

Table 6 *The fortification of the Balkans according to Procopius' Buildings IV*

| | New | Restored | Total |
|-----------------------|-----|----------|-------|
| ILLYRICUM: | 92 | 207 | 394 |
| Epirus Nova | 32 | 26 | 58 |
| Epirus Vetus | 12 | 24 | 36 |
| Macedonia | | | 46 |
| Thessaly | | 7 | 7 |
| Dardania | 8 | 61 | 69 |
| (Dacia Mediterranea): | | 140 | |
| near Serdica | | | 9 |
| Cabertus region | 1 | 16 | 17 |
| near city? | 5 | 23 | 28 |
| near Germene | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| near Pautalia | | | 5 |
| Kasseta region | | | 5 |
| near Naissus | 32 | 7 | 39 |
| near Remesiana | | | 30 |
| (Dacia Ripensis): | | 38 | |
| near Aquae | 1 | 37 | 38 |
| THRACE: | | | 179 |
| Europe | | | 2 |
| Rhodope | | | 12 |
| Thrace | | | 35 |
| Haemimons | | | 33 |
| Moesia Inferior | | | 51 |
| μεοογεία | | | 26 |
| LIMES: | | | 85 |
| (Moesia Superior) | | | 28 |
| (Dacia Ripensis) | | | 29 |
| (Moesia Inferior) | | | 20 |
| (Scythia Minor) | | | 8 |

Dobruđia, where two Romanian archaeologists, Mihai Zahariade and Andrei Opaț, excavated a *burgus*. The nature of activity within this small fortification seems to have drastically changed in the mid-fifth century, when a considerable reduction in the quantity of weaponry is recorded. The fortification gradually lost its military nature and became a store-house for the local military *annonia* with the aim of ensuring the supplies of troops passing by.⁶¹

⁶¹ Ovidiu: Bucovăla and Papuc 1981 and 1986, Cape Kaliakra: Dimitrov 1985:123. Capidava: Florescu and Covacef 1988–9:203, Garvăn: Barnea 1986:448 and 1984:344. For a similar situation identified at Topcecum Traiani, see Papuc 1977:358. That the basilica at Garvăn was restored under Anastasius is indicated by bricks from the nave's pavement with stamps bearing the emperor's name. See Barnea 1958:295–6 and 1980:251. Musait: Scorpion 1974:114. Pantelimonu de Sus: Barnea and Vulpe 1968:43. Topratchioi: Zahariade and Opaț 1986:565, 567, and 569–71.

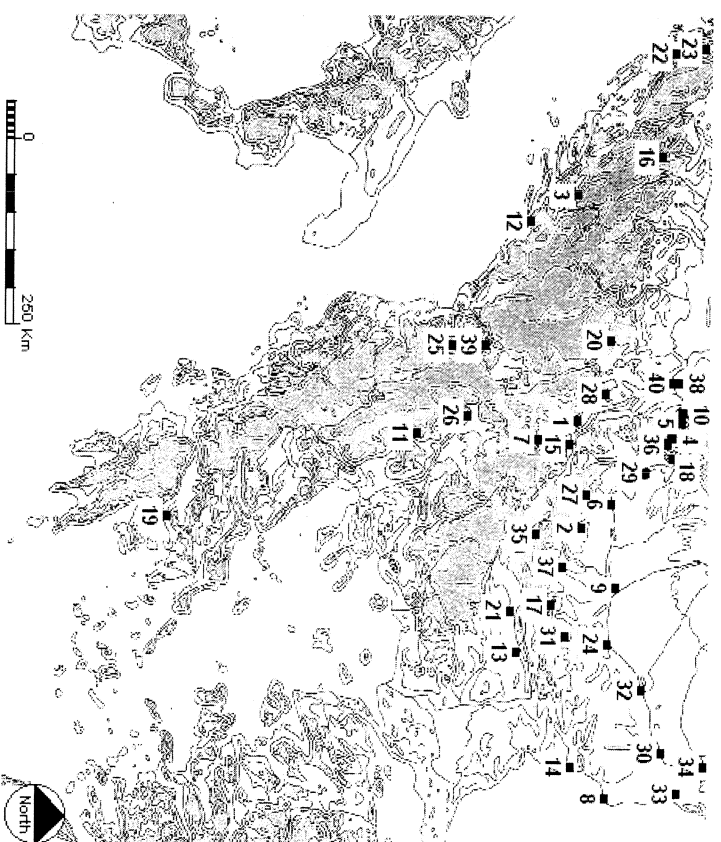


Figure 2 Location map of the principal forts and fortified churches mentioned in the text

1 – Balajnac; 2 – Berkovica; 3 – Biogradi; 4 – Boljedin; 5 – Bosman; 6 – Borevo; 7 – Bregovina; 8 – Cape Kaliakra; 9 – Celei; 10 – Cezva; 11 – Debrešić; 12 – Dabrovnik; 13 – Dyadovo; 14 – Džbanavar Tepe; 15 – Gamzigrad; 16 – Gornji Vrbjani; 17 – Gradar; 18 – Hajdučka Vodenica; 19 – Isthmia; 20 – Jelica; 21 – Karasur; 22 – Kaštelina; 23 – Korinija; 24 – Krivina (Iatrus); 25 – Krupa; 26 – Markovi Kuli; 27 – Mikhailovgrad (Montana); 28 – Mončlov Grad; 29 – Mora Vagei; 30 – Musait (Saciava); 31 – Nikinip (Nicomopolis ad Istrum); 32 – Nova Cherna; 33 – Ovidiu; 34 – Pantelimonu de Sus (Ulmecum); 35 – Pridlop; 36 – Ravna; 37 – Sadovec (Sadovsko kale and Golenanovo kale); 38 – Sapja; 39 – Shurubahn; 40 – Svetinja.

North of the Stara Planina range, the most striking feature is the ubiquity of fortified hilltop sites, concentrated along river valleys and the northern slopes of the mountains, occupying strongly defensive positions perched above cliffs or on top of steep-sided hills. Few have been explored by systematic excavations, but those that have (Nova Cherna, Krivina/Iatrus, Sivi Tepe near Kochovo, Zmei kale near Koprivce, Gradar near Batoshevo, Krumovo kale near Targovishte, Dolno Kabda, Sadovsko kale near Sadovec, Biala, and Shumen) seem to have been substantially restored at some point during the sixth century, most likely during Justinian's reign. That, in some cases, restoration may have started earlier than that is indicated by an inscription mentioning Emperor

Anastasius, which was found at Vavovo kale near Gradec. These forts were built with walls of ashlar filled up with white mortar and rubble (*opus impletum*). Walls are massive, with towers along the circuit and double enclosures (*protichisnata*) sometimes added to earlier fortifications, as in Shumen. These forts are called πόλεις by Theophylact Simocatta. For example, he refers twice to Iatrus as a πόλις. After being destroyed by the Huns in the mid-400s, Iatrus had been abandoned for at least fifty years. When building restarted in phase D (late fifth to early sixth century), the πόλις had turned into a simple fort. The only building in stone and the largest on site is the basilica. A building with a portico (Building xxxiii), but with no apparent use as dwelling, may have had some representative role, perhaps in connection with the military commander of the garrison. In the ruins of the fourth-century *horreum*, a complex of eleven houses was built, with walls of stones and mud bricks. A two-storied house was located in the southeastern corner of the *horreum*. On top of the former *principia*, now abandoned, a workshop was erected, which had a brick-made kiln. All houses were buildings of adobe or stones bonded with clay. But the use of glass vessels (*Stengläsien*) seems to have continued, though it remains unclear whether they were of local production or imports. During phase E, covering most of the seventh century, houses built in stone bonded with clay produced handmade pottery and a bow brooch. More important, the faunal material from this period typically contains a large number of species, particularly dog and wild animals, which suggests an increasing reliance on hunting for meat procurement.⁶²

A similar picture can be drawn on the basis of excavations at Nikiup (Nicipolis ad Istrum). The Roman city had been abandoned before the early 400s. The early Byzantine fort built in the former city's southeastern corner encloses an area of 5.74 ha, little more than one fourth of the size of the Roman city (21.55 ha). Early Byzantine Nicipolis had no regular street grid and no agora surrounded by public buildings. A large basilica, built at the highest point on the eastern side of the enclosure, was the dominant feature within the defenses. A second, single-naved

⁶² Theophylact Simocatta VII 2.16 and VII 13.9. Iatrus: see Mitrova-Dzhonova 1968:13 and 15 fig. 4; Wachter 1974:140; Gomolka 1976:40; Herrmann 1979a:18, 1979b:114–15, 1980a:10, and 1987a; Biebrauer 1986:457; Döhle 1989:41; Bilew 1990:369, 372, and 383; Dinchev 1997a:50. For faunal remains, see Bartosiewicz and Choyke 1991:191. Sivi Tepec: Antonova 1970:304. Krumovo kale and Dohno Kabda: Ovecharov 1971. Biala: Dimitrov 1985:125. Vavovo kale: Velkov and Lisikov 1994:203. Shumen: Antonova 1987:55–6. For *opus impletum* and other building techniques, see Biernacka-Lubańska 1982; Poulter 1983:98–9. At Sadosko kale, Ivan Velkov's excavations focused exclusively on the western half of the plateau and left most of the fort unearthed. As a consequence, the plan of the fort, as published in 1934, is wrongly viewed as a "classical" example of early Byzantine defense architecture in the Balkans. See Werner 1992:409.

church was still in use in the last quarter of the sixth century, as evidenced by a coin struck for Emperor Tiberius II, which was found above the nave floor. Despite clear evidence that the large basilica was destroyed by fire, the absence of metal fittings and roof-tiles from the destruction levels suggests that the church had been systematically stripped of reusable material, before being abandoned. A series of buildings running from east to west seems to have served as barracks or storehouses. In the center of the fort there was a two-roomed structure, perhaps a workshop, crudely built with limestone blocks and reused architectural fragments bonded with earth and supporting mud walls. Large "open spaces" existed along the northern side of the site, on the western side and around the basilica. There is no sign of large-scale grain cultivation and there seems to have been a shift from winter-sown cereal crops to garden cultivation of millet and legumes, which could have been grown close to the city or, conceivably, in the open land which existed inside the defenses.⁶³

It has been argued that since most of the forts in Moesia Inferior were built in isolated and almost inaccessible sites, they might not have been occupied permanently. However, most of them had at least one church, sometimes with a baptistery, as in Gradač. Moreover, houses built in the stone-cum-clay technique have been found on many sites, as has evidence of agricultural (sickles, at Gradač) and industrial activities (a smithy in the pentagonal tower at Sadosko kale). At Sadosko kale, one of the rooms built against the fort's wall produced twenty-nine gold coins, while two skeletons were found in the neighboring room, in a non-burial context, together with five gold coins and silver jewels, including two bow brooches, all scattered on the room's floor. The rooms immediately next to the pentagonal tower have been interpreted as belonging to elite members of the fort's garrison, clearly caught by surprise and killed during an attack.⁶⁴

How did the occupation on these sites end? At Nova Cherna, numerous traces of fire catastrophe were found within the *quadrburgium*, but this event is dated to the first half of the sixth century. Clear evidence of destruction by fire was found in several parts of the fort at Gradač, the last coins found there being issued under Justinian. At Sadosko kale, the archaeological evidence from rooms 2 and 3 clearly indicates an attack,

⁶³ Poulter 1995:40–2, 44, 46, 166, and 181. At Iatrus, the soldiers' diet seems to have included oats and peas, arguably cultivated on site. See Hignatova 1982:232. At Voivoda, near Shumen, a house built parallel to the fort's wall has been interpreted as a grinding area. The associated agricultural tools, however, are of a much later date. See Damjanov 1976:17 and 24.

