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THE BEGINNING OF MESSAMBRIA PONTICA*

Abstract: The foundation of Messambria Pontica has been debated for more than a century. Some questions still remain unanswered while some answers need revision due to the developments in research. Among these questions are the date of Messambria's foundation, the composition of its ἄποικοι, the identity of its historical founder, the polis' relations with local Thracian tribes, etc. Recent studies on various topics that concern these questions, including new archaeological evidence, provide some possible interpretations of already known sources. Generally speaking, these interpretations both challenge and confirm some of the ideas that have gained acceptance in the literature. Interpretations discussed in this article concern when the apoikia was founded, what the impact and nature of the ἔποικοι was, what the name of Messambria means, and what its larger tribal environment looked like based on the latest archaeological research.

Keywords: Messambria; foundation; apoikia; epoikoi; city-name

In discussing the beginning of Messambria Pontica, several questions usually come to the foreground: What was the date of its foundation? Was it a continuation of a Thracian settlement? What was the role of the ἔποικοι in the development of Messambria? What was the name of its historical founder? What was the composition of the colonist expedition as well as its relations with the local Thracian tribes? Despite the various type of sources available and decades of the efforts of scholars, some of these questions still

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have only problematic answers. So, the main goal of this contribution is to provide a fresh perspective on some of these problems.

One of the major questions that have been debated in the literature was that of the time of Messambria's foundation (Pl. 1: 1). Dispute on this point is provoked by two main literary sources in which at first glance a discrepancy is observed. According to Herodotus, who is the earliest known source on the subject, the *polis* was founded by a joint expedition of Byzantion and Kalchedon and was composed of citizens who were running away from the advanced Phoenician fleet that helped the Persians to suppress the Ionian Revolt in 493 BC¹ (Danov 1947, 14; Isaac 1986, 249-250). The other source is Pseudo-Skymnos, who links the foundation of Messambria with the Skythian expedition of the Persian king Dareios and attributes it to settlers from Megara and Kalchedon.² As the expedition is dated to 513/512 BC (Boteva-Boyanova 2000, 45; Robu 2014, 312; Zahrnt 2015, 37, 38), modern scholarship assigns Messambria's foundation in general to the end of the 6th century BC (Velkov 1969, 15-16; 1985, 30-31; IGBulg. I², p. 255; Nawotka 1994, 321; Oppermann 2004, 16; Avram *et al.* 2004, 935).

It has been suggested that the evidence provided by Herodotus and Pseudo-Skymnos can be considered both conflicting and complimentary. Thus, in some cases, preference is given to Herodotus' evidence due to its earlier date as well as the reputation of the author (Hind 1998, 138; Isaac 1986, 250). Pseudo-Skymnos is regarded as having confused matters by presenting a later tradition (Isaac 1986, 250). The skepticism regarding Pseudo-Skymnos' reliability for the early history of Messambria is important, but undue. It is now thought that he can be identified with Semos of Delos, and his periplus was probably composed around 120 BC (Boshnakov 2007, 67). It has also been established, though, that his information was based on evidence provided by the local historian Demetrius from Callatis (Velkov 1969, 16; Avram 1996, 291; Oppermann 2004, 8; Boshnakov 2007, 69-71) and therefore Pseudo-Skymnos' text presents a tradition that circulated in the city at the time of Demetrius of Callatis at the earliest, i.e., the 3rd century BC, and at the date of the composition of Pseudo-Skymnos' work at the latest. It is worth noting that Herodotus does not give any details about the foundation of Messambria, and the *polis* is mentioned in another

¹ Hdt. 6.33.2: Βυζάντιοι μὲν νῦν καὶ οἱ πέρηθε Καλχηδόνιοι οὐδ' ὑπέμειναν ἐπιπλέοντας τοὺς Φοίνικας, ἀλλ' οἴχοντο ἀπολιπόντες τὴν σφετέρην ἕσω ἐς τὸν Εὐξείνιον πόντον, καὶ ἐνθαῦτα πόλιν Μεσαμβρίην οἴκησαν.

² GGM 1, Skymn. 738-742: Περὶ δὲ τὴν ὑπώρειαν δὲ τοῦ καλουμένου Αἴμου πόλις ἐστὶ λεγομένη Μεσημβρία, τῇ Θρακία Γετικῇ τε συνορίζουσα γῆ Καλχηδόνιοι ταύτην δὲ Μεγαρεῖς τ' ὄκησαν, ὅτ' ἐπὶ Σκύθας Δαρεῖος ἐστρατεύετο.

text of his related to the Scythian expedition of the Persian king.³ An attempt to reconcile both sources has been made by advancing the idea of a ‘double foundation’ of Messambria (Nawotka 1997, 27), which, however, is unlikely (Oppermann 2004, 16, n. 121).

