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**CONSTANTINE THE GREAT AND RAUSIMODUS,  
*SARMATARUM REX***

The author starts from a paragraph in Zosimos's "New History", which describes the battle between Constantine the Great and the Sarmatians led by their king, Rausimodus, somewhere close to the Danube. V. M. Zubar has put this event in relation to information given by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus about an expedition of Constantine the Great against a rebellion in Scythia, but dated the event in the year 322. The author offers arguments, both from written sources and from archaeological evidences, which support Zubar's thesis, but corrects the chronology and dates the war which took place in the province of Scythia in the year 324.

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In the second book of Zosimos's "New History" there is a very interesting report about a battle between the Emperor Constantine I, the Great, and the Sarmatians, somewhere in the Danube region. Here it is: "Constantine hearing that the Sauromatae, who dwelt near the Palus Maeotis, had passed the Ister in boats, and pillaged his territories, led his army against them, and was met by the barbarians, under their king Rausimodus. The Sauromatae attacked a town which was sufficiently garrisoned, but its wall was built in the lower part of stone, and in the upper part of wood. They therefore thought that they might easily take the town by burning all the wooden part of the wall; and with that view set it on fire, and in the mean time shot at those who stood on the walls. The defenders threw down darts and stones upon the barbarians, and killed many of them; and Constantine then coming up and falling on them from a higher ground, slew a great number, took some alive, and put the rest to flight. Rausimodus, having lost the greater part of his army, took shipping and crossed the Ister, with an intention of once more plundering the Roman dominions. Constantine, hearing of his design, followed them over the Ister, and attacked them in a thick wood upon a hill, to which they had fled, where he killed many of them, amongst whom was Rausimodus. He also took many of them prisoners,

giving quarter to those that would submit; and returned to his head-quarters with an immense number of captives”<sup>1</sup>.

Probably, this conflict took place in Pannonia in 322<sup>2</sup>, but on this subject, V.M. Zubar has recently offered another interpretation. Emphasizing the fact that the clash between Constantine the Great and the Sarmatians happened on the Ister banks and emphasizing consonance of names of the Bosphorian king Radamsad and the king of the Maeotian Sarmatians Rausimodus, mentioned by Zosimos, Zubar considers possible to match the above mentioned events with the information given by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus about the suppression, by the same Constantine I, with the help of Chersonites army, of the barbarian revolt, which was organized against him in Scythia.

“On the death of Constans [emperor Constantius I – 305-306 A.D.], his son Constantine [Emperor Constantine I – 306-337 A. D.] became emperor at Rome, and when he came to Byzantium, and certain of those in Scythia revolted against him, he called to mind what has been said by his father Constans concerning the affection of the Chersonites and their alliance, and he sent envoys in the country of the Chersonites, with instructions that they should go to the country of the Scythians and fight those who had revolted against him. The chief magistrate and primate of the Chersonites was, at that time, Diogenes, son of Diogenes, and the Chersonites gladly obeyed the imperial mandate and with all zeal constructed the military wagons and the arbalests and arrived at the Ister river and, having crossed it, arrayed themselves against the rebels and routed them”<sup>3</sup>.

V.M. Zubar identifies the date when Constantine the Great pursued the rebels in Scythia as the year 322 and offers data about the barbarians from the Northern Black Sea coast<sup>4</sup>.

If we take into consideration this circumstance, the result of the reorganization of the military-administrative system of the Roman Empire, which was begun by Diocletian (284-305) and finished by Constantine the Great (306-337), Dobrudja was marked as a separate province from Scythia.

<sup>1</sup> Зосим. Новая история// Латышев В.В. Известия древних писателей греческих и латинских о Скифии и Кавказе. – Т.1. Греческие писатели. – Вып.1. – Ч. II. – Спб., 1893. – С. 796, 797.

<sup>2</sup> Зосим. Новая история// ВДИ. – 1948. - №4. – С. 280, прим.3; Буданова В.П. Готы в эпоху Великого переселения народов. – Санкт-Петербург, 1999. – С. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Константин Багрянородный. Об управлении империей. – Текст, перевод, комментарий. – М., 1989. – С. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Зубарь В.М. Херсонес Таврический и Римская империя. Очерки военно-политической истории. – Киев, 1994. – С. 122, 123; он же. Северный Понт и Римская империя (середина I в. до н.э. – первая половина VI в.). – Киев, 1998. – С. 156. 157.

Its northern border was under the lower branch of the Danube<sup>5</sup>. These suggestions of V.M. Zubar deserve the outmost serious attention. It is also interesting to notice his thesis about the consonance of names of king Radamsad, who reigned on Bospores between 309-320<sup>6</sup> or 309-322<sup>7</sup>, and the king of Sauromatae, who lived near the Meotian Lake – Rausimodos, which is attested by Zosimos in his “New History”.

Certain doubts are caused only by the date of the conflict – 322, and below we mention the causes for this situation. As a matter of fact, the beginning was when Diocletian abdicated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 305, and a terrible struggle flamed up the Roman Empire between certain pretenders at the throne, Constantine I and Licinius being the most important. In 317 they divided the Roman Empire, so that Constantine I took its western part and also the western provinces of Balkans, including Moesia Superior. Licinius ruled over Asia Minor and the eastern Balkan provinces and also the coastal Dacia, Moesia Inferior and Scythia. Such division existed until 324<sup>8</sup>.