⁶⁴ Gradač: Milchev and Koicheva 1978a:60. Sadosko kale: Werner 1992:411. Other churches within forts: Milchev and Koicheva 1978b:25, 27, and 31; Soustal 1991:344 and 349. All were three-aisled basilicas. Houses: Milchev and Koicheva 1978a:60; Milchev and Draginov 1992:39; Uenze 1992:125; Antonova 1987:61.

which, however, does not seem to have been followed by either fire destruction or systematic plundering. The last coins found on the site are those of Maurice.⁶⁵

The situation is slightly different on the territory of the former provinces Dacia Ripensis and Moesia Superior. Some forts were restored during Anastasius' or Justin I's reign, during Justinian's reign, or as late as Justin II's reign. Sixth-century forts were at about six kilometers from each other, in a sight distance, with *refugia* on hilltops, no farther than 150 to 200 m away from the Danube line. Many were square or rectangular in plan. The preference for angular architecture so typical of Justinian's reign is also visible. More often than not, these forts incorporate into a larger fortification an older, fourth-century *burgus*. Some forts were completely destroyed by fire at some point during the last quarter of the sixth century. Others were simply abandoned.⁶⁶

At Gamzigrad, the imperial palace was abandoned as early as the fourth century. During Theodosius I's reign, a basilica was built on top of the southern wing of the palace, and a glass workshop was installed in the former bath. After being destroyed sometime during the sixth century, the basilica was restored and a baptistery added on its southern side. A small settlement with houses built in stone bonded with earth appeared around the church. During most of the sixth century, Gamzigrad may have functioned as a fortified village. The presence of a considerable number of querns and agricultural implements bespeaks its rural character. Bulgarian excavations at Mikhailovgrad (Montana) have revealed a house built near the northwestern tower. The house produced a significant quantity of amphora sherds and agricultural implements, as well as a scale. Fragments of bronze vessels may indicate a workshop. The settlement had only one single-naved church. Evidence of long-term occupation also comes from Golemanovo kale. The fort had between thirty-five and forty houses, in addition to about forty to fifty storage rooms. The most impressive feature of this site is the presence of two-storied houses with no heating facilities, such as I 8 or the so-called "Nestor house" (named after the Romanian archaeologist Ion Nestor, who excavated it in 1937). The latter produced a hoard of seven gold coins, in addition to silver jewels (including a pectoral cross), illustrating the wealth of its

inhabitants. All houses were built in stone bonded with clay. The abundance of agricultural implements and spindle whorls has been too hastily interpreted as indication of a rural settlement, with no military function. Similar houses with glass windows and heating facilities were found on the acropolis of the site at Mokranjska stena, in the Iron Gates segment of the frontier. They are in sharp contrast with poorer dwellings in the lower part of the settlement.⁶⁷ Closer to the Danube line, smaller forts produced evidence of more modest dwellings. At Celei (Sucidava), on the left bank, rooms with brick ovens were built against the curtain. A two-roomed building was found in the middle of the fort, not far from a *hypocaustum* probably belonging to a larger building, now completely destroyed. A "secret fountain" outside the fort had an underground access beneath the southern wall. Small rooms built against the curtain were also found at Hajdučka Vodenica, and wattle-walled houses appeared at Bosman. At Mora Vagei, there were no buildings at all, which may suggest that soldiers lived in tents. Some forts had single-naved churches, as in Celei, with burials both inside and outside the basilica. The fort at Golemanovo kale produced an unique case of a two-storied church, included in a bastion (*peribolos*) on the northern rampart. An older church built outside the fort continued to be used during the 500s, but its baptismal function was transferred to the intramural basilica. In other cases, the church stood between the main walls and the *prothesis*. At Berkovica, the three-aisled basilica built outside the fort, immediately next to its wall, was later incorporated into a large bastion-like structure protruding from the fort's precinct. A second church was incorporated with its apse into the fort's northeast rampart. At Botevo, a small military outpost near Rataria, Bulgarian archaeologists discovered in 1947 a church of cruciform plan.⁶⁸

In addition, the northern Balkans provide two examples of fortified

⁶⁵ Nova Cherna: Milchev and Angelova 1970:36; Ivanov 1974:68–9; Milchev 1977:351–7. For Gradit, see Milchev and Koitcheva 1978a:66–1. For Sadovsko Kale, see Uenze 1992:127.

⁶⁶ Distance between forts: Janković 1981:208 and 211. Restoration under Anastasius or Justin I: Gabričević 1986:72. Restoration under Justinian: Uenze 1992:97; Jovanović 1982–3:328 and 330. Restoration under Justin II: Milošević and Jeremić 1986:250. For examples of angular architecture, see Kondić 1982–3a:141; Kondić 1984a:142. Incorporation of older *burgi*: Kondić 1984a:144–7. Destruction by fire: Tudor 1965:124; Uenze 1992:107 (6, 580). Abandoned forts: Jovanović 1982–3:330; Černanović-Kuzmanović and Stanković 1986:455; Atanasova 1987:125; Atanasova-Georgieva 1974:167.

⁶⁷ See Janković 1981:212. Gamzigrad: Stojković, Lalović, and Janković 1980:77; Popović 1982:556 and 557 fig. 13; Stojković 1986:90. Mikhailovgrad: Aleksandrov 1987:64, and 79. Because of the presence of agricultural implements, Joachim Hemming (1986:107) believed the Mikhailovgrad site had no military function. For Golemanovo kale, see Uenze 1992:116–19; Werner 1992:415. Werner (1992:403) believed that the site at Golemanovo kale was not a military one because no structure was found on site that could be interpreted as *horreum*. In fact, very few, if any, *horrea* were erected on sixth-century military sites in the Balkans.

⁶⁸ "Secret fountain" at Celei: Tudor 1965:109 and 116–17. Another well was found at Bosman (Kondić 1982–3a:141 and 143). Rooms built against the walls: Jovanović 1982–3:321. Mora Vagei: Černanović-Kuzmanović and Stanković 1986:454–5. The occupation of the site is evidenced by six *adida* and faunal remains, the majority of which are of pig. The fort had a small port, an indication that supplies for the garrison may have come via the Danube river. Another anchorage is said to have existed at the neighboring fort at Čezava (Kondić 1984a:153), but does not appear on any of the published plans. For the church and the cemetery at Celei, see Tudor 1965:111; Tudor, Topopu, Tăntăla, and Nica 1980. For the two-storied church at Golemanovo kale, see Uenze 1992:52. Berkovica: Mitrova-Džihonova 1974:342–3 and 1984:340–1. Botevo: Hoddinott 1975:242.

churches built in the middle of nowhere, apparently without any related settlements or cemeteries. At Džhanavar Tepe, 4 km south of Varna, in Bulgaria, a single-naved basilica was built with projecting north and south rooms inscribing both apse and narthex, all in the form of powerful towers. The one on the northwestern side was a baptistery. Some have suggested Syrian influences, but there is no doubt as to the defensive character of the complex. A still more compelling example is the Săg's basilica at Pirdop, in western Bulgaria, with a massive rectangular wall with four angle towers enclosing the church. The precinct seems to have been built at the same time as the extant church. Despite claims to the contrary, the defensive character of the complex is betrayed not only by its walls and towers, but also by barrel vaults and domes replacing the timber roof during the last building phase. It is not clear why these two churches were fortified in this way. Taking into consideration their isolated location, however, it may be possible to associate them with churches built within city or fort ramparts or close to the strongest parts of the precincts.⁶⁹

The situation in Moesia Superior is remarkably similar. Under Justinian, no less than nine new forts were built in the Iron Gates segment of the Danube *limes*, three of which incorporated older *burgi*. The only period of restoration or building indicated by coin-dated archaeological contexts is indeed that of Justinian's reign, as clearly shown by excavations at Sapaja, Saldum, Čezava, and Svetinja. Wattle-walled houses have been found at Ravna and Svetinja, near Viminacium. In the latter case, they were all similar in size and form, with surfaces ranging from twenty to twenty-seven square meters. Loom weights found in houses 1 and 3 suggest that weaving was an important activity. With the exception of house 3, which produced only seeds of millet, most samples of grain seeds from Svetinja were mixtures of wheat, rye, barley, and millet, a clear indication of three-field rotation. Supplies of corn undoubtedly came from outside the small military settlement, probably from the neighboring city of Viminacium. During the third building phase, which is coin-dated to the end of the sixth century, a smithy was established on the other side

of the rampart. The house produced a considerable quantity of soot with iron dust and slag. Elsewhere, there is evidence of storage facilities, possibly designed for supplies of corn from other areas. At Sapaja and Čezava, despite an abundance of ceramic material testifying to the intensity of human activity, there were no buildings at all. Soldiers may have resided in tents. But the forts at Čezava, Veliki Gradac, and Boljetin were dominated by single-naved churches, the latter two with later additions of baptisteries. Fire destruction was only attested at Ravna (on the profile A-A' at the southwest wall) and dated by archaeologists to 596 on purely historical grounds. At Svetinja, the second building phase ended with heavy destruction as evidenced by a thick layer of rubble mixed with fallen parts of the upper rampart construction. This destruction has been coin-dated between 575 and 587. After restoration, the settlement in phase III was abandoned at some point after 590/1, the date of the last coin found on the site. At Saldum and Čezava, the abandonment may have taken place shortly after 592/3 and 593/4, respectively.⁷⁰

In the interior, the evidence of forts has only recently come to light. In connection with special measures taken for the protection of the mining district in the Morava valley, several forts seem to have been built at key points. At Bregovina, near Caričin Grad, the only fully excavated building is the three-aisled basilica, which incorporated one of the fort's towers. A sixth-century coin was found in the middle of the nave. Six other, only partially excavated, structures within the fort produced evidence of the stone-cum-clay technique. The fort at Balajnac, near Niš, had a large, remarkably well-preserved, cistern, which produced a coin minted for Emperor Justinian. Very little is known about other buildings in the interior of the fort or about the date of its abandonment. Several other forts have been only partially explored in the iron ore district of

⁶⁹ Džhanavar Tepe: Pillingner 1985:285-7. The church has been dated on no solid grounds to the fifth century (Hoddmott 1975:327). Other examples of cross-shaped churches in the Balkans: Carevec (Hoddmott 1975:251), Čakvištre (Hoddmott 1975:279), the basilica D in Caričin Grad (Duval 1984:419), and the H. David basilica in Thessalonica (Krauthemer 1986:239-40). As suggested by the Carevec basilica, such churches might have served as martyria. For Pirdop, see Hoddmott 1975:327; Mitova-Džhonova 1974:56; Chaneva-Dechevska 1984:619; Pillingner 1985:284-5; Krauthemer 1986:251-2. Though the last building phase may be Justinianic, a final remodeling of the church seem to have occurred sometime during the last third of the sixth century. To my knowledge, there are no other examples of isolated churches in the Balkans, despite claims to the contrary (Mikulić 1986a:244). The only other case is located outside the area under discussion, in Iskra. See Šonje 1976 and 1976-8.

⁷⁰ Fire destruction at Ravna: Kondić 1982-3b:249. Abandoned sites: Popović 1987:12-13; Petrović 1982-3:133; Vasić 1990:907. Justinianic forts in northern Serbia: Vasić and Kondić 1986:555; Popović 1991:14; Vasić 1994-5; Sapaja: Dimitrijević 1982-3:47-9; Saldum: Kondić 1974:46; Petrović 1982-3:133. Transilvania: Vasić 1990:33; Čezava: Kondić 1974:41; Vasić 1982-3:102 and 1990:907. Miloje Vasić's subdivision of the sixth-century phase at Čezava into two sub-phases is not supported by the published archaeological profiles. For Svetinja, see Popović 1987:10; Milojević 1987:57. The construction of the bulwark across the narrow strip of land between the Danube and the Mlava bed is coin-dated to 542/3. New houses were built under Justin II and Maurice on both sides of the rampart. Svetinja has recently been interpreted as port, and the bulwark as wharf. See Mirković 1989:24-5. The soldiers who manned the bulwark (believed to be Gepid mercenaries, because of the stamped pottery found on the site) most probably came from Viminacium. For wattle-walled houses, see Borjovčić 1987:67 and 70. For the smithy, see Popović 1987:28-31; Milojević 1987:47. Among artifacts found in the house, there were two folles struck for Maurice in 587/8 and 590/1, respectively, in addition to parts of two armors made of small rectangular iron plates and a fragment of a comb case sheath. For storage facilities, see Vasić and Kondić 1986:558. For fort churches, see Bošković 1978:437; Kondić 1984a:155; Vasić 1990:907.

