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Flask, 12th century. Rentina Castle.



Cyathiscomele (medical instrument), 6th century. Pydna.

ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟ
ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ
ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΟΥ



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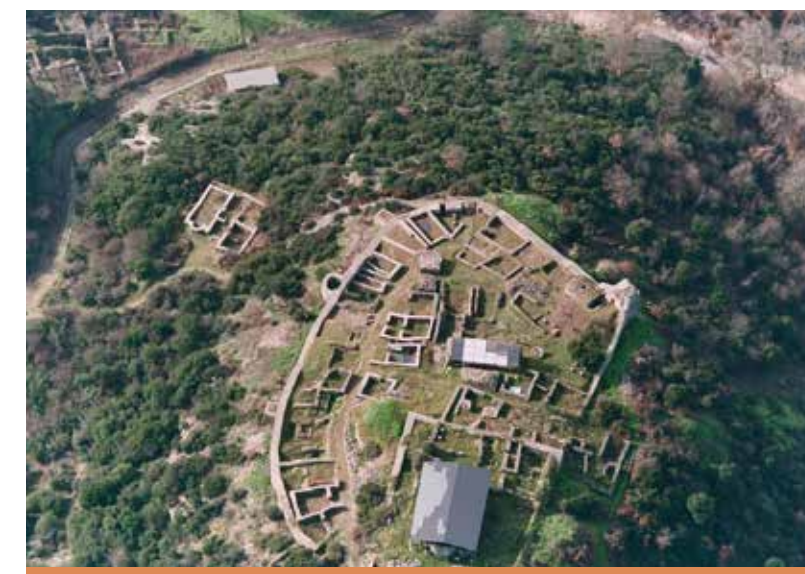
FROM MACEDONIAN TO THESSALIAN TEMPI FROM RENTINA TO VELIKA



In the periodic exhibition entitled: **"From Macedonian to Thessalian Tempi: from Rentina to Velika"** five selected fortification sites from Macedonia and Thessaly are presented, all connected to each other by virtue of the fact that they were founded, constructed or renovated during the reign of Justinian I (527-565). These are: the castle of Rentina, the fortification wall of Cassandreia, the castle of Pydna, the castle of Platamon and the castle of Velika. The city of Thessaloniki is also presented, as an example of a walled metropolis. The exhibition places strong emphasis on the road networks that developed between the fortresses along with the economic and commercial relationships that were established in the region. The course of each site throughout time is presented in parallel. Furthermore, this exhibition is yet another opportunity for the Museum of Byzantine Culture to promote significant excavational discoveries from Central Macedonia that, until today, have been stored in its warehouses and not displayed to the public.

RENTINA. EN ROUTE FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO THE WEST

The castle is built on the highest part of a naturally fortified hill south of the Rihios river at the entrance of the Rentina Gorge known as "Macedonian Tempi", at a point crucial for controlling the Egnatia road and accompanying cargo transit. The first fortification phase in the 4th century consisted of a pentagonal citadel and a fortified enclosure with two gates and it was probably built by the citizens of neighbouring Arethousa, while it is also possibly identified as the Artemision castle from the period of Emperor Justinian I (527-565). The area has signs of continuous human habitation until the 16th c. Its period of prosperity was in the 10th c.



FAITH AND WORSHIP INSIDE THE CASTLES

Excavations at the Rentina settlement have revealed churches and graveyards, dating from as far back as the Early Christian period but mostly from the first half of the 10th century. At the settlement, two churches were identified, a large Middle Byzantine basilica, possibly three-aisled and timber-roofed, and a single-roomed, timber-roofed church which followed a basilican building plan. During the Palaiologan era, a small church was built.

THE CASSANDREIA FORTIFICATION WALL.
A FORTRESS ON THE PASSAGE TO CASSANDRA



The fortification wall of Cassandreia is situated at the northern border of the Nea Potidaea settlement and extends to approximately 1200m in length. It was intended to close the narrow entrance of the Cassandra peninsula. A gateway was opened at the centre of the wall. Justinian rebuilt the wall after the destruction of Cassandreia by the Huns in 540 AD, as mentioned by the historian Procopius. The next piece of historical information regarding the fortification wall dates to the start of the 15th century. During the uprising against the Ottomans in 1821 the fortification wall served as a line of defence for the insurgents of Chalkidiki led by Emmanuel Pappas.