The philological analysis of the aorist used by Herodotus and Pseudo-Skymnos when describing Messambria’ settlement (see for instance Zahrt 2008, 88, n. 1) is of much help here. It reveals that both sources are in fact complimentary. For example, it is now assumed that Herodotus’ οἰκησαν of the verb οἰκέω would mean a ‘temporary settling’ (installation?) in a pre-existing city.⁴ If so, we can conclude that Herodotus’ expedition of fugitives on the run from an enemy in 493 BC settled in a colony that had already existed but they did so only temporarily since they returned southward when the danger was over. This probably happened soon after 478-477 BC when the Greek fleet led by the Spartan Pausanias liberated Kalchedon and Byzantion from Persian domination (Robu 2014, 313). This is in contrast with the aorist ὤκισαν of the verb οἰκίζω that is used in the statement of Pseudo-Skymnos with the clear meaning of ‘colonize’ when describing the foundation of Messambria (Voinov *et al.* 1943, 547).

We may assume that Messambria was most probably founded after the Scythian campaign, as it is well known that the Scythians pursued the Persians on their retreat and inflicted heavy losses on them (Ktesias (*FGrHist* 688) Fr. 13.21). I can hardly imagine that an unfortified settlement just founded by the Scythians’ enemy would have gone unnoticed and escaped destruction by the barbarians. Otherwise, we should assume that the settlers sailed back and abandoned the newly found *apoikia* with the approach of the Scythians. Support for the idea that Messambria was founded after the Persians’ Scythian campaign is provided by Eustathius in his comment on Dionysius Periegetes, as K. Boshnakov has suggested (Boshnakov 2007, 128-130).⁵ As this suggestion has remained unnoticed in the literature so far (see, for instance, Gjuzelev 2009; Robu 2014; Damyanov 2015), a brief overview seems appropriate. Boshnakov rightly doubts that this evidence should be reconciled with that provided by Herodotus (Hdt. 6.33.2). The information about a certain ‘battle’ that

³ Hdt. 4.93.1.

⁴ Casevitz 1995, 75-81 (non vidi); cited by Robu 2014, 313, n. 885. On the aorist of ‘οἰκέω’ with the meaning of ‘settle,’ see also Voinov, Georgiev *et al.* 1943, 547.

⁵ Eustath. ad Dionys. 803: Ἱστορεῖται δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐν ἀριστερᾷ τοῦ Εὐξείνου Πόντου Μεσημβρίαν Χαλκηδονίων εἶναι κτίσμα καὶ Βυζαντίον, ἠττηθέντων ἔν τινι μάχῃ καὶ φυγόντων ἐκεῖ.

was avoided by the Kalchedonians and Byzantines reveals that, in fact, this is not the case of 493 BC, when they just ran away from the advanced Phoenician fleet with no intention to join battle. As it is also other apographic tradition, he assumes that Eustathius' comment should not be assigned to the Ionian revolt in 493 BC, and therefore was not a repetition of the Herodotus' text, but to an earlier event, close chronologically but different by nature, when Kalchedon and Byzantium were defeated and seized by the Persian satrap Otanes (Boshnakov 2007, 128-129). Indeed, sources mention that Kalchedon was destroyed by Dareios after returning from Scythia (Ktesias (*FGrHist* 688) Fr. 13.21; Loukopoulou 1989, 88-89; Avram 2004, 979), but it seems that the city was not heavily affected as it recovered quickly to resist later the Persian siege (Polyaen. 7.11.5; Hdt. 5, 26). Thus, it may be assumed that a certain group of Kalchedonians and Byzantines might have escaped from Otanes and founded Messambria (Boshnakov 2007, 129) and therefore the date of Otanes' capture of Kalchedon is the date of the Messambria' foundation. As the Persians had to re-establish their rule in Kalchedon, one would wonder if the *apoikoi* of Messambria were the anti-Persian citizens in Kalchedon and Byzantium that naturally left them when the Persians appeared and threatened the cities.

The Persian satrap Otanes is mentioned by Herodotus in connection with the uprising in Cyprus in 497 BC⁶ when he was probably appointed as general by Dareios (Kienast 2002, 24). It seems it was after the military operations against the Ionians that their cities were sacked as described before the Persians turned to Propontis (Hdt. 5.122.1). This is probably when Kalchedon and Byzantium were also sacked. So, I would assume that 497 BC may be accepted as a *terminus post quem* of Messambria's foundation if K. Boshnakov's observations are correct.