Tutin, in southern Serbia. The most impressive site in this region, however, is Jelica-Gradina, near Čačak. Within the area enclosed by walls, a building was found, with walls of stone bonded with clay. The building produced fragments of quern stones and ceramic and glass remains. The site had at least three churches, one of which was an extra-mural, ceneterial basilica. Basilica C had a cruciform baptistery with walls decorated with frescoes. Fragments of window glass also point to a decoration unusually lavish for a fort basilica. The church produced a pentamunition struck for Justinian between 526 and 537 and the excavator believes that the fort was built under Justinian, in the 530s. However, twelve burials within and outside basilica C had no associated finds. The Jelica-Gradina fort also had a martyrion, which produced a silver reliquary, now lost. Another group of burials – women, men, and children – was found inside basilica A. The associated grave-goods (a bronze buckle and a *Vogetfibrel*) indicate a date in the 500s. A third cemetery of thirty-one burials, including a burial chamber, was found within and around the third church, most probably a *basilica coemeterialis*. A gold coin struck for Emperor Justin II was found near the burial chamber. It gives a *terminus a quo* for this cemetery. The presence of burnt layers in various parts of the site has been interpreted as an indication that habitation within the fort ended in violence, but no chronological evidence exists for this event, while the occupation of the site during the seventh century remains doubtful. Field surveys and trial excavations in the same region identified four other forts, all of which produced evidence of a sixth-century, perhaps Justinianic, occupation. The same is true for the fort at Momčilov Grad near Potočac, which produced a great number of coins issued under Justinian's reign. By contrast, the fort near Pautalia was built in the early 400s. When Procopius spoke of Justinian restoring Pautalia, he may have referred to this fort, not to the city itself.⁷¹

The date established on the basis of coin finds for the small fort at Dyadovo, in Thrace, excavated by a Dutch-Bulgarian team, is confirmed by an inscription found near Nova Zagora indicating substantial building activity during Justinian's reign. Radiocarbon dating of grain seeds from houses destroyed by fire at the end of the building phase C indicate that the neighboring fort at Karasura was rebuilt at some point after the early sixth century, thus confirming Procopius' textual evidence. Among all

churches on site, only the extramural *basilica coemeterialis* has been fully explored. More interesting is the evidence of intramural habitation. Two storage rooms containing no less than 167 amphoras and 4 *dolia* were built against the northwest wall shortly after the early sixth century. House N 10/W 10 had two stories, and the presence of a quern suggests that its first floor may have served as a mill. The great number of weapons found in N 10/W 10 does not necessarily indicate fighting, despite clear evidence that the house ended in fire, for the house's second floor may have been used as armory. Three houses with walls of stone and adobe bonded with clay were built on top of the ruins of the storage rooms erected during the building phase D. Subdivision of the area formerly designed for storage indicates that the new buildings served as dwellings. The pottery found in these houses has no analogy in the Balkans. It has been therefore interpreted as an indication of Armenian settlers brought to Thrace during the seventh century. Moreover, house S 5/W 34, dated to the same building phase as the three houses already mentioned, produced wheel-made pottery (called "Byzantine" by the German archaeologists), arrow heads, a shield, bronze and iron brooches (including fibulae with bent stem), and a stirrup, all artifacts strikingly reminding those from the house excavated at Caričin Grad in the western portico of the colonnaded street running from the circular plaza to the upper city's south gate. Just as in Caričin Grad, there is no evidence to substantiate the idea of a Slavic settlement. On the other hand, there is clear evidence that the fort at Karasura was destroyed by fire at some point after Justinian's reign. After restoration, buildings belonging to phase E were also destroyed by fire at some point during the seventh century, as evidenced by burnt layers on many house floors.⁷²

Thanks to an excellent survey of the archaeological evidence in Thrace and the neighboring areas, it is possible to visualize the distribution of forts in the region south of the Stara Planina range (Figure 3). One of the most striking features of this distribution is the cluster of forts around the main mountain passes. Particular attention seems to have been paid to passes of lower altitude. Many forts were large (over 2 ha), sometimes with an extra-fortified acropolis. With only one exception, forts in the Stara Planina mountains have no churches, but many were equipped with

⁷¹ Forts in the Morava basin: Werner 1986:561–4; Bregovina: Popović 1989–90; Jeremić and Milinković 1995; Milinković 1999; Baljunać: Jeremić 1995. Forts in the Tutin area: Milinković 1982a, 1982b, and 1985. For Gradina and other forts in the area, see Milinković 1995 and <http://arheo.fg.ac.yu/projektu/jelica/index.html> (visit of May 29, 2000). Momčilov Grad: Brnbić 1986; Pautalia: Goeva 1971:431. For forts in the Timok valley in eastern Serbia, see Petrović 1994–5.

⁷² Karasura: Procopius, *Buildings* IV 11; Wendel 1987:201 and 1992:201 and 206; Herrmann 1992:174–5; Döhle 1992:196; Bötzger 1992:245 and 249; Dinchev 1997a:53. Extramural church: Schöneburg 1991. For other fort churches in Thrace, see Borisov 1988b; Soustal 1991:238, 300, and 488; Dyadovo: Boer 1988–99. It is not at all certain that any Armenian settlers came to Thrace during this period. According to Sebeos (pp. 70–1 and 81), Emperor Maurice had the intention to conscript the Armenian nobility to serve in the Balkans and twice attempted to settle Armenian families in Thrace, the last time just before Phocas' revolt. There is no indication, however, that the settlers ever arrived in Thrace.

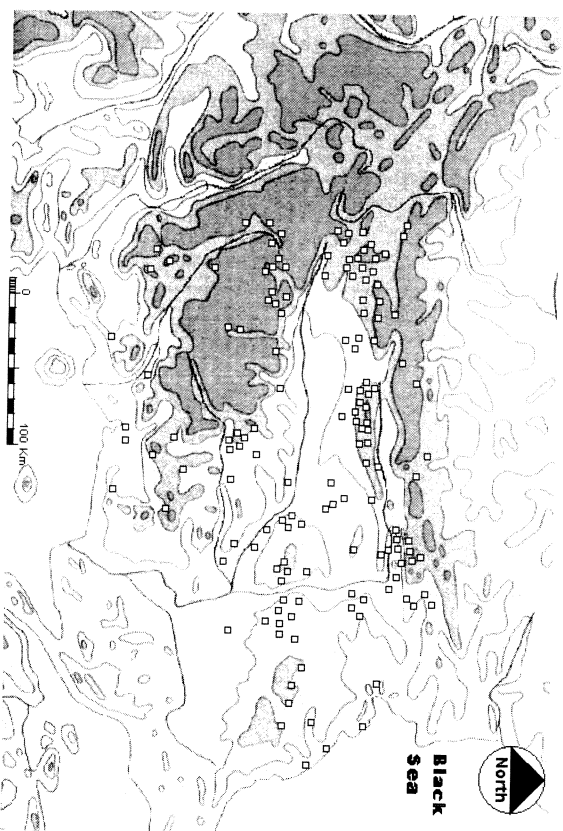


Figure 3 The distribution of known fifth- to sixth-century forts in Thrace
Lowest contour 200 m, thereafter 500 m and over 1,000 m (data after Sousal 1991).

cisterns or wells. Despite the lack of systematic excavations and relevant finds, their dating to Justinian's reign is secured by the presence of *proteichismata*, as well as of triangular, pentagonal, and horseshoe-shaped towers.⁷³

Equally interesting is the evidence from Macedonia. It is often assumed that forts in this region can easily be separated from fortified villages or *refugia* because of being apparently built by military experts. In many cases, interior amenities (cisterns, *horrea*, *ammanteria*) were identified. Typical for the Justinianic phase are the disappearance of *praetoria* and the building of interior structures against the ramparts. A date to Justinian's reign is also suggested by the presence of triangular and pentagonal

⁷³ *Proteichismata*: Ovecharov 1973; Biernacka-Lubanska 1982:148, 159, and 162; Gregory 1982a:200. For *proteichismata* and Justinianic fortifications in Crimea, see Veimann 1958:10. For a case of pentagonal tower in the Caucasus region, see Voronov and Bgazhba 1987:118. For the archaeological survey of Thrace, see Sousal 1991. On the Black Sea coast, two forts were identified at Sv. Nikola and Maslen nos, both on the bay of Burgas, but no excavations were carried in any of them (*ibid.*, pp. 62–3). The main passes of lower altitude in the Stara Planina are Korel (685 m), between the upper Tricha valley and the Luda Kanchiia, and Trainova vrata (Succi, 843 m) between the Elendzhik and the Dohla Vasilica mountains. The latter was the most important pass on the main highway across the Balkans, from Constantinople to Singidunum. Each one of these two passes was defended by ten forts, unlike passes at higher altitude (such as Trojan, Zlatitski probod, and Shipka), which had fewer.

towers, and confirmed by coin finds. All Macedonian forts have churches, either three-aisled or single-naved basilicas. Despite clear evidence of heavy destruction by fire, the fort at Markovi Kuli was twice restored. In the end, it seems to have been abandoned sometime after 601/2, the date of the last coin found in the fort's aqueduct. The same is true for the fort at Debreše, though an exact date for its abandonment cannot be conjectured. In both cases, there is no indication that the abandonment was the result of any external threat.⁷⁴

Elsewhere in the Balkans, the evidence is too meager to permit any conclusions. In Albania, only three forts have been identified so far from the sixth and seventh centuries: Drisht-Shkodër, Shurdhah, and Krutja. Their date was established on the basis of the presence of triangular and horseshoe-shaped towers, a feature most typical for Justinianic military architecture. Though excavations were carried at Shurdhah, the original date initially advanced for houses found in the interior has been disputed. Nor is it clear what was the relation between the famous cemetery at Krutja and the neighboring fortress. With the exception of the large fort at Isthmia, which may have accommodated soldiers and their families, the evidence from Greece is minimal.⁷⁵

Farther to the north, forts produced evidence of occupation at the time of the Byzantine take-over in Dalmatia, during the Gothic war in Italy. Recent archaeological excavations at Dubrovnik reveal that shortly after Byzantine troops occupied the eastern Adriatic coast, a fort was built on the former island of Lave. It was immediately followed by a large

⁷⁴ For the use of leveling courses of brick (*opus laterium*) or alternating courses of brick and stone (*opus mixtum*), with bricks set in a bed of red mortar, as typical for the late fifth- and sixth-century military architecture, see Ovecharov 1977:470–1 and 1982:68; Gregory 1982a:258. Cisterns: Mikulčić and Bilbija 1981–2:213; Mikulčić 1986b:266. A smiddy was identified at Lyubanci: Chausidis 1985–6:191. For other buildings in the interior, see Mikulčić and Nikuljka 1978:139. Houses built against the ramparts: Mikulčić 1986b:261 and 266. Triangular and pentagonal towers: Georgiev 1985–6:203–4. At Markovi Kuli, the triangular tower is coin-dated to Justinian's reign. New work was added during Justin II's reign (two coins issued between 575 and 578 date phase II). After heavy destruction, a new restoration amplified the triangular tower into a massive, polygonal bastion. This latter phase is coin-dated to the last regnal years of Justin II or to Tiberius II's reign. See Mikulčić and Nikuljka 1978:139 and 141; Mikulčić and Nikuljka 1979:72. Fort churches: Mikulčić and Bilbija 1981–2:214; Rauturova 1981:45–8; Spasovska-Dimitrovska 1981–2:170–1; Mikulčić 1986a:266. The three-aisled basilica at Venice had a baptistry, that of Debreše was built next to an episcopal residence.

⁷⁵ Forts in Albania: Komata 1976:182; Annanali 1993a:455–7; Hoxha 1993:555–6. Shkodër produced brick stamps with Justinian's monogram. Triangular towers also appear at Qafa. The three-aisled basilica from Zardashitë produced a relatively large number of coins minted for Justin I and Justinian, but its chronology is not clear. For Shurdhah, see also Spahiu 1976:154–5 and 158; Karasaj 1989:2647. For the cemetery at Krutja, see Annanali and Spahiu 1993. That families of soldiers may have resided within forts is suggested by the presence of intramural female and child burials. See Kardulis 1988:208 and 1992:284; Milinković 1993. Military sites in Greece: Ober 1987:220.

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extramural, three-aisled basilica, built on the site of the modern city cathedral. This fort appears to be the largest on the Adriatic coast and in mainland Montenegro, comparable in size to such cities as Dyrrachium, Ohreznos, and Butrint. At some point after 536, but before 597, the bishop of neighboring Epidaurus was transferred to the new basilica erected under the eastern ramparts of the fort. Dubrovnik thus became a bishopric and, perhaps, a lesser center of Justinian's administration of the coastal region.⁷⁶

In Slovenia, no settlements existed during the fifth and sixth centuries, other than hillforts. The abandonment of settlements in the lowlands was accompanied by drastic changes in the economic profile of those communities, with a greater emphasis on pastoralism. At Ajdovski gradec, faunal remains mainly consisted of bones of sheep and goat, followed at a distance by pig and cattle. A date established for the forts in the northwestern Balkans during Justinian's reign seems to be confirmed by finds of coins and fibulae. In most cases, the fort's interior contained relatively large, open spaces, probably under cultivation. At Tinje, houses were cut in rock, with wattle or wooden superstructure. One of them, no. 4, produced a hoard of agricultural implements, with socketed shares, a mattock, and a scythe. At Rifnik, houses were built in stone bonded with clay. One of them, built very close to the church, produced evidence of glass windows. Another house may have served as a smithy. Houses built in stone bonded with clay were also found at Ajdovski gradec. House A had four rooms and produced exceptional artifacts: a bronze bowl, stamped pottery, *spatheia*, a marble mortar, and a silver pin. It has been interpreted as an episcopal residence. House D had a single room with a heating system with channels under the floor of lime mortar. House E produced a considerable number of tools (awl, knife, whetstones, saws), which suggests that the building may have been a workshop. Handmade pottery was found in house G, built immediately close to the precinct. A multi-roomed building was also found at Gorjki Vrbljani, in western Bosnia. It had an inner courtyard, an oven, and a kitchen. No other buildings were apparently built on the site. By contrast, at Korinjski hrib, in Slovenia, some of the towers of the precinct may have served as dwellings, as suggested by the existence of hearths. Another tower contained a cistern. At Rifnik and Korinija, on the island of Kik, the cisterns were cut in rock. At Ajdovski gradec, Biogradi, and Kaštelina, on the island of Rab, the cisterns were part of the precinct. Almost all forts have at least

⁷⁶ Stevović 1991:142, 147, and 150; see also Gambi 1989:2400 and 2402. Even before the Gothic war, a defense line was built on the left bank of the Neretva river, with forts at Debelo brdo, Bobovac, Usora-Bosna, and Zecovi near Prijedor. At the same time mining activities resumed at Bosanski Novi. See Basler 1993:17–18.

