An Attempt at Enriching the Information on the Fortification of Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium

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Abstract: The authors are trying to reason a possibility to date the construction of the first fortification wall of colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium, situated in the south-eastern part of the province of Thracia. Their study is focused on two types of monuments – Roman provincial coinage and a fragmentary marble sculpture of a turreted head of a young woman, found back in the 1930s but never properly published so far. The methodological basis of the present research is fixed by the understanding that the appearance of a turreted City-Goddess on city coins was possible only if the respective city was either fortified or in the process of being fortified, and by the conclusion that the depiction of city fortifications on coins appears only within issues that are synchronous with the very final stage of the construction works. The crucial point of this research is the precise description and dating of the sculpture, based on a thorough autopsy. As a result of the present study, the following conclusion came forth: the activities concerning the fortification of Deultum could have started ca. AD 165 and might have been finalized prior to AD 184-185.

Key words: Anchialos, Asellius Aemilianus, city fortification, corona muralis, Deultum, Fortuna-Tyche, Iulius Castus, Lucilla, Lucius Verus, Serdica, Thracia.

The importance of colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium for the infrastructure of Early Roman Thrace is beyond any doubt, and accordingly, the study of every detail of its development should be a welcomed priority. Despite the enormous work done so far in this direction, there are many questions concerning the colony that are so far without an answer firmly fixed by the existing literary, archaeological and numismatic evidence. Among these questions is the date of the construction of its first fortification wall.

The remains of a wall 1.80 m wide have been discovered during the archaeological excavations in the eastern part of the colony and it has been presumed that they belong to the very first fortification of Deultum (Балабанов / Петрова 2002, 239). It is further presumed that this fortification was constructed during the rule of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, similar to the other important cities in Thrace – Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana, and Serdica (Балабанов / Петрова 2002, 239; Draganov 2007, 30). The reasoning of such a dating remains however just a hypothesis based so far solely on historical parallels.

Numismatic Evidence

One of the causes for the vague picture of the issue is that the coins minted in the name of colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium do not include representations of the city fortification. On coins of the colony, however, a depiction of a turreted City-Goddess (Draganov 2007, 137,
Rev. 572) appears on coins of Severus Alexander (Draganov 2007, 228-229, ## 276-278a) and Julia Mamaea (Draganov 2007, 262-263, ## 520-521), minted probably within the period AD 222-224 (Draganov 2007, 67); later, a turreted Fortuna (Tyche) was depicted on coins of Gordian III (Draganov 2007, 330-331, ## 1033-1034) and Tranquillina (Draganov 2007, 390-391, # 1488), dated to the period of AD 241-243 (Draganov 2007, 85). This reverse motive is universally viewed as simply a conventional type without any concrete local information; accordingly, so far it has never been used in the context of a discussion on fortification walls. In our opinion, however, a detailed analysis of the available evidence from the province of Thracia implies otherwise, as will be shown here below.

In order to get a correct point of view, one needs a reliable case study. A suitable example here is probably the city of Byzantion, because of Cassius Dio’s explicit statement that Emperor Septimius Severus “demolished the walls of the city” in AD 195 after a three-years-long siege. The ancient historian even witnessed “the walls after they had fallen, looking as if they had been captured by some other people rather than by the Romans” (Cass. Dio 75.14.4-5). Eloquently enough, on Byzantion coins issued after the severe punishment, the City-Goddess was never depicted with a fortification crown: so far she has been attested either with a kalathos (Schönert-Geiss 1972, ## 1529, 1537, 1598), or bare-headed (Schönert-Geiss 1972, ## 1742, 1858-1859). A different situation can be observed within the coinage of Perinthos – a city which, similarly to Byzantion, was already fortified in pre-Roman times, but unlike Byzantion, did not suffer a demolishing disaster. Accordingly, the mint of Perinthos issued coins with the City-Goddess wearing also a fortification crown (Schönert 1965, ## 222-223, 517, 918) and not just a kalathos (Schönert 1965, ## 516, 594-599, 653, 719, 861), or bareheaded (Schönert 1965, ## 474, 784). This could mean that the appearance of a turreted City-Goddess on city coins was possible only if the respective city was fortified (Biernacka-Lubánska 1984, 198).