Archaeology completes this picture of Messambria's foundation. During excavations on the Peninsula, for example, some fragments of Attic black-figure pottery were found that date to the last decade of the 6th and the first quarter of the 5th century BC (Reho 2005, 33-35; Bozhkova 2017, 41). Among these fragments are two of a cup decorated with the so-called 'subgeometric' decoration, which belongs to the pottery group of cups produced either on Thasos or somewhere in its *pereia* between 520-480 BC

⁶ Hdt 5.116: Κύπριοι μὲν δὴ ἐνιαυτὸν ἐλεύθεροι γενόμενοι αὐτίς ἐκ νέης κατεδεδούλωντο. Δαυρίσης δὲ ἔχων Δαρείου θυγατέρα καὶ Ὑμαίης τε καὶ Ὀτάνης ἄλλοι Πέρσαι στρατηγοί, ἔχοντες καὶ οὗτοι Δαρείου θυγατέρας, ἐπιδιώξαντες τοὺς ἐς Σάρδις στρατευσαμένους Ἴωνων καὶ ἐσπράξαντες σφέας ἐς τὰς νέας, τῇ μάχῃ ὡς ἐπεκράτησαν, τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν ἐπιδιελόμενοι τὰς πόλεις ἐπόρθεον.

(Bozhkova 2009, 143-145). Besides these, there were also found fragments of monochrome grey pottery from the beginning of the 5th century BC (Bozhkova 2017, 168, Tabl. 14/7), a terracotta of Aphrodite and head of a kore dated to the second half/end of the 6th century BC (Ogdenova-Marinova 2005, 56), and an antefix dated to the last quarter of the 6th-beginning of the 5th century BC (Ogdenova-Marinova 1991, 28, n. 28). Unfortunately, the archaeological context of these finds is obscure, but they either belong to a cultural layer of the beginning of 5th century without solid architecture or to a cultural layer of distinctive architectural remains which therefore might be dated to the beginning/the second decade of the 5th century BC at latest. Despite this uncertainty, this archaeological information reveals the existence of a settlement that was incorporated into the local market, in which Ionian ceramics dominated.

Available literary sources and their philological analysis raise the possibility of Messambria's colonization by ἄποικοι in or shortly after 513/512 BC and by ἔποικοι in 493 BC (Oppermann 2004, 16; Veligianni-Terzi 2004, 56-57; Avram 2012, 208; Robu 2014, 314).⁷ In the view of Boshnakov that is expressed above and Otanes' advance into the Propontis, we may fix the date of the foundation more precisely shortly after 497 BC. It has also been suggested that the *epoikoi*, in fact, strengthened the newly founded Messambria as was possibly be the case with other *apoikiai* (see for example Nawotka 1997, 26; Boshnakov 2007, 125). This, however, may not be true for Messambria. As A. Robu convincingly reveals, the *epokoi* settled temporarily and likely returned home soon after 478-477 BC, when Kalchedon and Byzantion were liberated by the Greek fleet under the Spartan Pausanias (Robu 2014, 313). Besides, there was no hostility from local Thracian tribes that would require the fortification of Messambria, or at least we do not have as yet archaeological data of such a threat.

The archaeology, however, offers additional evidence and a clue for this question as it provides more information about colonial life during the 5th century BC. For example, the earliest built houses attested so far are dated to the second half of the 5th century BC as a whole (see for example Bozhkova and Kiyashkina 2015, 77), while the imitative Attic black-glazed pottery with monochromic decoration on grey clay produced in local workshop is dated as early as the end of first to the beginning of the second quarter of the 5th century BC (Bozhkova 2010, 488). The earliest attestation of

⁷ Lenk 1931, 1072-1073; Hanell 1934, 128; Velkov 1969, 15-16; IGBulg. I², 255; Oppermann 2004, 16; Avram 2004, 916, 935; Avram 2012, 208; Gjuzelev 2009, 86; Boshnakov 2007, 125; Robu 2014, 314.

Corinthian conventionalizing pottery, which reached the western Black Sea coast in the late 6th-beginning of the 5th century BC as finds from neighboring Apollonia reveal, is in domestic contexts in Messambria not earlier than the second quarter of the 5th century BC.⁸ It is noteworthy that the oldest necropolis found at the site dates to the mid-5th century BC (Kiyashkina and Bozhkova 2017, 7-22). All this evidence implies that intensive colonial life in Messambria began in the second quarter of 5th century BC at the latest, which in fact coincides with the period when settlers from Kalchedon and Byzantion are supposed to have moved to Messambria.⁹ Even if the Propontis was closed for some time by the Persians, this should not be accepted as a reason for a lack of large quantities of imports at the beginning of the 5th century BC. In fact, between 499 and 494 BC, the empire practically lost control over the Propontis, the Hellespont, and all the cities located there (Zahrt 2015, 38). Moreover, the earliest imported pottery of North Aegean and Ionian origin found at Messambria date to the years of Persian domination. The small quantity of imported pottery reveals that initially, Messambria was not intensively included in Hellenic trade routes along the Western Black Sea coast.