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one single-naved church located on the highest point of the settlement. But Christian congregations on the northern shore of the Adriatic, in the Alpine region farther north and in Bosnia, clung to architectural types established in the early fourth century. Box churches without apses, the altar pushed forward into the nave and a semicircular clergy bench behind the altar, have been found at Rifnik and Ajdovski gradec. It is often assumed that the occupation of the forts in the northwestern Balkans ceased sometime before or shortly after 600, as a consequence of Avar or Slavic attacks. At a closer examination of the published material there is no indication of destruction by fire, except at Gorjki Vrbljani, for which, however, there is no indication of date.⁷⁷

In many cases, the exact dates for the building, restoration, destruction, or abandonment of the Balkan forts were established on the basis of isolated coins or hoards. Hoards are particularly important in this context, since they are often associated with impending disaster caused by barbarian raids. It might be worthwhile, therefore, to take a fresh look at the numismatic evidence before drawing the final conclusion of this chapter.

INFLATION IN THE BALKANS AND THE END OF THE LIMES: THE EVIDENCE OF COIN HOARDS

Hoards are generally believed to have been deposited close to the date of the latest coin. An unusual clustering of coin hoards within a short span of time is often interpreted as indicating some severe threat to the region. Plotted on maps, hoards were often used for tracing movements of armies or peoples and areas of social and military unrest. They were thus viewed as mute testimonies to misfortunes, calamities, or tragedies. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that archaeologists made extensive use of coin hoards for tracing barbarian invasions into the Balkans, especially when coin hoards were found in or near destroyed forts.⁷⁸ Despite the extensive use of numismatic evidence for documenting Slavic invasions, very few scholars attempted to map hoards in order to show in detail how far away they lay from the conjectural routeways and focal areas of settlement.

⁷⁷ Čiglenečki 1987a:107 and 1987b:272 and 285. See also Biebrauer 1984:53–4. For pastoralism, see Petru 1978:226. For faunal remains at Ajdovski gradec, see Knific 1994:215. Intramural open spaces: Čiglenečki 1979:463 and 1987b:114–15. Coins and fibulae: Bolla 1978:515; Čremošnik 1987–8:94. Tinje: Čiglenečki 1987b:44. Rifnik: Bolla 1978:511. Ajdovski gradec: Knific 1994:212 and 216. Gorjki Vrbljani: Čiglenečki 1987a:107; Basler 1993:33. Korinjski hrib: Čiglenečki 1987a:274 and 1987b:101–3. Korinija: Tomičić 1986–7:151. Kaštelina: Tomičić 1988–9:33. Fort churches: Tomičić 1986–7:151 and 1988–9:30–2; Faber 1986–7:123. Church architecture in Dalmatia, Bosnia, and Istria: Krauthmeier 1986:179; Bolla 1978:515; Knific 1994:212; Bratož 1989:238f; Basler 1993:48.

⁷⁸ Kent 1974:202; Banning 1987:7; Metcalf 1991:141. See also Curta 1996:65–78. What follows is primarily based on this study.

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Even fewer examined large numbers of hoards in order to assess from their size and age-structure how soon after the *terminus post quem* their concealment is likely to have been. Some observed that not every incursion provoked hoarding. Moreover, the evidence of sixth-century hoards suggests that coin hoarding continued in relatively quiescent periods.⁷⁹ The deposition of low denomination copper coins has been attributed to economic factors. Inflation had a particularly marked effect on the radiate, making it practically worthless. Large hoards of radiates may thus have been originally buried for safe-keeping, but not retrieved because inflation had rendered them valueless or they were already worthless and were buried as a means of disposal.⁸⁰

The early Byzantine Empire operated a closed economy, in which the monetary value of coins was officially sanctioned. It is often assumed that copper coins which passed beyond the sphere of control of the issuing authority lost their value, because coinage in that metal was almost uniformly of a fiduciary nature. Exporting copper beyond the imperial frontiers would have immediately dropped its value to that of its bullion content.⁸¹ If this is true, however, it is very difficult to explain the presence of coin hoards, primarily of copper, in the regions beyond the Danube frontier of the Empire, where historical sources locate the Sclavenes. These sources suggest that beginning with the 570s the raids of the Slavs considerably increased and changed in both direction and effects. Some argued that until 602 the most destructive invasions were in the southern region of the Balkans and that Roman sites in the north survived until Heraclius' early regnal years. Did, then, invasions of the Cutrigurs, Avars, and Slavs result in such clear-cut changes in the pattern of coin-hoarding in various provinces that we can identify particular moments when these provinces were overrun? The distribution of hoards in the Balkans would at best indicate that large tracts in the western and central parts were not touched by invasions at all (Figure 4).⁸²

As shown in Chapter 3, the diocese of Thrace was systematically raided

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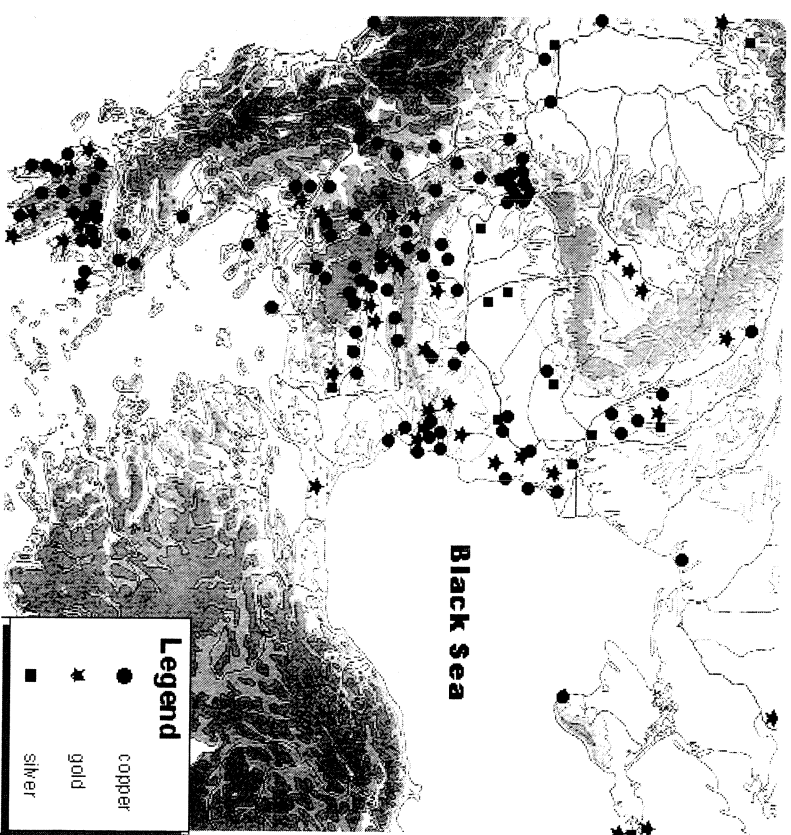


Figure 4 The distribution of sixth- to seventh-century Byzantine coin hoards in Southeastern Europe.

by Cutrigurs and Sclavenes in the late 400s and the early 500s, as well as by Sclavenes and Avars in the late 500s. One would expect to find a large number of hoards in an area under such a serious threat. The distribution of sixth-century hoards in the Balkans reveals, however, a striking difference between central regions, such as Serbia and Macedonia, and the eastern provinces included in the diocese of Thrace (Figure 5). With just one exception, there is no hoard in the eastern Balkans with a *terminus post quem* before 600. The latest coins found in Thracian hoards were either struck for Justin I or, more often, pre-550 issues of Justinian. The number of hoards drastically dropped in the following decades and hoards completely disappeared between 580 and 680.⁸³ One can easily find similar examples in Thessaly and the western provinces of the Balkans,

⁷⁹ For the use of hoards for documenting Slavic invasions, see Metcalf 1962a and 1962b; Iurukova 1969b; Popović 1975 and 1980; Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou 1986; Madgeanu 1997. Out of more than 200 hoards known so far from the Balkans, not a single one produced a *terminus a quo* to be associated with the serious Cutrigur raid of 558/9. Conversely, coin hoarding in the Balkans increased particularly after 565 and before 580, at a time when, according to historical sources, there was no major Slavic invasion or any other barbarian attack across the Lower Danube. See Curta 1996:80 and 103–4.

⁸⁰ Atchison 1988:273–4; Berghaus 1987:16. For an interesting study of coin hoarding and burying in relation to economic recession, see Mikolajczyk 1982. See also Sarvas 1981. Samuel Pepys's diary (1667) is the cautionary tale most frequently cited against hastily associating hoards with invasions. See Higbed 1967; Casey 1986:53–5.

⁸¹ Hendy 1985:357; Atchison 1988:270. *Contin.* Potter 1983:225; Morrisson 1989:251. For coin circulation in the Balkans, see Duncan 1993.

⁸² Popović 1980:257; Metcalf 1991:140; Curta 1996:76 and 178 fig. 1. For the Sclavene raid of 548, which reached Durres (Epidaurum, Dyrrachium), see Procopius, *Wars* vii 29.1–3.

⁸³ Curta 1996:94–5 and 180 fig. 3. The exception is the ill-published Mezek hoard with a last coin probably struck during the second half of Justinian's reign (Iurukova 1969b:262).

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for which clear evidence exists that they were also raided by Avars and Slavens. However, no hoard was found on the territory of Epirus Vetus, Prevalitana, and Epirus Nova, while Thessaly is ranked close to the eastern provinces. By contrast, the largest number of hoards is that from Greece, which was seriously threatened only after *c.* 580.

A considerable number of sixth- and early seventh-century hoards were found in urban contexts, in Caričin Grad (Justiniana Prima), Pustogradsko (Stobi), Adamclisi (Tropaeum Traiani), Athens, Corinth, or Salona. Others were found in Roman camps, particularly in the Iron Gates area of the Danube frontier.⁸⁴ In cases where coins were associated with other artifacts, we can discern a certain pattern. While two hoards with the last coin issued under Justin II include cast fibulae with bent stems,⁸⁵ hoards of silver of the late 600s contain silver earrings with star-shaped pendants of a type usually found in the late 500s.⁸⁶ Archaeological observations thus suggest the existence of certain regularities in hoarding activity. A closer examination of the numismatic data may verify this hypothesis. Many hoards of copper have a *terminus post quem* between the reign of Anastasius and the early years of Justinian's reign, with a peak shortly before and after 530 (Figure 6). The number of hoards decreased dramatically after 535 and a new increase took place only after 570. By contrast, the seventh century witnessed a significant increase, particularly after 670, in the number of hoards of silver, silver and copper, or silver and gold.

