

## UNDERWATER SITES IN THE AREA OF CAPE SHABLA (NORTH-EAST BULGARIA)

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**ABSTRACT.** In the area of Cape Shabla (North-East Bulgaria) we know three sites which are very important for archaeology as well as for paleogeography: the reef of Caron Limen, the sunken prehistorical necropolis situated to the North from Shabla and the reef of Lake Shablenska Tuzla. This paper analyzes some newly received data, as well as known and published information.

### Introduction

The Late Bronze Age harbours are located and determined only by anchorages, single finds of stone anchors and metal ingots. Unfortunately, during the underwater archaeological expeditions pottery has not been found yet. The stone anchors have been found at the aquatories of Cape Shabla, Yailata, Cape Kalliakra, Kavarna, the Gulf of Varna, North and South of the Nessebar Peninsula, Pomorie, Sozopol, Korenyata, the mouth of Ropotamo River, Cape Maslen Nos, Cape Urdovisa and Ahtopol. For these sites we do not have data for artificial quays as trace for coastal settlements.

Large part of the stone anchors is found in the areas which are unsuitable for harbours because of lack of gales protection. If we make a reconstruction of the ancient coastal lines we will see that at least one of them (Caron Limen) had a natural protection of the strong Northeastern and Eastern winds.

In the area of Cape Shabla we know three sites which are very important for both archaeology and paleogeography: the reef of Caron Limen, the sunken prehistorical necropolis situated to the North from Shabla and the reef of Lake Shablenska Tuzla.

*Cape Shabla* (Fig. 1). The harbour Caron Limen is mentioned by Pomponius Mela (*P. Mela* 2, 22), Arrianus (*Ar. PPE* 35) and Annonimus (*Ann. PPE* 75) situated between Callatis and Kalliakra. The first author who takes notice of Caron Limen is L. Bozhkov (1925). More serious analysis of this matter was made by Toncheva (1964) and especially by Lazarov (1988). The pottery found in the settlement at the Cape Shabla is dated between V c. BC and VI c. AD. The origin of the oldest amphoras is Chios and dated at the second – third quarter of the V c. BC (Lazarov, 1988).

At the Cape Shabla an underwater reef is known which was the quay of the ancient settlement Caron Limen at the time of

lower Black Sea level. During the underwater archaeological expeditions is determined that the site has a length of about 400 m and depth up to 4 m (Lazarov, 1988). If we picture the situation before 3500 years with the Black Sea level about 3-5 m below present, we will see that the reef was above the water and it was protected by the ancient bay. This explains the presence of a settlement and a port in the area which is unsuitable for mooring nowadays.

To the North of the reef five stone anchors were found at depth between 1.5 up to 3.5 m (Lazarov, 1988). The stone anchors with three holes get back the life of the harbour in the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200/1100 BC). The three lead stocks were found to the East of the stone anchors at depth of 10-11 m. The absence of pottery later than VI c. AD suggests that 1400 years ago the reef was flooded by the Nymphaean regression (Peychev, Peev, 2006). A sketch of the sunken reef is published by Toncheva (1964) and repeated by Lazarov (1975).

A new data was obtained from the prehistoric necropolis of Cape Shabla. Two burial sites are present, the first is at 6.5 masl, the other at 3.5 masl (Fig. 2). These could be dated to the Late Neolithic or Chalcolithic. The Sea level along the Bulgarian coast was at least 7 m below present (Peychev, Peev, 2006). Without doubt the necropolis is related to the settlements Shabla I and/or Shabla II (Todorova, 1984).

In the area of the Lake Shablenska Tuzla, there is a reef with length of 1 km and at depth of up to 5-7 m. The known archaeological materials from the area presumed the existence of one more harbour which is not mentioned in the written sources. During the SCUBA diving at the site a lead trade mark (dated II-III c. AD) (Fig. 3), ancient millstone (Rokov, 2007), as well as ceramic material have been found.



Fig. 1. Ruins of Caron Limen



Fig. 2. Underwater photo of prehistoric grave at depth 3.5 m below present



Fig. 3. Roman trade mark II-III c. AD

During the underwater investigations conducted by the Institute of Oceanology (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) a lot of material was collected and whereby is possible to prepare a map of the bottom in the area of Shablenska Tuzla. On Fig. 4 the mentioned reef is visible.

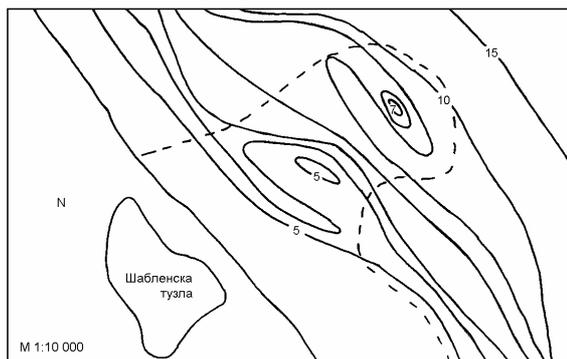


Fig. 4. Map of the area of the Lake Shablenska Tuzla

The artefacts are found to the south the reef. It is obvious that these natural conditions have been profited by the ancient mariners and sometimes the ancient gulf has been used as a harbour.

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