Messambria's growth as an economic hub following the arrival of the *epoikoi* is attested by the appearance of local silver coinage (obols, diobols, and drachmas) in the second quarter of the 5th century BC (Karayotov 2007). This coinage indicates the expansion of the city's *chora* toward the mountains, where there were stone quarries and silver mines, and the lands of the Thracian tribe the *Nypsaioi*, as we can infer from a passage in Herodotus' *Histories*.¹⁰ In fact, Messambria's economic growth would have been impossible without good relations with neighboring Thracian tribes to the north and south. It is worth mentioning that, for now, material manifestations of these relations date to as early as the second quarter of the 5th century BC.

⁸ Bozhkova 2013, 87-90; 2017, 37. This type is usually used in funerary contexts, but in Messambria and elsewhere it is also found in domestic context – see, for example, Zimi 2018, 131-150.

⁹ A fragment of the so-called 'East Greek pottery' originated probably from North Ionia has also been found in one of the houses discovered in Nessebar dated to the first half of 5th c. BC (Bozhkova 2017, 31), while a fragment of Corinthian archaic pottery was found in the hinterland of Messambria (Bozhkova 2017, 35).

¹⁰ Hdt. 4.93.1: πρὶν δὲ ἀπικέσθαι ἐπὶ τὸν Ἴστρον, πρῶτους αἰρέει Γέτας τοὺς ἀθανατίζοντας. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸν Σαλμυδησὸν ἔχοντες Θρήικες καὶ ὑπὲρ Ἀπολλωνίης τε καὶ Μεσαμβρίας πόλιος οἰκημένοι, καλεῦμενοι δὲ Κυρμιάναι καὶ Νιψαῖοι, ἀμαχητὶ σφέας αὐτοὺς παρέδωσαν Δαρείῳ. See also Gjuzelev 2009, 85.

One of the most debatable questions when it comes to Messambria's foundation is the relationship between the Hellenic *apoikia* and a pre-existing Thracian settlement. It was initially believed that the settlement attested on the Peninsula should be dated based on the pottery from the 11th until the 6th century BC and was then destroyed with the arrival of the *apoikoi*.¹¹ This led to the conclusion that there was a 'continuation of the settlement pattern from the Thracian to the Greek phase of occupation' (Nawotka 1994, 320). At first glance, this idea is supported by the tradition that Messambria's name is a combination of the name of a certain Μέλσα/Μέλσας and βρία, as is suggested by a funeral epitaph from the mid-2nd century AD¹² and Nicolaos of Damascus in Stephen of Byzantium.¹³ As Melsas is interpreted as a chieftain or Thracian king, it is assumed that, in fact, Messambria inherited the royal residence of the Thracian king (Porozhanov 1999, 29), who therefore became a mythical founder of the polis (Karayatov 2009, 20). In some studies, this settlement is interpreted as a 'protopolis' related to a certain type of settlement in Greece from the end of the second to the beginning of the first millennium BC.¹⁴

It seems, however, that this is not exactly the case. A reexamination of the pottery from the Thracian settlement on the peninsula shows that life at the settlement did not survive until the end of the 6th century BC since the latest pottery is dated to the end of the 8th century BC. This dating is based on the resemblance between this pottery and the vessel types in the second phase of the Babadag culture, which is dated to the end of the first phase of the Early Iron age. This led P. Alexandrescu and S. Morintz not only to revise the proposed date of the end of the Thracian settlement but also to assume that there was a *hiatus* between the Thracian settlement and the Hellenic *apoikia* that lasted around three centuries (Alexandrescu and Morintz 1982, 50-55). Therefore, it should be accepted that there is no clear connection between the Thracian settlement on the peninsula and the Hellenic *apoikia*.

¹¹ Venedikov 1980a, 7-22; 1980b, 75-80; Ognenova-Marinova 1979, 34-40; 1986, 142-156; 1991, 133-136; Hind 1992-1993, 86; 1998, 138.

¹² GBulg. I², 345: Μεσεμβρία (sic) δέ μυ (sic) πατρις ἀπὸ [M(?)]έλσα καὶ βρία.