On the basis of a detailed statistical analysis of the age-structure of Balkan hoards it is possible to explain this hoarding pattern by drawing comparisons between various regions in the Balkans.⁸⁷ Hoards from both Greece and Dobruđa with latest coins minted before 570 include fairly large numbers of minimi (i.e., lowest copper denominations) and so-called "barbarian imitations." These hoards were often interpreted as indicating continuous raids by Cutrigurs, Antes, or Slavens, but the examination of hoards with last coins struck *after* 570 suggests a different solution.⁸⁸ This latter group of hoards typically includes a much smaller number of coins, usually lesser fractions of the follis, issued in the late

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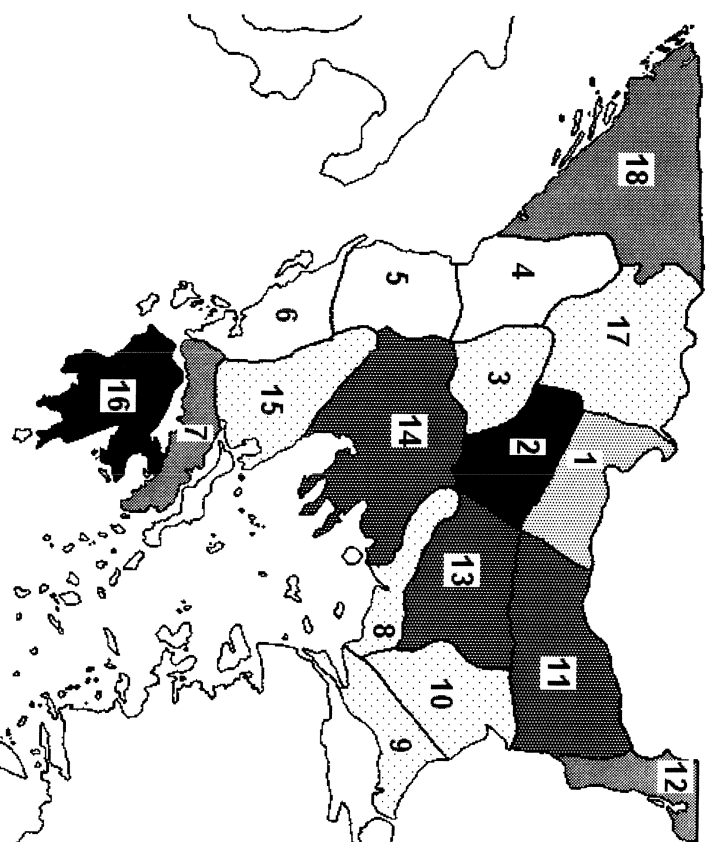


Figure 5 The distribution of sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine coin hoards in the Balkans, plotted by provinces

Blackened areas – over twenty hoards; white areas – no hoards. The descending scale of grays indicates the frequency of hoard finds. Provinces: 1 – Dacia Ripensis; 2 – Dacia Mediterranea; 3 – Dardania; 4 – Praevalitana; 5 – Epirus Nova; 6 – Epirus Vetus; 7 – Achaia (without Peloponnesus); 8 – Rhodope; 9 – Europe; 10 – Haemimons; 11 – Moesia Interior; 12 – Scythia Minor; 13 – Thrace; 14 – Macedonia; 15 – Thessaly; 16 – Achaia (Peloponnesus); 17 – Moesia Superior; 18 – Dalmatia.

400s and early 500s. Since accumulation had often begun in the early 500s and continued until the reigns of Justin II or Tiberius II, the owners of these hoards seem to have deliberately avoided lower denominations, no doubt because of the growing inflation. Indeed, by the time hoards concluded in the 570s and 580s, 1/4, 1/8, and 1/40 fractions of the follis were already valueless and probably out of circulation.⁸⁹ If so, then hoards

⁸⁴ Citres: Popović 1964b:61–9 and 77–9; Barnea et al. 1979:22 and fig. 2; Popović 1978:620 with n. 79; Metcalf 1962b:138–44 and 145–6; Avramica 1983:52 and 54–6; Mitrak 1981:89; Marović 1984. For: Jovanović 1984; Popović 1984b:23–6, 71–2, and 75–7; Minić 1984; Kondić 1984b.

⁸⁵ Bracić: Uenze 1974:485–6; Koprivac: Mitchev and Draginov 1992:39. For a recent discussion of this group of fibulae, see Curta 1992:83–5 and Uenze 1992:154–8.

⁸⁶ Zemianský Vrbovak: Svoboda 1953; Radomirsky 1953. Silistra: Angelova and Penchev 1989. Priscaca: Butoi 1968. For earrings with star-shaped pendants, see Coniga 1971; Albabin 1973; Čilińska 1975.

⁸⁷ Curta 1996:84–97.

⁸⁸ "Barbarian imitations": Juturkova 1969a; Gaj-Popović 1973; Zhekov 1987. For the interpretation of pre-570 hoards as signaling barbarian raids, see Pređa and Nubari 1973:81; Popović 1978:610; Pečarić-Borčeta and Ochešani 1980:387.

⁸⁹ The last nummia were struck under Emperor Maurice, but both the nummion and the pentanumion had become rare during Justinian's reign. See Morrison 1989:250. The regional stress in the copper coinage supply may have caused small-scale production of leaden imitations of low denominations. See Culic 1976–80; Morrison 1981; Weiser 1985.

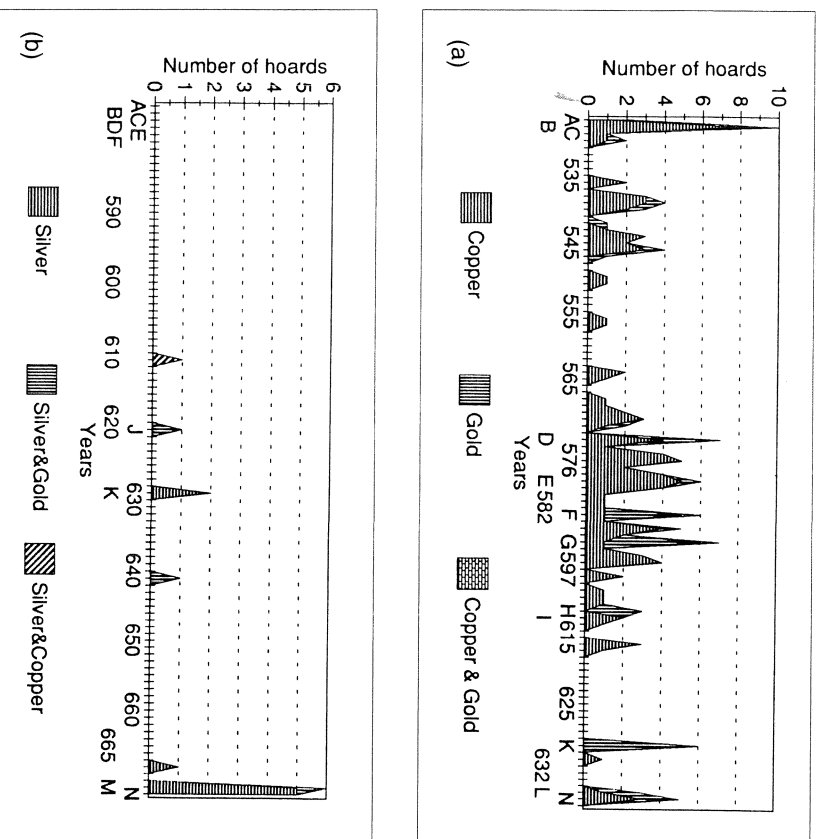


Figure 6 The mean number of sixth- to seventh-century Byzantine coin hoards found in Eastern Europe

including very low denominations, with latest coins struck shortly before 570, as well as a large number of saving hoards with mini from Greece dated after 570, may have never been retrieved by their owners not necessarily because of external threats, but because they had become valueless.⁹⁰ After 540, there is a general decline in the number of coins and no coins minted between 545 and 565 made their way to the regions beyond the Danube frontier. In Greece, on the other hand, hoards with latest coins minted before 570 display a significant decrease in both the number and the value of coins. In 554, coin circulation seems to have completely

⁹⁰ Inflation during Justinian's reign was encouraged by the financial ability of John the Cappadocian, who levied a supplement to the land tax, called the "air tax" which added 3,000 lb of gold to the annual revenue, in order to balance the budget grievously threatened by the Persian wars. See Jones 1964:284.

ceased. By contrast, hoards dated after 570 indicate a continuous circulation between 540 and 560. Despite minor variations at the regional level, the trend is visible throughout the entire Balkan peninsula. By 540, a dearth of copper seems to have become most serious in the northern Balkans, but the evidence of hoards shows that Greece and Scythia Minor also felt the impact of the crisis.

What caused this sudden change from inflation to lack of copper currency? The crisis coincides with the unpopular reform of 542, when Peter Barzymes, Justinian's *comes sacrarum largitionum*, decreased the number of folles to 180 per solidus. In addition, in 545, Peter Barzymes was compelled by the failure of the Egyptian harvest to make extensive compulsory purchases of wheat in Thrace, Bithynia, and Phrygia. Dismissed in 546, he came back in 554/5 and held office until 562. Although the financial situation was very difficult, he was able to supply Narses with sufficient funds for paying off the arrears which had accumulated in Italy and for raising the considerable army with which Justinian eventually defeated the Ostrogoths. In addition, between 545 and 562 Peter raised 7,500 pounds of gold which were instrumental in buying the final peace with Persia.⁹¹ The general decrease in coin circulation in the Balkans and the proportional increase of low or very low denominations may have something to do with these strains. The drastic decrease in the number of coins after 542/3 may have also been associated with the plague and the subsequent famine in Constantinople.⁹² The lack of any coin finds dated to 554/5 may also be connected with the project of another reform, that of 553, which aimed at decreasing the weight of the half-follis. The project had to be abandoned after street riots broke out in Constantinople.⁹³ The evidence of hoards, however, suggests an alternative interpretation.

In the central Balkans, in Dobruja, and north of the Danube frontier, the number of hoards with latest coins struck under Emperor Justinian is very small. The first half of Justinian's reign, however, witnessed the largest number of Thracian hoards, all found in or near small-sized forts along the roads from Philippopolis to Diocletianopolis and Berea. This has traditionally been interpreted as indicating Slavic raids, which reached a peak around 550. Indeed, Procopius' evidence suggests that the raids of both Cutrigurs (in 551) and Sclavenes (in 549, 551, and, possibly, 545) focused on the diocese of Thrace (see Chapter 3). However, his account highlighted only those Sclavenes who approached the walls of

⁹¹ Procopius, *Secret History* 25.12. Monetary reform of 542: Whitting 1973:106; Grierson 1982:46-47. For Peter Barzymes' career, see Jones 1964:205-6; Delmaire 1989:269.

⁹² For the plague, see Duthat 1989. For its effect on mint output, see Potter 1983:241.

⁹³ See Potter 1983:241; Morrisson 1986:115.

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Constantinople and completely ignored concurrent developments in Illyricum. On the other hand, there are no hoards from the last fifteen years of Justinian's reign (550–65), a period in which the eastern Balkans were ravaged by the invading Cutrigurs, although Slavic raids seem to have completely ceased.⁹⁴

The dwindling of the hoarding activity between 545 and 565 coincides in time with the implementation of Justinian's defense system in the Balkans. On the basis of Procopius' evidence, the completion of this building program can be dated shortly before 558. A connection between Justinian's building program and contemporary hoards is substantiated by their archaeological association with small-size forts. Justinian's gigantic project in the Balkans and its execution must have strained the local coin circulation. The increasing number of payments and other monetary transactions brought by this economic conjuncture had serious consequences especially on small savings, such as found in hoards of radiate. This may also explain the sharp decline in accumulation, as fewer coins were now withdrawn from circulation. Throughout the Balkans, hoarding developments match the picture given by stray finds. In both cases, the number of coins in the late 540s and in the 550s drastically dropped, although to different ratios in Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Dobruđa. North of the Danube frontier, circulation of coins practically ceased between 545 and 560, a clear indication that relations between the two banks of the river were interrupted as a consequence of Justinian's building program (Figures 7–8).⁹⁵ This conclusion is supported by finds of gold coins north of the Danube. Thirteen specimens are known so far from the first half of Justinian's reign. By contrast, there are only seven gold coins from the rest of Justinian's reign, as well as from Justin II's and Tiberius II's reigns (Figures 9–12).⁹⁶

Despite the occasional presence of gold coins, no hoards of gold were found in the regions adjacent to the Danube frontier. Hoards of early sixth-century *solidi* were found, however, at a considerable distance from the Danube frontier, in the steppes north of the Black Sea and on the Baltic Sea shore. Many include large numbers of light-weight *solidi*, which may have been specifically minted for paying mercenaries