THESSALONIKI. A FORTIFIED METROPOLIS

Thessaloniki is a characteristic example of a fortified metropolis. Its fortification system consists of a fortified enclosure, with towers and outwork at vulnerable points, and an acropolis citadel.

The oldest wall was built in the middle of the 3rd century AD. Its fortification follows a simple architectural system with rectangular towers, united with curtain walls. This system formed the basis for the later imposing fortifications, with the only addition being the acropolis citadel. The new walls of the 4th century were about 8 km long. Inside the citadel, at the northern edge of the fortifications, the Heptapyrgion (Seven-towers) fortress was created. The sea wall protected the city's waterfront.

The initial outline of the walls has not been particularly altered throughout the centuries.



Additions were also made during the period of Ottoman Occupation, such as the White Tower.

HORSEMEN AND ARCHERS IN THE EMPIRE'S SERVICE

Bone rings are presented in this exhibition, rings that bear a slightly curved bezel which extends at one side, forming a triangular terminal. This is the only exclusively male type of ring, which was carried by archers. At the moment of releasing the string, the ring would protect the thumb from friction, thus allowing the archer to focus his attention on the precision of his shot.

PYDNA (KITROS). A CASTLE ON A COVE OF THE THERMAIC GULF

The castle of Pydna (Kitros) is situated on the west coast of the Thermaic Gulf, near the village of Makrygialos in Pieria. It was founded in the 6th century by Justinian I at the site of ancient Pydna's citadel. The new castle was rectangular, with dimensions of 320m x 130m, and occupied an area of 50 acres. It acquired a new name, Kitros, like many other castles that were founded on the sites of ancient cities.

Due to its port and salt evaporation ponds Kitros emerged as the most important city in Pieria and its bishopric was ordered first out of the ten such bishoprics that were subject to the metropolitan bishop of Thessaloniki during the 10th century. The city reached its peak during the 12th century when it was the seat of a "katepanikion" (an administrative division of the empire).



In 1345 the castle was occupied by the Serbs and in 1386 it was taken over by the Ottomans.

BEACONS. FIRE SIGNALS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Beacons were a system of direct communication based on the use of fire and allowed for the rapid transfer of messages over long distances. The message was transmitted by lighting a torch inside a specially made construction that was situated upon hills and mountaintops, to gain greater visibility. A beacon was revealed at the castle of Kitros (Pydna).

Plate, 14th century. Cassandreia Fortification Wall.



PLATAMON. THE GUARDIAN OF THE TEMPI VALLEY

Platamon's castle, built at a site of strategic importance, above the passage that connects Macedonia to Thessaly and southern Greece via the Tempi Valley, controls the Katerini plain and the Thermaic Gulf. The castle's location is identified with the ancient city of Heraklion. Excavational research has brought to light phases of the Early Christian Justinian fortification, which was to the same extent as the contemporary castle. A large part of the currently visible lower part of the wall belongs to the Middle Byzantine period. The castle underwent modifications and strengthening during the 13th-14th centuries, the 15th c. and also during recent years.

The castle is in the form of a typical fortified city during the Middle Ages.

GUNS AND SIEGE ENGINES

As we are informed by manuals on strategy from the Justinian era, the Byzantines were constantly trying to evolve their use of technology in the field of war. Their main siege engines were catapults, which hurled enormous rocks against the walls, siege towers, ballistas (powerful weapons firing arrow-like bolts), ladders, as well as wooden bridges that were used to fasten on to the ramparts in order to approach the walls.

THE CASTLE OF VELIKA. A COMMERCIAL STATION IN THESSALY

The castle of Velika lies in the southeastern foothills of Mount Kissavos (Ossa) and overlooks the coastal plains of Agiokampos and the mountains of Mavrovouni and Pelion. It is a naturally fortified site and during antiquity it was part of ancient Melivoia, one of the most important cities of the ancient Greek tribe, the Magnetes, and seat of the Homeric king, Philoctetes.

It was renovated by Justinian.

The wall includes a settlement from the 6th century. Isolated repairs suggest an attempt to strengthen it during the second half of the 6th century, while it was abandoned during the 7th century, with the exception of the church.