¹³ FGrH 90, Fr. 43: s.v. Μεσημβρία: ἐκλήθη ἀπὸ Μέλσου βρία γὰρ τὴν πόλιν φασὶ Θραῖκες ὡς οὖν Σηλυμβρία ἢ τοῦ Σήλους πόλις, Πολτυμβρία ἢ Πόλυτος [πόλις], οὕτω Μελοσημβρία ἢ Μέλσου πόλις, καὶ διὰ τὸ εὐφωτότερον λέγεται Μεσημβρία.

¹⁴ Ognenova-Marinova 1982, 69-81, 1991, 134-136; Porozhanov 2000a, 345-350, 2000b, 115-119, 2002, 220-221, 222, 2004, 514-521; Preshlenov 2003.

The date of the pottery proposed by the Romanian scholars has generally been accepted (see, for instance, Lazarov 1998, 94; Bozhkova 2009, 145-147), although some clarifications have been made as regards the late date and extent of the hiatus. Thus, the pottery found in some recently excavated pits on the Peninsula that belonged to the Thracian settlement places the end of life there in the second phase of the Early Iron Age, more precisely in the 8th-7th century BC. (Bozhkova 2009, 146). This dating not only shortens the duration of the proposed hiatus but also implies that Messambria was founded on unoccupied land (Lazarov 1998, 94) with no immediate pre-colonial cultural layer (Bozhkova 2009, 146). Based on the Thracian etymology of the city-name, it is suggested that even if Messambria was founded in an uninhabited area, it was located close enough to a Thracian settlement for this settlement's name to be transferred to the Dorian city (Danov 1960, 75; Alexandrescu and Morintz 1982, 52; Lazarov 1998, 94). It has also been proposed that the Greeks sought to make a link to the Thracians who used to live in the vicinity of their city through their city's name and by doing so, sought to integrate themselves into local mythical genealogies (Robu 2014, 320).

The abandonment of the area of the Peninsula as revealed by archaeological excavations is significant in itself (Gjuzelev 2009, 78-85; Bozhkova 2009, 146-147) since the probable hiatus of less than two centuries is the only such gap attested in the area over the course of almost three thousand years of habitation. Indeed, rescue excavations covered most of the area of the Peninsula, but the lack of any material in the areas along the curtain walls is very indicative of the Peninsula's abandonment. It is also significant that archaeological material is missing from the coastal area, i.e., where necropolises would be located and therefore where remains should have been preserved. As mentioned, the earliest strata that is attested on the Peninsula is dated to the second quarter of the 5th century BC, while the oldest necropolis dates to the mid-5th century BC (Kiyashkina and Bozhkova 2017, 7-22). Until sure archaeological evidence for settlement in the second half of the 6th century BC is found in the area, the idea that Messambria was founded close to a pre-existing Thracian settlement remains a speculation based only on the polis' name. However, such a Thracian settlement should contain imported pottery that would somehow confirm its connections with the colonists despite the fact that the imported Greek pottery might have penetrated inland for other reasons. A recent study reveals that unlike other regions with no urban center established,

and even the *chora* of neighboring Apollonia, imported pottery spread in the area around Messambria in the second quarter of the 5th century BC at the earliest (Bozhkova 2017, 53-72). The oldest imported pottery was found only in Messambria itself and this fact significantly sets off the settlement from others that were scattered nearby.

Besides, the interpretation of the ‘Thracian’ etymology of Messambria is not unambiguous. Another meaning of the word ‘βρία’ has been suggested that differs significantly from the meaning proposed by Nicolaos of Damascus and Strabo.¹⁵ Based on these sources, it seems that ‘βρία’ might mean a ‘polis’ in Thracian in the 1st century BC, but other literary sources, such as the Alexandrian lexicographer Hesychios, tell a different story:

βρίαν τὴν ἐπ’ ἀγροῖς κώμην¹⁶

This evidence has already been discussed in the literature with ‘βρία’ translated as ‘agricultural settlement’ or simply ‘settlement’ (IGBulg. I², 257; Alexandrescu and Morintz 1982, 48). We may assume, then, that the term reveals either the agricultural nature of earlier Thracian towns, which differs significantly from the earliest remains found on the Peninsula, which have been interpreted as constituting a ‘protopolis’ as mentioned above, or that this was a Greek word Thracians used to describe their urban centers. As is plainly seen on every official inscription on Messambria’s coinage or on inscribed monuments from the site, the name of Messambria is presented as Μεσ(σ)αμβρία or ΜεΤαμβρία.¹⁷ A passage in Homer’s *Iliad*¹⁸ may have had an impact on the city-name of the Mes(s)ambrianoi as well, as J. Hind proposes (Hind 2007, 24). Whether this is so is uncertain yet, but what is clear is that this Homeric link was used in the polis’ ideology at least by the mid-5th century BC, as is manifested by the depiction of a Corinthian helmet on Messambrian coinage from this time (on the coinage, see Karayotov 1994a, 2009; on its interpretation, see Hind 2007, 24). However, the name Μεσ(σ)αμβρία might have another meaning based on the composition of