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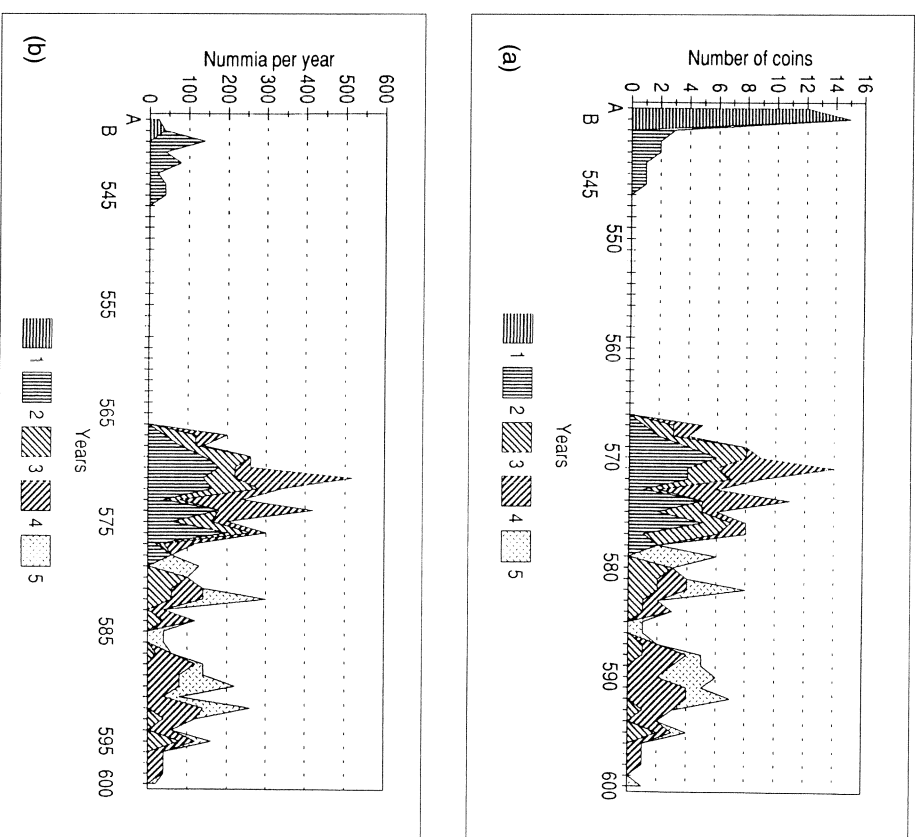


Figure 7 The mean number of coins (a) and nummia per year (b) in hoards found in Romania
1–Cudalbi; 2–Gropeni; 3–Uinea; 4–Horgești; 5–Movileni.

recruited in *barbaricum*.⁹⁷ Late sixth-century hoards of gold found south of the Danube frontier, in the Balkans, have a different composition. They typically include between five and nine *solidi* each, with all coins struck in Constantinople within a short span of time. It has been suggested that such hoards represent payments to the army known as *donativa*. Under Tiberius II, the accessional *donativum* was indeed 9 *solidi* and

⁹⁴ Curta 1996:90–1 and 93–7. For the association between Thracian and Macedonian hoards and incursions of Sclavenes and Cutrigurs, see Iurukova 1969b:257 and 259; Popović 1978:262; Poenaru-Bordea 1976.

⁹⁵ Stray finds of coins of Anastasius and Justin I in present-day Romania are relatively numerous, but the largest number of coins are those of Justinian. See Butnariu 1983–1985. Out of 96 coins of Justinian known from *barbaricum* (Eastern Europe), 54 are Romanian finds. Forty specimens were published with exact dates. Only eight of them were minted after 550.

⁹⁶ Gold coins in *barbaricum*: Butnariu 1983–5; Huszar 1955; Kropotkin 1962 and 1965; Gassowska 1979; Kos 1986; Fiala 1989; Stolicnik 1992.

⁹⁷ Kropotkin 1962:231–2 and 253; Frolova and Nikolcheva 1978; Laser 1982:106–10. See also Fagerlie 1967; Gaul 1984. For the interpretation of light-weight *solidi*, see Hahn 1989:165–7; Smedley 1988:129. See also Hahn 1981:97.

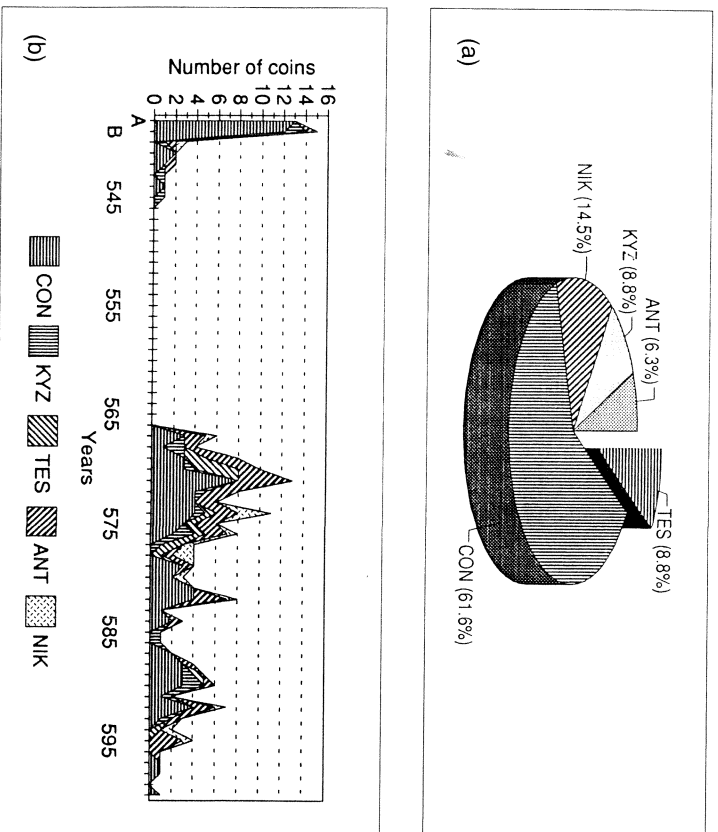


Figure 8 The frequency (a) and the mean number of coins per year (b) issued in mints represented in hoards found in Romania

the quinquennial one 5 solidi. *Donativa* were still paid in 578 and the practice of ceremonial payments to the army may have survived as late as 641.⁹⁸ In addition, the distribution of late sixth-century hoards of solidi within the Balkans coincides with the shift of military operations from the eastern to the western Balkans, which took place in the late 570s and early 580s in connection with the siege of Sirmium by the Avars and the Sclavene raids into Greece. Hoards of five to nine solidi may therefore be seen as an example of the correlation between mint output and hoarding, on one hand, and military preparations, on the other. Such hoards indicate the presence of the Roman army, not Avar or Slavic attacks. Their concealment is not necessarily the result of barbarian raids, because their owners may have kept their savings in cash in a hiding place

⁹⁸ Curta 1996:86 and 103; Hendy 1985:188 and 640–7. According to Wolfgang Hahn (1981:96–7), the 23-carat solidi introduced by Maurice were specifically struck for his quinquennial *donativum* of 587.

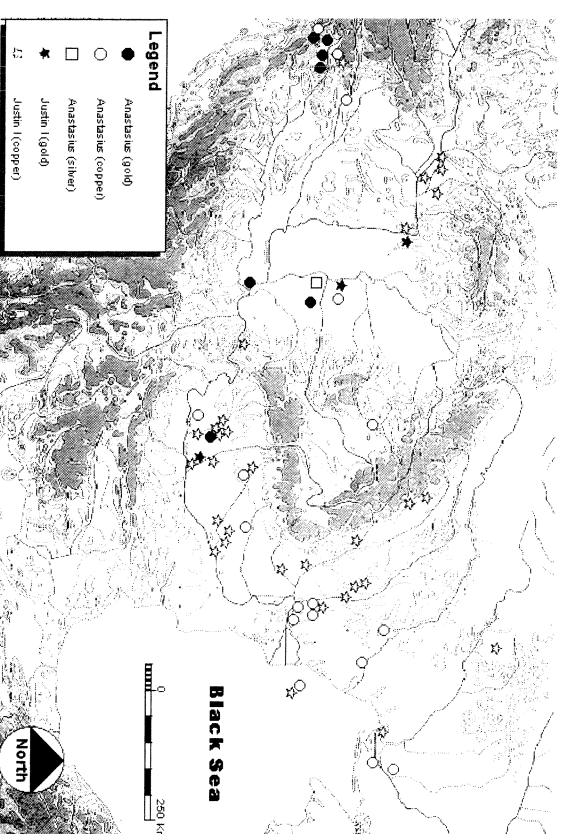


Figure 9 Distribution of stray finds of coins of Anastasius and Justin I north of the Danube frontier

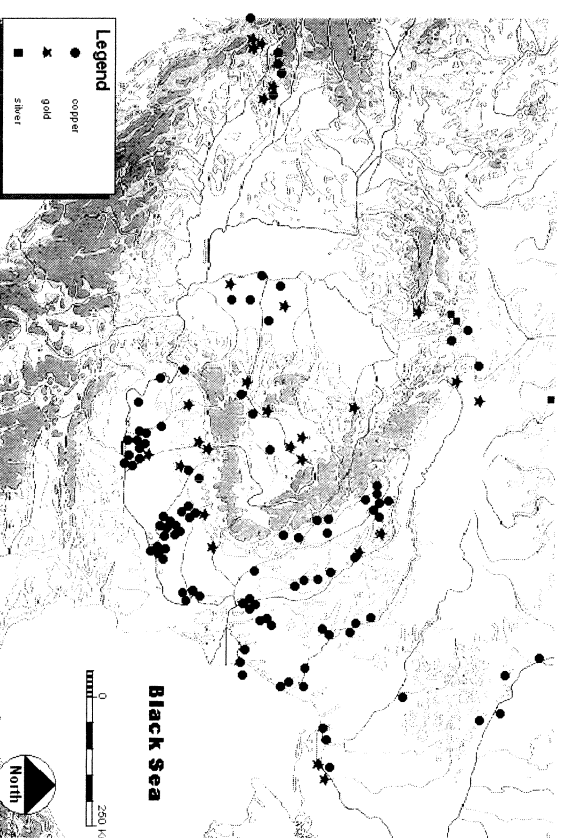


Figure 10 Distribution of stray finds of coins of Justinian north of the Danube frontier

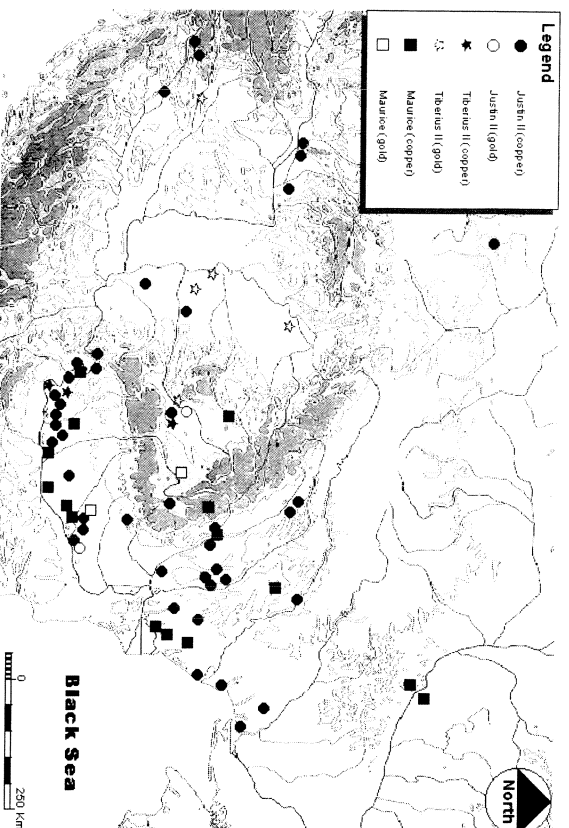


Figure 11 Distribution of stray finds of coins of Justin II, Tiberius II, and Maurice north of the Danube frontier

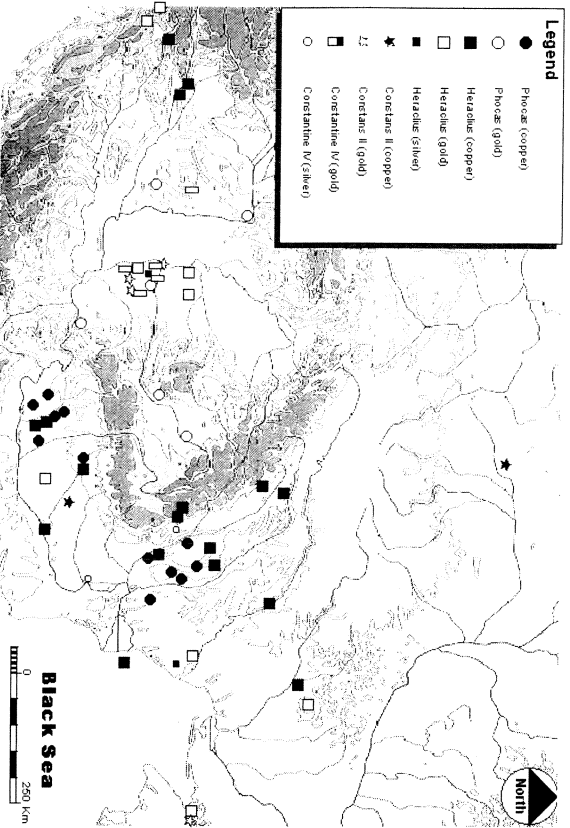


Figure 12 Distribution of stray finds of coins of Phocas, Heraclius, Constans II, and Constantine IV north of the Danube frontier

custodiae causa, not *ob metum barbarorum*.⁹⁹ In contrast with the abundance of low value coinage, finds of late sixth-century gold coins are extremely rare in the regions beyond the Danube frontier. This may indicate that few such savings fell into the hands of Slavene or Avar marauders. The chronology of gold hoards, on the other hand, is different from that of hoards of radiate. While the number of hoards of copper considerably diminished after c. 600, small quantities of gold, possibly *donativa*, were still hoarded in the early seventh century.¹⁰⁰

During the early 600s, both copper and gold continued to reach the regions north of the Danube. By 620, however, the distribution of the new silver coinage, the hexagram, provides a true measure of disruption. Only two hexagrams are known so far from the Balkans. By contrast, a large number of silver coins were found north of the Danube (Figures 4 and 12). The majority were struck for Constans II and Constantine IV. Many hoard specimens are freshly minted and die-linked, which may indicate that they did not change hands much after leaving the mint. Hoards of hexagrams have been interpreted as bribes or gifts sent directly from Constantinople to some barbarian, most likely Bulgar, chieftains. Viewed against the background of general decline, if not total cessation, of coin circulation in the Balkans, these shipments of silver to the regions north of the Danube are in sharp contrast to the small accumulations of copper in sixth-century hoards on both sides of the Danube frontier of the Empire.¹⁰¹ They delineate a different distribution network for the Byzantine coinage, itself the result of changing military and political circumstances.¹⁰²

CONCLUSION

Justinian, or, more probably, one of his Vaubans named Viktorinos, designed the defense system of the Balkans as a network of three inter-related fortification lines. This plan is spelled out by Procopius, and

⁹⁹ For the association between mint output and military operations, see Metcalf 1976:92. For hoards of gold and the presence of the military, see also Pochtaru-Bordea and Ochegsanu 1983:5-180; Iurukova 1992b:287. See also Okamura 1990:31.

