is located close to the town of Eynesil. It is identified with the ancient Koralla (Görele), first mentioned by Arrian (*Arr. Peripl. M. Eux.* 24) and repeated in an anonymous *periplus* (*Anon. Peripl. M. Eux.* 36). However, Pauly-Wissowa would place this locality on Görele Cape located roughly 30 km east of the modern town of Görele (ancient Philokalea).³⁷ Forts exist at both Eynesil and Görele,³⁸ and the etymological link between Koralla and Görele is persuasive,³⁹ although Natela Kechakmadze would prefer to connect it with the small settlement of Fol.⁴⁰

The fort at **Görele** [Figs. 17–18] is built on a headland, the old name of which is Koralla, later renamed Görele. A narrow spit of land connects the promontory to the shore. The fort seems to have been a large building, adapted to the topography of the rocky hill site. Apparently destroyed by the Trabzon Pasha in 1811,⁴¹ it was restored, but while some ancient remains were still to be seen before the restoration, the original plan could not be traced. The building material from the early Byzantine period seems to have been roughly dressed flattened slabs of square shape used for the outer faces, the core being filled with cobbles poured with mortar. There is a resemblance to the sixth-century CE walls of Petra-Tsikhisdziri, a site located in southwestern Georgia, close to Batumi.

The restored walls stand high despite the fact that the fort was surrounded by the sea on three sides. Apparently, they were built following the line of the ruined Byzantine walls, but because nothing of the old walls remains, it is impossible to say anything more about their appearance. Square towers seem to have been built against the outer walls. Buildings of different function are found inside the walls, but they are all destroyed or dismantled down to the foundations. On the northwestern side of the fort there was a large water tank shaped like a pithos. East of the tank, a stepped path, still in existence today, descended to the sea.

³² KAÇARAVA, KVIRKVELIÄ 1991, pp. 153–154. See also MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2019, pp. 15–16.

³³ <https://www.ancientportsantiques.com/the-catalogue/bosphorus-black-sea/NB2732.1>.

³⁴ <http://dare.ht.lu.se/places/29563.html>.

³⁵ On this issue see also: <http://www.besikduzu.bel.tr/besikduzu>; <http://www.sanalfotograf.com/besikduzu-kale-guney-kalesi>; <http://ozhanotuzturk.com/2018/01/13/besikduzu-tarihi-trabzon/>.

³⁶ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, pp. 157–158 (Section XVII); SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105.

³⁷ *RE* 11, col. 1373, s.v. “Koralla” [W. RUGE].

³⁸ <https://www.ancientportsantiques.com/the-catalogue/bosphorus-black-sea/NB2733>; MAMULADZE, KAKHIDZE 2019, pp. 13–15.

³⁹ BRYER, WINFIELD 1985, vol. I, pp. 153–159 (Section XVII); SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105.

⁴⁰ KECHAKMADZE 1961, attached map: Fol Pazari situated on the river of Fol Deresi, modern Vakfikebir.

⁴¹ According to the written sources; see SINCLAIR 1989, p. 105.

ძინოსელ კალეს სიხე



a



b

Fig. 17 a–b. The fort at Görele (graphics by T. Asabishvili, photo by G. Dumbadze)



a



b

Fig. 18 a–b. The fort at Görele (photos by G. Dumbadze)

In the southeastern corner of the fortification there is a path carved in the rock leading to a wine cellar, densely overgrown with bushes, standing next to a wine press for crushing grapes, its three walls still preserved.

Interestingly, the rocky seashore in the extreme eastern part of the fort seems to have been preserved in unchanged form to this day. Four fairly deep notches, carved in the rock on an elongated rectangular plan, were observed in the extreme western part of the rock massif. They could have been used for drying fish or for other purposes. A huge water reservoir was carved to the south, its northwestern side built up with additional masonry, which apparently concealed the tank from view.

Towers built on a rectangular and semicircular plan flanked the entrance gate at the end of the access road from the landward side, which was 7–8 m wide.

Recapitulation

In summary, the site of perhaps the greatest importance in the northeastern part of Turkey is the fort at Araklı, the ancient Hissoslimen/Hissiporto, which is persuasively interpreted as a Roman fort, built alongside the fortifications at Canayer and Eskipazar to guard the Pontic-Caucasus border in the period from the first to the fifth centuries CE. Other fortifications, namely, the forts at Yücehisar, Tordovat, Akçakale, Gelida, Çesmeönü and Eynesil, were built at a relatively later date and must reflect Byzantine aspirations to control the area further inland. Kalecik stands separate as a port in both Roman and Byzantine times, and a support base for the Araklı and Canayer forts.

Abbreviations

RE 11 *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. XI, Stuttgart 1922.

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