¹⁵ The βρία as the explicit Thracian word for ‘town,’ see Detschew 1976, 296; Georgiev 1966, 175; 1977, 13, 22, 41, 71, 99, 103, 168, 169; Velkova 1986, 48-50; Paliga 1987, 23-24; Ognenova-Marinova 1991 133-136.

¹⁶ Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon 321, 23.

¹⁷ The way the name has been presented throughout the centuries and in various sources, see Velkov 1969, 27-28.

¹⁸ Hom. *Il.* 16.412-413: μέσσην κὰκ κεφαλὴν: ἦ δ’ ἄνδιχα πᾶσα κεάσθη ἐν κόρυθι βριαρῆ.

Μεσ(σ)α[μ] + βρία, with Μέσσα¹⁹ as the Doric Aeolic form of the Aeolian Μέσσοσ. This name is, in turn, related to the Ionian-Attic Μέσσοσ (Liddell-Scott 1996, 1107). By this component, it reminds of a certain Μεσσά πόλις which was located in Laconia as described by Pausanias.²⁰ This city also figures among the *poleis* mentioned in Strabo's presentation of Homer's Catalogue of Ships.²¹ These examples reveal that the city-name of Μεσ(σ)αμβρία/ΜεΤαμβρία may have had a Greek etymological origin and therefore may not necessarily be connected with an as yet unknown Thracian settlement. Given that Μέσσοσ also means "middle, in the middle" (Liddell-Scott 1996, 1107), we may go as far as to suggest that perhaps Messambria was founded as a town "in the middle" between Dorian Kalchedon/Byzantion and Callatis (on the date of Callatis' foundation, see Avram 2007, 244-246), as Messambria's name reflected the city's location.

It has also usually been assumed that Messambria was founded in a densely populated area (see, for example, Oppermann 2004, 29; Boshnakov 2007, 125), which is contradicted by the results of archaeological excavations. In support of this idea, scholars mention several archaeological sites in the wider area such as Aitos, Gorica, Preobrazhenci, Ruen, and Maglen, but the archaeological data for life at these sites is unconvincing. Before going further, it should be mentioned that in some cases pottery fragments were found accidentally, i.e., with no proper archaeological context, and that sometimes the pottery is dated roughly to the 'Early Iron Age,' which makes its precise date difficult to be established. Such is the case, for example, of the ceramic evidence from Goritza (Karayotov 1994b, 284; Gjuzelev 2009, 225) and Preobrazhentsi (Gjuzelev 2009, 239). With one exception, no excavations have been conducted at these sites. For example, archaeological fieldwalking has identified a potential settlement near the village of Muglen since scattered fragments of local handmade pottery were found in an area of several thousand square meters there. These urns were dated generally to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Attic black-glazed kylix and Thasian amphora of the last quarter of 5th century-middle of 4th century BC were also found in this area (Karayotov 2004b, 284; Gjuzelev 2009, 182).

¹⁹ The lack of nasal 'μ' can be explained by one of the rules of Old Greek about the disappearance of the nasal consonants before spirants; see Schwyzler *et al.* 1939, 213-214. Other examples on the Western Black Sea coast, see Galabov 1957, 407-409 with the discussion of the name of neighboring Anchialos.

²⁰ Paus. 3.25.9: ὀλίγον δὲ ἀπωτέρω Μέσσα πόλις καὶ λιμῆν.

²¹ Strab. 8.5: τῶν δ' ὑφ' Ὀμήρου καταλεγόμενων τὴν μὲν Μέσσην οὐδαμοῦ δείκνυσθαι φασί: Μεσσοῶν δ' οὐ τῆς χώρας εἶναι μέρος ἀλλὰ τῆς Σπάρτης.