¹⁰⁰ Gerasimov 1959:263; Iurukova 1980; Avramica 1983:58 and 65; Marović 1984:302. For an unusually rich hoard, see also Iurukova 1992a; Fiedler 1994a: 31 with n. 2.

¹⁰¹ Curta 1996:109-16. The two hexagrams found south of the Danube are those from the Valea Teilor hoard. See Oberländer-Târnovanu 1980:163-4. For the hexagram, see Yampopoulos 1978; see also Hahn 1978-9. For hexagrams found north of the Danube, see Radomirsky 1933; Fiala 1986; Mitrea 1975; Bonev 1985; Somogyi 1997.

¹⁰² This is further substantiated by the two ceremonial issues from a late seventh-century hoard and by Emperor Constantine IV's seal, all found in Silistra (Bulgaria). See Angelova and Penchev 1989:40; Barnea 1981. For the Silistra "coins" as ceremonial tokens for the anniversary of either Rome (April 21) or Constantinople (May 11), see Hahn 1975:156.

archaeological investigations proved the existence of three successive lines of fortifications along the Danube, the Stara Planina range, and the high ridges of Istranca Dağlar. The system may have been implemented shortly after the devastating Cutrigur invasion of 539/40. The major part of this grandiose building program was already finished in 554, when Procopius ended Book IV of his *Buildings*. This program was later extended to the northwestern Balkans, following the defeat of the Ostrogoths and the conquest of Dalmatia. In the central Balkans, Justinian laid a stronger emphasis on the second line of defense, for the largest number of forts were found around the main mountain passes across the Stara Planina. Many forts in the northern and central Balkans were quite small. Among seventy forts found in Bulgaria until 1977, more than half were less than 1 ha, and among those, the majority had no more than 0.5 ha.¹⁰³ A tabulation of some of the most important forts mentioned in the archaeological survey, for which exact data on the occupied area is available, confirms this conclusion (Table 7). Moreover, a closer examination of the tabulated forts shows that most of those built along the Danube frontier, in either Moesia Superior or Dacia Ripensis, were remarkably small. By contrast, forts built in Macedonia, in Scythia Minor, or Achaia tend to be large, over 1 ha. How could this situation be explained?

One way to answer this question is to tackle the problem of the troops used to man these forts. On the basis of archaeological research at Isthmia, Nick Kardulias has recently argued that estimates of the military population of sixth-century forts should be based on a coefficient of 1.8 to 2.7 square meters per man, which corresponds to calculations based on the archaeological evidence from the Late Roman forts at Lejjun, on the Arabian frontier, and at Thannughadi, in North Africa, as well as to the sleeping space in modern, standard US-army 25-man barracks for enlisted men. Figures obtained by using this coefficient show that most small forts did not hold more than a *numerus* (or *tagma*), the basic tactical unit of the early Byzantine army, with numbers varying from 100 to 500 men. Garrisons at large forts, such as Krivina (Iatrus), Jelica, Isthmia, or Nikiup (Nicolopolis), may have held maximum forces ranging between 2,000 and 4,000. By contrast, adding up the lowest estimated numbers of soldiers for all garrisons of forts with known area, which were found in the Iron Gates segment of the Danube frontier, we obtain a total force of slightly more than one legion with an operational strength of 5,000 men (Figure 13).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Ovcharov 1982:22. For Justinian's plan, see Procopius *Buildings* IV 1.

¹⁰⁴ Kardulias 1988:207, 1992:282-3, and 1993. A sixth-century military treatise (*De Re Strategica*, p. 9) recommends that "the men in the garrison should not have their wives and children with them." However, "if a fort is extremely strong, so that there is no danger of its being besieged, and we can keep it provisioned without any problems, then there is no reason why the men cannot have their families reside with them." Indeed, the only evidence for the presence of women and children in sixth-century forts comes from large ones, such as Isthmia and Jelica.

Table 7 Sixth-century Balkan forts: area and estimated number of soldiers

| Fort | Province | Area (in hectares) | Estimated number of soldiers |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Nikiup | Moesia Inferior | 5.74 | 3,589 to 3,651 |
| Veneç | Macedonia | 3.00 | 1,876 to 1,908 |
| Petnja | Macedonia | 3.00 | 1,876 to 1,908 |
| Krivina | Moesia Inferior | 2.80 | 1,751 to 1,781 |
| Debršte | Macedonia | 2.80 | 1,751 to 1,781 |
| Isthmia | Achaia | 2.71 | 1,694 to 1,724 |
| Balchik | Scythia Minor | 2.60 | 1,626 to 1,654 |
| Doljiman | Scythia Minor | 2.50 | 1,563 to 1,590 |
| Pantelimon | Scythia Minor | 2.20 | 1,375 to 1,399 |
| Enisla | Scythia Minor | 2.00 | 1,250 to 1,272 |
| Karataš | Dacia Ripensis | 1.87 | 1,169 to 1,189 |
| Vavovo | Moesia Inferior | 1.80 | 1,125 to 1,145 |
| Korinjski | Dalmatia | 1.80 | 1,125 to 1,145 |
| Kalakra | Scythia Minor | 1.70 | 1,063 to 1,081 |
| Korintija | Dalmatia | 1.70 | 1,063 to 1,081 |
| Momčlov g. | Dacia Mediterranea | 1.50 | 938 to 954 |
| Saldun | Moesia Superior | 1.36 | 850 to 865 |
| Kaštelina | Dalmatia | 1.30 | 813 to 827 |
| Kula | Dacia Ripensis | 1.25 | 781 to 795 |
| Dvoršite | Macedonia | 1.00 | 625 to 636 |
| Sapaja | Moesia Superior | 0.86 | 538 to 547 |
| Nova Cherna | Moesia Inferior | 0.81 | 506 to 515 |
| Vrbljani | Dalmatia | 0.66 | 413 to 420 |
| Sadovec | Dacia Ripensis | 0.65 | 406 to 413 |
| Sivri Tepe | Moesia Inferior | 0.50 | 312 to 318 |
| Zelenikovo | Macedonia | 0.47 | 294 to 299 |
| Cetacea | Dacia Ripensis | 0.37 | 231 to 235 |
| Ovidiu | Scythia Minor | 0.36 | 225 to 229 |
| Ijubičevac | Dacia Ripensis | 0.36 | 225 to 229 |
| Dyadovo | Thrace | 0.36 | 225 to 229 |
| D Butorke | Dacia Ripensis | 0.33 | 206 to 209 |
| Ijubanci | Macedonia | 0.30 | 188 to 191 |
| Glanija | Dacia Ripensis | 0.28 | 169 to 172 |
| Miliutinovac | Dacia Ripensis | 0.27 | 168 to 171 |
| Ravna | Moesia Superior | 0.24 | 150 to 153 |
| Bosman | Moesia Superior | 0.20 | 125 to 127 |
| Mora Vagei | Dacia Ripensis | 0.03 | 19 |

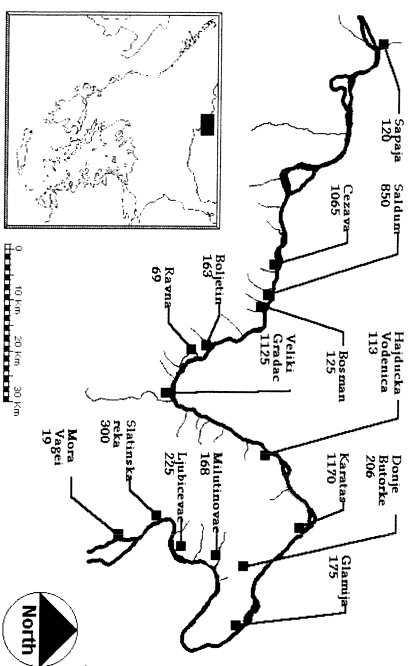


Figure 13 Sixth-century forts in the Iron Gates segment of the Danube limes, with estimated numbers of soldiers

It has been argued that Justinian depended on local farmers, serving as a kind of peasant militia, to defend his walls and forts in the Balkan peninsula.¹⁰⁵ Both the absence of rural settlements and the great number of forts, especially in the northern Balkans, show this conclusion to be wrong. It would not have made much sense for the state to undertake such expensive building projects, only to leave defense of these fortifications in the hands of local militias. Whether or not the troops which manned the forts remained there for a longer term cannot be decided on the basis of the archaeological evidence alone. But the general picture obtained from this evidence is one of rather permanent garrisons, at least in medium to large forts, with houses, amenities, and churches.

The evident association of smaller forts with the regions in the northern Balkans does not indicate that the defenders were fewer. Justinian's building program was designed to increase the potential of the existing troops by dividing and subdividing them into smaller units capable of manning the newly built or restored forts. Frontier areas, such as the mining district at the border between Dacia Ripensis and Moesia Superior, received special treatment with barrier walls and towers built across the outlets of the tributaries into the Danube.¹⁰⁶ An important role was that of the Danube fleet. Theophylact Simocatta shows that in the

late sixth century, Securisca was still an important center for producing boats and rafts for the army. Archaeological excavations indicate that the location of forts on the right bank of the Danube was influenced by the location of major ports of the Danube fleet. The Danube fleet was under the command of the *quaestor exercitus*, the office created by Justinian in 536 by combining two Balkan provinces, Scythia Minor and Moesia Inferior, and two provinces overseas, Caria and Cyprus, into a single administrative unit in which the fleet played an obviously crucial role. Moreover, since the *quaestor exercitus* was not only the most important military commander of the Thracian diocese, but also the most important administrative office in that region, some historians suggested that the *quaestura Iustiniana exercitus* was an antecedent of the first theme, the Karabisianoi.¹⁰⁷

In contrast to other regions, where Justinian's program simply consisted of restoring older constructions, the building activity in the northern Balkans seems to have been taken more seriously. Local quarries, such as those of oolitic limestone in the Svishov-Ruse area, supplying all sites in the Iantra valley, provided most of the building materials. Who took the responsibility for all these forts? Frank Wozniak suggested that local aristocrats and their personal armies took the provincial defense into their own hands. If true, this hypothesis would still have to account for the problem of how forts were supplied with ammunition, weapons, and food. Themistius' evidence from the fourth century suggests an important role of the central government and the imperial administration. There are some indications that the system was still in use during the sixth century.¹⁰⁸

Ever since A. H. M. Jones interpreted the *quaestura exercitus* as an administrative reform designed to ensure a continuous food supply for troops stationed on the Thracian border, scholars insisted that the attributions of the *quaestor* were primarily financial. He was directly responsible for the *annona* of the army in Moesia Inferior and Scythia Minor. In addition, lead seals found in the region point to communication of some regularity between the two Balkan provinces included in the *quaestura exercitus* and the central government. Thirteen imperial seals, nine of

¹⁰⁷ Theophylact Simocatta viii 6.7. The major ports of the Danube fleet were Ratiaria, (Se)curisca, and Transmarisca. See Mitrova-Dzhonova 1986:506. For the Karabisianoi, see Szádeczky-Kardoss 1985:61 and 63.