Noteworthy, however, is the case of Serdica which was fortified during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus already as Augustus, i.e. within the timeframe mid-177 – 17th March 180 (Kienast 2011, 147), as explicitly attested by two building inscriptions (IGBulg IV 1902; IGBulg V 5668; Mihailov 1976; Станчева 1975). The important information these inscriptions provide concerns the provincial governor of Thrace at the moment they were set up, who happened to be Asellius Aemilianus. His tenure in the province is traditionally dated to AD 176-180 (Kubitschek 1911, 154; Thomasson 1984, col. 167, # 33), though some scholars prefer ca. mid-177-180 (Horster 2004, 251, 254). However, there are trustful indications that his stay in Thrace as a provincial governor came to an end in AD 178 (Horster 2004, 255), which gives us the possibility to date more precisely the finalizing of the construction of the city wall of Serdica in AD 177/178 (Boteva, forthcoming, with lit.). Much earlier, already during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, i.e. within the period of AD 161-169, the mint of Serdica issued coins which depict the City-Goddess with a fortification crown (Borensa 2012, 542-543 with lit.). It is obvious that this reverse type appeared at least ten to fifteen years prior to the building of the city wall, thus contradicting at first glance the observations concerning the presence and respectively the absence of the turreted City-

1 Translation by Earnest Cary (Cary 1955, 195).
Goddess within the coinage of Perinthos and Byzantion. However, one should not neglect the fact that the construction of a city wall is a time-consuming undertaking in which the setting of a building inscription(s) points to its very last stage, while the decision of its construction is already a fateful and meaningful event for the citizens. Because of this, we are inclined to see the depiction of a turreted City-Goddess on the coins of Serdica not just as a conventional type, as the existing opinion insists, but as a reference to a recognizable local reality, albeit through a conventional depiction. This means that the appearance of such motifs within the coin complex of Serdica during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus was possible most probably due to the fact that the activities for the fortification of the city have already started and were in process at the time when these coins were minted.

Putting together the two observations allows us to suppose that the appearance of a turreted City-Goddess on city coins was possible only if the respective city was either fortified, or in the process of being fortified. If this supposition is correct, it would mean that Deultum’s coins of Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea mentioned above testify that by the time of AD 222-224 Deultum was already fortified, or at least was in the process of its fortification. In both cases, the question about the exact date of the fortification of the colony remains and it is precisely this question that inspired the present study.

The Fortuna / Tyche sculpture from Deultum

The keystone for this project is embodied by a find from Deultum – a turreted head of a young woman, made of white fine-grained marble, found in the 1930s and now kept at the Regional Historical Museum in Burgas (inv. # 61). This sculpture has been referred to in different contexts and by many researchers (Костова / Балабанов 2003, 44; Draganov 2007, 33; Попова 2012, 180, табл. III/5; Карайотов 2012); however, it has never been properly published and, in our opinion, its importance has not been fully revealed so far.

The preserved height of the monument is now 31 cm: the distance between the chin and the vertex is 20.5 cm, the fortification crown is ca. 8.5 cm high; from the neck only 2 cm are still preserved. The head is slightly turned to the right; to the right is directed also the calm and contemplative gaze of the young woman (fig. 1). The beautiful and very carefully molded face has a harmonious oval, perfectly modeled forehead, eyebrows and eyes; the cheeks are smooth, tight and tenderly brought to motion near the mouth and the nose. Her wavy hair is parted in the middle and styled in a flat roll, which is narrower in the front part and broader in the rear. The roll passes close to the temples, covers half of the left ear and almost the entire right one, and turns towards the nape. A tiny sickle-shaped lock is sliding on the cheek, separating from beneath the hair roll just in front of the ears (figs. 2-3). Behind each ear there is a long and relatively thick lock going down. The very modeling of hair is rough and not very discernable: long wavy grooves made by a chisel structure thick bundles. This yields a noticeable contrast between the precise execution of the face and the rather generalized treatment of hairstyle. Both hairstyle and facial features follow the tradition of Classical-ideal art forms. Therefore, we are inclined to insist that the sculpture under discussion is not a portrait, but an ideal image representing either a Goddess or a personification.