The only place that has been excavated is the fortress and necropolis near the village of Ruen. In the course of excavations, a rectangular fortress (20/30 m) was discovered that was initially said to have been used between the 6th and 1st century BC (Karayotov and Kiyashkina 1986, 117; Karayotov and Boneva 1987, 84). The observation made later by I. Karayotov and P. Kiyashkina is that the fortress was built ‘after the colonization’ (Karayotov and Kiyashkina 1986), which is also supported by the construction technique of the curtain walls that is identical to that of Messambria’s curtain walls (Gjuzelev 2009, 238). It is assumed that the fortress was used for the storage of grain (Gjuzelev 2009, 238). The structural parallels between the curtain walls suggest that the fortress was probably built by the Messambrians. This raises the question of the importance of the fortress to the polis. The imported pottery that was found along the local hand- and wheel-made pottery, which consists of Attic black-glazed vessels like *lekythoi* (Bozhkova 2017, 69), ‘Megarian’ cups, and amphorae from Cos (Gjuzelev 2009, 238), is strikingly diverse and undoubtedly reveals the importance the fortress held for the Messambrians. It is plausible that the fortress was built to protect the grain that was stored there, near the fields where it was cultivated. It may be also assumed that such an ostentatious way of storing the crops could serve as a way for the Messambrians to emphasize their polis’ productivity and material wealth. Lastly, the case of a certain settlement being localized near the town of Aitos is uncertain as fragments of ‘Thracian pottery’ were discovered here accidentally without any archaeological context. The place seems to have become an important center in the colonial period of Messambria, as is evidenced by the numerous coin hoards discovered here. These consist of coins minted at Messambria and Apollonia (see the brief report in Gjuzelev 2009, 182).

To sum up, based on archaeological excavations and surveys at the Thracian settlements that scholarship supposes to be located near Messambria, two major group of settlements may be distinguished: those dated with ‘Late Bronze and Early Iron Age’ pottery, and those dated to the colonial period. Until a more precise date is established for the ‘Early Iron Age’ pottery, it is not possible to attribute the settlements of the first group (Gorica, Maglen, Preobrazhentsi) to the time of foundation of Messambria; the pottery in the pre-Hellenic settlement on the Peninsula was initially designated as such. Even if these settlements are contemporary with Messambria’s foundation, which is not unlikely, we should not necessarily regard them as particularly significant settlements since

no contemporary imported pottery was found and so these sites' link with the newly founded *apoikia* is obscured. It is worth mentioning that all of these settlements are located northwest of Messambria in the tribal lands of the Nipsaei (on the location of the Nipsaei, see Gjuzelev 2009, 85).

The second group of settlements consists of those that were built by the Messambrians (Ruen) or by local Thracians and so likely received their economic importance from relations with the Hellenic polis (Aitos, Preobrazhentsi). It is possible that Preobrazhentsi was included into the *chora* of the polis. If we go a step further, we may assume that Gorica, Maglen and possibly Preobrazhentsi were located on the tribal area of the Nipsaei, and the foundation of Ruen may imply the foundation of the Messambrian *katoikiai* in the lands of that Thracian tribe. In fact, Herodotus says that Messambria was located between the Thracian tribes of Cyrmianae and Nipsaei (Hdt. 4.93: Κυρμιάναι καὶ Νιψαῖοι), and the Cyrmianae are thought to have been located between Apollonia and Messambria.

Certainly, the list of settlements of the second phase of Early Iron period can be extended to include a few more, such as that near the village of Bata (Vagalinski, Mihailov 2007, 13-22) and elsewhere (Uzunov *et al.* 2014, 650; Bozhkova *et al.* 2018, 674). However, this does not change the picture significantly. Given all this, we may assume that there was a certain empty area around Messambria that stretched west as far as Aitos and so the *apoikia* was founded in intertribal territory, which would account for the abandonment of the pre-colonial settlement on the Peninsula in 7th century BC (Pl. 1: 2). The numerous settlements attested in this area dated to the colonial period as early as the 5th century BC may indicate that Messambria's foundation at this time was the catalyst for the later urban development of the region.

Messambria's foundation is a case study for all Greek colonies established on the Western Black sea coast. All of these cities seem to have been founded in places that had already been known to the colonists. A good example is provided by Messambria since it was established by colonists on the run from the Persian regime at Kalchedon and Byzantion. In an extreme situation of this kind, there was no need to seek out a permission from the oracle in Delphi for undertaking the colonization since the Kalchedonian Apollo was oracular himself. It seems, though, that a relatively small group of colonists sailed to lands that were previously known to them but empty at that time, so they expected no hostility from local Thracians. Otherwise, the whole process might have been compromised and unsuccessful. Whether it was

Dareios' Scythian campaign that weakened the local tribes is unclear since no resistance is attested in the sources, but the abandonment of the Peninsula and the surrounding area in the 7th century BC may suggest another reason, which remains unknown. I would rather presume that it was due to intertribal relations rather than the result of an external threat. Nonetheless, it seems that at the very beginning of the 5th century BC, the area was unoccupied, which allowed a small-scale colonization with the foundation of Messambria to be undertaken. Currently available archaeological material reveals that it was the ἔποικοι's settlement in 493 BC that made a great impact on the polis' life with the expansion of the Messambrian *chora* mostly northward where it reached the Thracian tribe of Nipsaei and promoted mutually beneficial relationships with them. As a result, Messambria grew as an economic hub and its *chora* started to be urbanized with the establishment of *katoikiai* by the Messambrians and settlements by the local Thracians. Imported pottery as well its imitations and the beginning of Messambrian coinage that spread among the settlements in the *chora* are good evidence for this and reveal the mechanism of the colonization process in the area at the time.