¹⁰⁵ Rosser 1985:233.
¹⁰⁶ Werner 1986:562. Elsewhere in the Balkans, barrier walls seem to have been either earlier constructions (the Hexamilion) or designed to protect water supplies (the Long Walls). See Gregory 1982b:21; Harrison 1974:247; Crow 1995:117. For the Long Walls as predating Anastasius' reign, see Croke 1982 and Whitby 1985b.

¹⁰⁸ Themistius, *Oration* 10.136, trans. P. Heather and J. Matthews (Liverpool, 1991), 44; Velkov 1987:147. For an earlier example of central distribution, see Whitaker 1994:103 and 105. For a detailed discussion of *annona* in the early Byzantine period, see Duthat 1990:37–282. For local aristocrats and sixth-century forts, see Wozniak 1982:204 and 1987:265. For marble quarries in Macedonia, see Kermadchuev 1981–2:123. For stone-cutting workshops in Thrace, see Vakhinova 1984/04:7–8.

which are from Justinian, demonstrate that officials in Scythia Minor received letters and written orders from the emperor.¹⁰⁹

Even more interesting is the evidence of amphoras. Egyptian papyri show that the daily food ratio for a soldier consisted of three pounds of bread, two pounds of meat, two *sextarii* of wine and 1/8 *sextarii* of olive oil. At least three elements of this ratio were commodities usually transported in amphoras. The capacity of these vessels varied minimally, as suggested by a few measurements taken, and never exceeded forty to fifty liters, the majority ranging between fifteen and twenty-five liters. There are two basic types according to the shape: squat or globular, and oblong or elongated. The first type, subdivided into Late Roman 2 (LR 2), Kuzmanov XIX = Scorpion XIII, and Kuzmanov III = Scorpion VI, is well represented in sixth-century Balkan forts. LR 2 amphoras were produced in the Aegean and were used for transporting either wine (as indicated by grape seeds found in some cargo amphoras on the Yassi Ada shipwreck) or olive oil. Such amphoras were quite common on sixth-century sites in Greece (e.g., Argos), as well as in northern and central Balkan forts. The same is true for Kuzmanov III = Scorpion VI, a type well represented at Ratiaria and Cape Kaliakra. As for the Kuzmanov XIX = Scorpion XIII amphoras, presumably used for transporting wine, they were found in great quantities at Krivina (Iatrus) and Voivoda. No globular amphoras were found in the Balkans in seventh-century contexts.¹¹⁰

Elongated amphoras of a type known as Late Roman 1 (LR 1) were also a familiar presence. Produced in Cilicia, near Antioch, in Cyprus, as

¹⁰⁹ Imperial seals: Barnea 1984:95; Schulz 1978:100; Culică 1975:246; Barnea 1982:202; Gerasimova-Tomova 1992:70; Barnea 1969:29–30. A seal of Justinian of unknown provenance, now in the National Museum at Sofia, may have been found in Bulgaria. See Mushinov 1934. By contrast, only one imperial seal is known from the interior (Gaj-Popović 1980:165). Similarly, only one seal of Justinian was found in Crimea. See Sokolova 1991:204. The sigillographic evidence from the Balkans includes an abundance of official seals: prefects, eparchs, consuls, *thant-lari*, *magistri*, and *a secretis*. They must have belonged to the local administration. Three seals belong to *stratelai*, one of whom may have been the last king of the Gepids, Cunnimund. By contrast, the sigillographic evidence from Crimea produced no seals of prefects, eparchs, consuls, or military officials. Attributions of the *quacstor excritus*: Jones 1964:280; Torbatov 1997:78 and 80.

¹¹⁰ Daily food ratios: Böttger 1990:926; Torbatov 1997:82 with n. 4. For early Byzantine amphoras, see Haunum 1981:38; Böttger 1988:73–4; Bakirtzis 1989a:73; Van Doorninck 1989:248 and 252; Conrad 1999. LR 2 amphoras reached Ireland and England and made their way into Avar burials and local settlements north of the Danube frontier. See Haunum 1981:43–4; Jakobson 1979:14; Gantea 1959:22; Mitrea, Eminovici, and Momatu 1986–7:224. This distribution suggests that LR 2 amphoras carried some precious substance, arguably a liquid, not just plain grain supplies. Balkan finds of LR 2: Abadie-Reynal 1989b:53; Kuzmanov 1974:13, 1978:21, and 1987:115; Jerečić and Milinković 1995:224 fig. 31; Uenze 1992:302; Mackensen 1992:252; Popović 1987:13. For Kuzmanov XIX = Scorpion XIII amphoras, see Böttger 1990:926; Kuzmanov 1985:25.

well as in Rhodes, they were used for transporting wine, oil, or grain. They were the commonest of all amphoras at Argos, in Greece, Constantinople, and on many military sites in the Balkans. They were also found in great quantities in Crimea and on the eastern Black Sea coast. The Yassi Ada shipwreck produced a large number of LR 1 amphoras, though in relatively fewer quantities than the LR 2 type. Unlike this latter type, LR 1 amphoras are also known from early seventh-century contexts. A closely similar type, Kuzmanov XV = Scorpion XII is one of the three types found at Krivina (Iatrus), but it is also known from early Byzantine forts on the eastern Black Sea coast and in Crimea. A second variant of the elongated type is known under the rather improper name of *spatheion*. *Spatheia* were most probably produced in the east Mediterranean area and may have been used for carrying olive oil, though other commodities, such as *garrin* or honey, may not be excluded. Such amphoras were relatively rare at Argos and in Constantinople. The Yassi Ada shipwreck produced only two specimens. But they were very common in the northern Balkans, and the only type of early Byzantine amphoras found on hilltop sites in Slovenia.¹¹¹

By contrast, types produced in Palestine (Late Roman 4 to 6), which were common in the western Mediterranean area and in Gaul, where they certainly transported wine, are comparatively much rarer. Only a few fragments were found in Constantinople, at Histria, Novae, and at Cape Kaliakra. Large quantities come from Argos and from some other sites in Greece, where LR 1 and LR 2 do not occur too frequently. Catherine Abadie-Reynal first attempted to explain this difference in distribution patterns by pointing to different distribution networks. She argued that Palestinian amphoras, particularly the so-called “Gaza amphora” (LR 4), seem to indicate “free-market commerce,” for they crossed the Mediterranean and reached Gaul in significant quantities. Their relatively lower frequency in the Aegean area and total absence in the Balkans (except a few trade centers on the coast) suggest that the Balkans were an area of state-run distribution. The frequency curves for LR 1, LR 2, and *spatheion*-type amphoras seem therefore to support the hypothesis of *annonna*-type distributions to the army. This is also suggested

¹¹¹ LR 1 amphoras: Mackensen 1992:252; Haunum 1981:64; Hayes 1992:64; Jovanović 1982–3:325; Popović 1987:13; Opač 1984:320; Kuzmanov 1974:312 and 1978:22; Jakobson 1979:14; Van Doorninck 1989:247; Allen 1996. For Kuzmanov XV = Scorpion XII amphoras, see Böttger 1990:926; Jakobson 1979:12. Böttger (1988:74) suggested that the Kuzmanov XV amphora was produced in the Balkans, but no evidence exists to support this idea. For *spatheia*, see Mackensen 1992:252; Böttger 1990:926; Borisov 1985:42; Jovanović 1982–3:325; Mackensen 1987:258; Knific 1994:220. By contrast, in Gaul, particularly at Marseilles, *spatheia* appear in great quantities in fifth-century deposits, but are very rare in the 500s and early 600s. See Bonifay and Plet 1995:97.

The making of the Slavs

by the constant association of these amphoras with military sites, as well as by their relatively homogeneous typology.¹¹²

That the sixth-century *limes* still relied on the central distribution of grain is shown by legislative measures taken by emperors from Anastasius to Justin II. All attempted to provide a solution to the irremediable problem of making a much impoverished and depopulated region of the Empire capable of producing enough food for the troops coming to its defense. Approaches to this problem ranged from compulsory collection of the *annona* to tax exemptions, but in all cases at stake were food supplies for troops stationed in Thrace or Moesia Inferior. Some have even and rightly assumed that the very creation of the *quastina exercitus* in 536 was a solution to the problem of helping Scythia Minor and Moesia Inferior feed their troops with supplies from the rich overseas provinces. That none of these measures proved to be successful is indirectly shown by the *Strategikon*. Its author, an experienced military officer, not only knew that the Slavens buried "their most valuable possessions" in secret places, but also recommended that "provisions found in the surrounding countryside should not simply be wasted," but shipped on pack animals and boats to "our own country." The evidence of the *Strategikon* is archaeologically confirmed by the changing consumption patterns. In addition to shipments of *annona*, the soldiers of the fort at Iatrus relied heavily on hunting for meat procurement. Garden cultivation of millet and legumes at Iatrus and Nicopolis, as well as the occasional presence of agricultural implements elsewhere, suggest that the *annona* was not sufficient for the subsistence of the frontier troops. On the other hand, that Roman soldiers may have relied on food captured from the enemy is also a good indication of the ongoing crisis.¹¹³

A project of gigantic proportions and overall excellent execution, Justinian's system failed to provide the expected solutions because its maintenance would have required efforts far beyond the potential of the Roman state, particularly of the Balkan provinces. Clearly what seems to

¹¹² See Abadie-Reynal 1986b:159. For finds in Gaul, see Bonifay, Villedeu, Leguilloux, and Raynaud 1983:1. For Novae, see Kleina 1999:87. For finds in Histria, see Pippidi, Bordenache, and Eftime 1961:241. The cargo on the Yassi Ada shipwreck has been associated with food supplies for the army, perhaps in connection with the *quastina exercitus*. It is possible that the ship sunk off the southwest coast of Turkey shortly after 625 transported *annona* distributions to the Byzantine army in the East. See Alfén 1996:213.

¹¹³ *Strategikon* XI 4, 8 and 32. See Velkov 1962:38–9; Torbatov 1997:80. Roman armies and populace were twice supplied with food by the Avars, first after the fall of Sirmium, as the conquering Avars supplied the desperately starving besieged with "bread and wine" (John of Ephesus v.32); and then during a five-day truce for the celebration of Easter, in 598, "when famine was pressing hard on the Romans" and the qagan "supplied the starving Romans with wagons of provisions" (Theophylact Simocatta VII 13.3–4). By contrast, the Avars, unlike Germanic federates, never received supplies of grain from the Romans. See Pohl 1991b:599.

The Balkans and the Danube limes

have happened after Justinian's death, if not earlier, is that the emperor's building program, whose implementation coincides with the last phase of a sharp decline of the rural population, proved to be an unbearable burden for the provincial administration. When the central distribution of *annona* completely ceased, maintaining the troops on the frontier became impossible. During Maurice's reign, the Roman army on the Danube frontier twice mutinied, and the second rebellion brought about the emperor's rapid fall. In both cases, at stake was the deterioration of the living standards and the social status of the field army as a consequence of Maurice's intended reforms.

But when did the system eventually collapse? The *communis opinio* is that as soon as Phocas' rebellion broke out, the *limes* crumbled and the Slavic tide invaded the Balkans. This idea, however, does not stand against the archaeological evidence. The year 602 has no archaeological significance for the early Byzantine settlements in the northern Balkans. Most cities and forts along the Danube frontier had already suffered heavy destruction by fire at some point between Justinian's and Maurice's reigns, at least twenty years before Phocas' rebellion. In many cases, destruction was followed by rebuilding. We have seen that the number of forts apparently abandoned without any signs of violence by far exceeds that of forts presumably sacked and destroyed by barbarians. Moreover, recent research shows that Phocas' purge of the Danubian army did not prevent it from returning to the Danubian front after overthrowing Maurice, in order to continue operations against the Avars and the Slavs. It remained there until Phocas concluded a treaty with the qagan in 605, in order to transfer the army to the Persian front. In 620, Heraclius definitively moved all troops from Europe to the eastern front. The general withdrawal of troops from the Balkan front thus coincides in time with the definite cessation of grain supplies (*annona*) from Egypt, now occupied by the Persians. The effects of the latter on grain supplies for Thessalonica are well, if indirectly, documented by the *Miracles of St Demetrius*. The Arab conquest of Syria and the subsequent developments prevented the return of the army to Thrace. The Thracian troops would be relocated in western Anatolia and Thrace remained without any troops until 680 or 690, when the Thracian theme first emerged. By that time, Justinian I's system of defense was already history.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Sebeos, p. 80. See Olster 1993:69. For the archaeological significance of AD 602, see Shuvailov 1989. For the creation of the Thracian theme, see Lilie 1977:27.