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2 Here we would like to express our gratitude to the museum Director Milen Nikolov for his kind cooperation and for providing us with numerous photos of the monument. Thanks are due also to Lyudmil Vagalinski, Director of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for his permanent support and strong insistence that the project should be fulfilled.

3 For a more detailed analysis of the sculpture as a monument see Милчева 2018.

4 For a different opinion see Попова (2012, 180), who inclines to identify the sculpture as a portrait of Faustina the Younger.
Initially the sculpture was loosely dated in the “2nd – 3rd century” (Draganov 2007, 33), or “2nd – early 3rd century” (Balabanov / Petrova 2002, 241), despite the clear features of the hairstyle indicating production within the Antonine period. The latter was correctly identified only recently and it has been stated that the sculpture “reflects the iconographic type of the second half of the 2nd century AD, from Faustina the Younger to Crispina” (Попова 2012, 180). It is beyond any doubt that the ideal “Mittelscheitelfrisur” of the young woman is strongly influenced by the Antonine hairstyle fashion. The smooth, soft molded surface of the face is also typical for the Antonine period.

Now, further preciseness became possible due to the detailed autopsy; it showed that in fact the frontal wavy hair is almost identical with that in the images of Lucilla from her first portrait type dated to AD 165 (?) and discussed in details by Klaus Fittschen (1982, 75-77, # 1-12, Taf. 44-47). A very close stylistic parallel, especially in terms of hairstyle, is to be found in the portrait of Lucilla from the forum of Smyrna (Izmir Museum, inv. # 3694 – see Fittschen 1982, 77 # 12, Taf. 47, 3-4). These details restrict, in our opinion, the time of the production of the sculpture under discussion to the third quarter of the second century and more specifically – in the late 160s or very early 170s.

Concerning the iconography of the sculpture, there are two very important elements that deserve more attention than they have received so far. On the rear part of the head there is a highly important iconographic element which has traditionally been interpreted as part of the hair, stated to have been styled in a bun. A close autopsy of the sculpture showed that this is not a correct interpretation, as what is in fact to be seen now is the arched edge of the back part of a throne on which the female figure was seated when produced by the ancient sculptor (fig. 4). The thickness of the preserved part of the throne is 4 cm. The second important element concerns the corona muralis (ca. 8.5 cm high). This iconographic feature has been always referred to in the literature when the sculpture was mentioned, however without any detailed description which could have brought to light essential peculiarities. The autopsy showed that the upper edge of the fortification crown is only very slightly damaged, and therefore it is clear that neither battlements, nor towers were depicted by the sculptor. The stone quadrae are duly marked, but instead of the expected gate of the city fortress, a circular-shaped stone is represented in the centre of the upper part of the corona muralis.

It is well-known that the fortification crown appears usually in connection with images of Tyche-Fortuna, Kybele, Aphrodite, Artemis and city personifications (Deonna 1940, 157-159), but also with portraits of members of the emperor’s family and even with private persons (Alexandridis 2004, 88-89). The sculpture from Deultum fits in our opinion well within the ideal heads of the second century AD, assumed to represent Tyche. However, due to the lack of any attributes, except for the crown, its identification remains uncertain.

**Standing on quicksand**

Here a historian would most probably pose a question on the historical aspect of this analysis of the discussed sculpture from Deultum. The answer would, of course, very much depend on the way one is reading the scanty evidence. Here we would try to offer another point of view, fully aware that we are standing on quicksand, firmly emphasizing that

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5 The female sculpture from Deultum shows close similarities with two portraits from Odessos, dated to the Antonine period (Милчева 1988; Милчева 2013, 445-446, figs. 1/1-4).
this is just an attempt at enriching the information on the fortification of Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium:

1) If the conclusion (based on numismatic evidence about Byzantion, Perinthos and Serdica) that the depiction of a turreted City-Goddess could appear in the coinage only of cities that were fortified or being in the process of their fortification is correct, then one would have to look thoroughly in the turreted and obviously enthroned fragmentary female sculpture from Deultum;

2) If the dating of the sculpture with the *corona muralis* in the late 160s – early 170s is correct, then it would be fair to claim that at this time the fortification wall of Deultum was already either fully completed, or at least under construction;

3) If the depiction of the *corona muralis* of the enthroned Goddess of Deultum was intended to be meaningful, as we do believe, then it would be fair to claim that at the time when the sculpture was created, i.e. in the late 160s – early 170s, the fortification wall of the Flavian colony might have been at the very initial stage of its construction.