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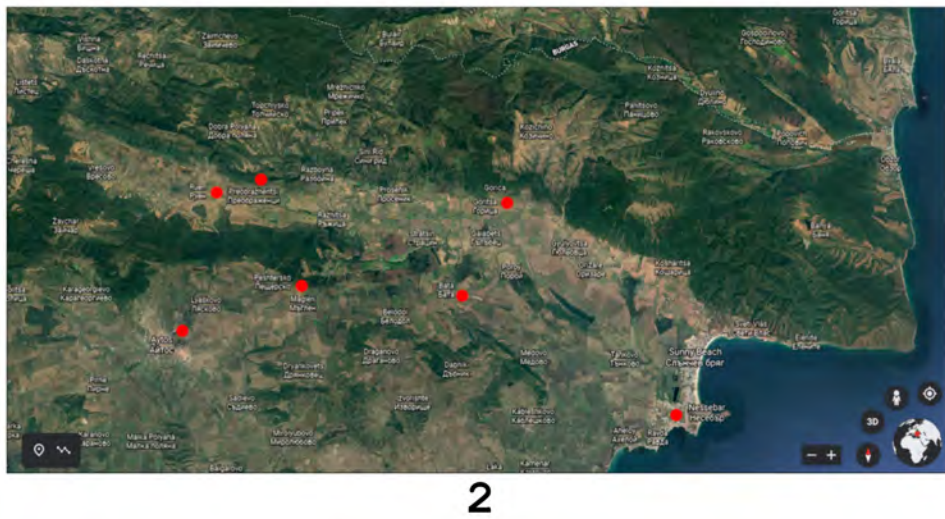
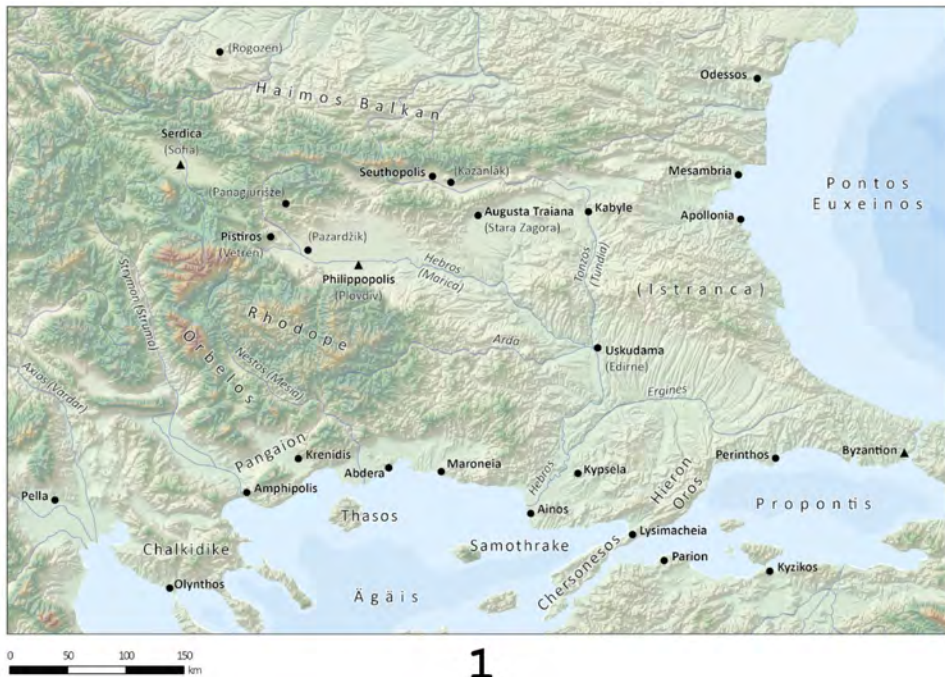
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Pl. 1: 1 – Ancient Thrace (Sayar 2020, fig. 1(cartography: Susanne Rutishauser /University of Bern)

Pl. 1: 2 – The location of the settlements around Messambria (author: Ivo Topalilov based on the data provided by Google Earth)