According to Sextus Aurelius Victor, the peace, which was concluded between Constantine I and Licinius, did not last too long and was broken<sup>9</sup> six years later. In 323, they became irreconcilable enemies again and in 324 in Thracia near Adrianopole, Licinius was defeated by Constantine's troops. After the defeat, he escaped and reached Byzantium and then Chalcedon and, finally, in the battle of Chrysopolis on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 324, Licinius suffered the final defeat<sup>10</sup>.

According to established chronology, among the most important events that happened in the Roman empire between 317 and 324, we must mention the riot, as depicted by Constantine VII, when Licinius ventured in Scythia against Constantine the Great, and couldn't be defeated by him thanks to the Chersonites army in 322, as before 324 Chersoneses were administratively connected to the eastern part of empire, which was ruled by

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<sup>5</sup> Карышковский П.О., Клейман И.Б. Древний город Тира. Историко-археологический очерк. – К., Наук. думка, 1985. – С. 138; Кудрявцев О.В. Исследования по истории Балкано-Дунайских областей в период Римской империи и статьи по общим проблемам древней истории. – М., 1957. – С. 211, прим. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Исанчурин Р.А., Исанчурин Е.Р. Монетное дело Боспорского царя Радамсада// НЭ. – 1989. – Т. XV. – С. 53 – 96.

<sup>7</sup> Frolova N.A. The Coinage of the Kingdom of Bosphorus A.D. 242 – 341/342// BAR International Series 166, 1983. – P. 54 – 58.

<sup>8</sup> Буданова В.П. Готы... - С. 138; Шаров О.В. Рескупорид V и Константин Великий// Боспорский феномен: погребальные памятники и святилища. – Ч.1. – Спб., 2002. – С. 211.

<sup>9</sup> Секст Аврелий Виктор. История Рима// ВДИ. – 1963. - №4. – С. 255.

<sup>10</sup> Буданова В.П. Готы... - С. 141; Шаров О.В. Рескупорид V... - С. 214.

Licinius, the one we have already discussed about<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, from the message of Constantine VII, we understand that the riot in Scythia against Constantine the Great was started “when he came to Byzantium”<sup>12</sup>. Thereby, we have also found a chronological mark for this riot.

As it is known, Constantine the Great had founded a new capital (Constantinople) in the place of ancient Greek Byzantium in 324 and sanctified it on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 330. During the time of his rule, Constantine the Great marched only two times to Byzantium, in January 317 and in 324<sup>13</sup>.

Consequently, if we could collate fragments from the texts of Zosimos and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus with information about the same war, which had taken place in the province of Scythia, we must date it either in 317 or in 324. The latter is more preferable because Constantine I could get military help to fight against the Chersonites only after 324, already as an individual ruler of Roman Empire, after the battle of Adrianople and probably after the one of Chrysopolis. Secondly, the same date is mentioned by other written sources. Therefore, “The ecclesiastical history” of Sozomen, which covers especially the period from 324 until 423, reported that Constantine the Great after the war with Licinius “was so happy in battles with foreign tribes, that he won the battle with the Sauromates and the so called Goths and, finally, in form of good deed made peace with them”<sup>14</sup>.

In connection, we would like to pay attention to one very interesting aspect in Zosimos’s report about the battle of Constantine I with the Sarmatians. Its final episode took place after Rausimodus crossed back the Danube, when Constantine followed him. According to him, a final battle in the south-western part of Budjak was not possible. This thesis can explain the group of Sarmatian antiquities, situated on the lower Danube, which is represented mainly by tombs in pits with cut niche and dated, according to supporting chronological indicators, during the first quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup>. During this time, the Sarmatians buried their dead in pits with cut niche mainly in two regions – in Crimea and on the Lower Don, but not in the Budjak. Sarmatian cut niche graves are widely represented in burial grounds dating between the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Шаров О.В. Рескупорид V... - С. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Константин Багрянородный. Об управлении... - С. 353.

<sup>13</sup> Константин Багрянородный. Об управлении... - С. 453, прим.17; Шаров О.В. Рескупорид V... - С. 212.

<sup>14</sup> Ермий Созомен. Церковная история// Латышев В.В. Известия древних писателей греческих и латинских о Скифии и Кавказе. – Т.1. Греческие писатели. – Вып.1. – Ч. II. – Спб., 1893. – С.756, 757.

<sup>15</sup> Дзиговский А.Н. Очерки истории сарматов Карпато-Днепровских земель. – Одесса, 2003. – С. 197; Васильев А.А., Дзиговский А.Н. Еще раз к хронологии позднейших сарматских древностей Буджака// *Stratum plus*. – 2001 – 2002. - №4. – С. 330, 331.

century, but not for the developed 4<sup>th</sup> century, unknown for this territory<sup>16</sup>. In Crimea, the Sarmatians buried their dead in pits with cut niche, which are most typical for mixed Alano-late Scythian-Sarmatian burial grounds of the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>17</sup>.

It is not difficult to see that Crimean antiquities and the antiquities from the territory of the Lower Don are wholly comparable with the area of «Sauromatians», which Zosimos mentioned in his tale.

#### THE LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ВДИ	- Вестник древней истории
НЭ	- Нумизматика и эпиграфика
РА	- Российская археология

**Odessa**

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<sup>16</sup> Безуглов С.И. Аланы-танаиты: экскурс Аммиана Марцеллина и археологические реалии// Историко-археологические исследования в г. Азове и на Нижнем Дону в 1989 г. – (выпуск девятый). – Азов, 1990. – С. 85.

<sup>17</sup> Храпунов И.Н. О населении Крыма в позднееримское время (по материалам могильника Дружное)// РА. – 1999. - №2. – С. 146; 149 – 152, 153.