Back in 1923, Adrien Blanchet offered an intriguing observation concerning a city located in the same region as Deultum, namely the city of Anchialos: “*Il est certain qu’Anchialus avait déjà murs avant le règne de Commode; mais il est evident que la porte fortifiée, empreinte sur une piece de cet empereur, conservait le souvenir de travaux qui venaient d’etre executés*” (Blanchet 1923, 7–8). Blanchet’s fundamental idea seems to have been widely accepted in the modern research as seen in an article of Johannes Nollé who puts forward the supposition that the representation of a city gate on a coin of Prusias ad Hypium, minted under emperor Gallienus, reminds of the completion of the city wall (Nollé 2006, 280). This point of view seems to allow some further conclusions concerning the fortification of Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium by fixing two chronological milestones which so far have never been discussed.
The identification of the similarities between the sculpture from Deultum with the corona muralis and the images of Lucilla, Marcus Aurelius’ daughter, from her first portrait type dated to AD 165 (?), including the portrait of the same Augusta from the forum of Smyrna, point at a possible start of fortification works in Deultum shortly after the marriage of Lucius Verus to Lucilla, which marriage is dated to either AD 163 (Halfmann 1986, 210-211) or AD 164 (Birley 2000, 131). The event itself took place in Ephesus in a time when the Roman legions were fighting in Syria in the East and serious military tension was already experienced on the Danube limes in the North, as clearly stated by HA (Marcus 12.13): "While the Parthian war was still in progress, the Marcomannic War broke out, after having been postponed for a long time by the diplomacy of the men who were in charge there, in order that the Marcomannic War might not be waged until Rome was done with the war in the East" (see also Cass. Dio 71.3.1-1). Because of this, it would be expected that the Emperor’s instructions for taking respective measures towards ensuring the safety of the provincial cities could have been issued, and namely such instructions opened the way for the start of the fortification of Serdica (as indicated by the city’s coins discussed here above), Augusta Traiana (Boteva, forthcoming) and possibly Deultum. These cities, all of them belonging to the province of Thracia, could have profited from Lucius Verus’ care in a moment when he was visiting the province of Asia, which was in fact neighboring Thracia – the two provinces shared the common sea border over the Hellespont and Propontis.

Regarding Anchialos, an important specification is needed, as the coins mentioned by A. Blanchet bear on the reverse the name of the provincial governor Iulius Castus (Strack 1912, 227, # 439), whose tenure in Thrace is epigraphically attested for AD 184-185 (Thomasson 1984, col. 168, # 37 with lit.). A further step would be possible here. If the conclusion (reasoned on another occasion, see Boteva, forthcoming) that the depiction of city fortifications on coins appears only within issues that are synchronous with the very final stage of the construction works is correct, then it would be fair to assume that the reconstruction of the city wall of Anchialos was completed ca. AD 184-185. As Anchialos was situated close to Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium, one could imagine that the fortification of the Roman colony might have had a priority and was accordingly finalized at least several months, if not several years, prior to that of Anchialos.

To sum up: the activities concerning the fortification of Deultum could have started ca. AD 165 and might have been finalized prior to AD 184-185. Defining the period in such a way sounds too ambitious and even more speculative, and we are fully aware of it. Hopefully, future archaeological excavations of Deultum would provide further evidence confirming our reasoning. However, any new archaeological information concerning the issue would be warmly welcomed, even if it proves that we are wrong in our conjecture presented here.

6 Translation by David Magie (Magie 1991, 165-167).

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