

*The Komani–Krue Settlements, and Some Aspects  
of their Existence in the Ohrid-Struga Valley  
(VII-VIII century)*

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In science, there are justified general assumptions that the settling of the Slavs did not cause complete destruction and the removal of the native population in the Balkans. Certainly, part of the population was killed, others died from epidemics and hunger, and some were taken into slavery or forced to flee and to withdraw into the mountains. But, still part of the local population probably remained and survived the initial dangers. The presumption is that it was impossible to stop every peaceful contact between the natives and the settlers, that no economic and other relations developed, and that no mutual influencing happened, especially of religious ideas.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that these presumptions may find indirect confirmation in the interpretation of the archaeological discoveries in the greater Ohrid area. Namely, unlike the inside of the devastated city of Lychnidos in at least two settlements – one in its closest vicinity and the other in its farther surrounding – there are strong indications that during the course of the VII – VIII century there was a continuity of life of some kind of Christian Romaioi population. This opinion stems directly from the archaeological findings that are classified without any reservations as part of the controversial Komani–Krue culture.

The centre of the Komani–Krue culture has been identified in a relatively compact area of present-day central and northern Albania, and part of southern Montenegro. Sporadically, it has been established that this culture

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<sup>1</sup> СТЕФΟΣКА, 2002: 56, and n. 118 with quoted literature.

has also appeared in the following regions outside Albania: in four locations in the Ohrid and Struga area, and another one in the Prilep area (Republic of Macedonia); in one location on the island of Corfu, and two in Dalmatia. There is unanimous belief that its existence should be chronologically set in the course of the VII and VIII century.<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, various objects, mainly jewellery and some tools, weapons, ceramics, etc., have been discovered in four locations in the Ohrid-Struga valley: “Kozluk” and “Sv. Erazmo” (in the close vicinity of Ohrid), “Nad Selo” (village of Orovnik, Ohrid) and “Ciganski Grobista” (village of Radolishta, Struga), all of which contain more than enough characteristic features to be established as belonging to the Komani-Krue culture.<sup>3</sup>

In regard to the wealth of archaeological findings, it is important to describe the way of burial and to identify the items found in the graves. It has been established that the deceased were buried in clothes, with jewellery, equipment, tools, items for everyday use, rarely weapons, as well as ceramic and glass dishes. The origin of these items should be sought in the following: the Byzantium import (plate fibulae; filigree earrings; rings with carved Greek liturgy texts, crosses, pentagrams, birds, etc; clearer buckles of the Corinthian/Balgota type; glass vessels, and other items); items inspired by the early Byzantium production (bended-leg fibulae, lunar- or star-shaped earrings, and other accessories); items, which according to their appearance, function and way of use, refer to the affinities of the nomads and the semi-nomads (belts and belt garnitures, from which metal accessories have been saved; torques, pendants, amulets, ceramic vessels, etc.); items close to the Slav material culture (finger, arch-like fibulae with masks, ceramic vessels with Slav parallels); traces of Frankish import, as well as items with a

<sup>2</sup> POPOVIC, 1984: 218-224; EADEM, 1988: 231-234; MANEVA, 1992: 14; EADEM, 1997: 12-13; EADEM, 2006: 607-608; BOWDEN, 2003: 62; NALLBANI, 2005: 279. In the scientific community, the site “Kartashi” near Prilep is considered to be the most eastern place where the Komani-Krue culture existed. Maneva (1992: 26) accepts this view, but nevertheless expresses reservations since the three Komani-fibulae from this site were acquired by purchase and not by regular archaeological exploration.

<sup>3</sup> МААЛЕХКО, 1976: 221-234; EADEM, 1977; EADEM, 1985: 286-289; 297-298; MANEVA, 1992: 25-26; 28-34; 39-40; 174; 181-184; 223-224; EADEM, 1997: 12-13; EADEM, 2006: 607-608. Cf. ARBERORE, 1988: 20-87.

generally accepted late classical origin (glass bead necklaces, tools, axes, knives, blades and flints).<sup>4</sup>

In science there are still open discussions being waged primarily in regard to the issue of the ethnic attributes of this culture.<sup>5</sup> Probably spurred by the older and mainly already-surmounted West-European thesis about the defining of the Komani-Krue culture as Illyrian,<sup>6</sup> according to most of the Albanian researchers, the bearers of this culture are the non-Romanised Illyrians, i.e., the proto-Albanians.<sup>7</sup> Another group of researchers of some of the archaeological findings from this culture consign them certain Slav, i.e., Avarian attributes.<sup>8</sup>

In the Macedonian historiography, B. Babic supports the opinion of a strictly Slav origin of the Komani-Krue culture, directly connecting it to the tribe of the Verzites.<sup>9</sup> Of similar opinion is V. Malenko as well, according to whom the archaeological material of the Komani-Krue culture is, in all probability, of a Slav-Alan origin, or is closely linked to other tribes that were in alliance with the Slavs.<sup>10</sup> N. Chausidis also supports this thesis about its Alan or Alan-Slav attributes, but concerning the findings in Macedonia, they represent a hint and proof of the settling of the Slavs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> MANEVA, 1997: 13; EADEM, 2006: 608. Cf. BOWDEN, 2003: 59-60; NALLBANI, 2005: 283 and n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> BOWDEN, 2003: 63-65, from a theoretical aspect, the power of archaeology to ethnically identify the culture is a rightfully debatable subject for discussion.

<sup>6</sup> About the supporters of that theory, with a reference list, see: MANEVA, 1997: 12 n. 1; 14; EADEM, 2006: 607 n. 2; 608.

<sup>7</sup> ПОРОВИЋ, 1984: 218-224; EADEM, 1988: 231-233 with n. 70-71 and 74 with a reference list; ANAMALI & SPAHIU, 1988: 11-15; МАНЕВА, 1992: 14, n. 19 with references; EADEM, 1997: 14 n. 10; DZIDROVA, 1998: 300 and n. 8; СЕКА, 2005: 328-335; MANEVA, 2006: 608 n. 11; BOWDEN, 2003: 58-59 and n. 4, 62, who also shows more moderate views on the Albanian historiography.

<sup>8</sup> ПОПОВИЋ, 1988: 234, n. 75 with references on that opinion; МАНЕВА, 1997: 14-15 and n. 12; 14; DZIDROVA, 1998: 300; MANEVA, 2006: 609.

<sup>9</sup> БАБИЌ, 1995: 153-163. КУЗМАН, 1995: 34 only briefly stated that an old Slav necropolis containing interesting material was discovered on the Sv. Erazmo site, but he was, in fact, referring to the Komani-Krue necropolis.

<sup>10</sup> МАЛЕНКО, 1985: 311.

<sup>11</sup> ЧАУСИДИС, 1996: 261 and n. 21. It seems that the main reason that the Komani-Krue culture is given Slav attributes is the so-called finger fibulae that re-

Motivated by the discovery and the interpretation of two precious depots near Erseke and Vrap, there are certain beliefs in science, according to which the Komani-Krue culture should be linked to the penetration of Kuver and the Sermesians in the Balkans. Furthermore, among the researchers, there is also the view that the Komani-Krue culture was in some kind of a relation with the Saltovo-Majatskaja culture.<sup>12</sup>

In science there are also completely different views according to which the Komani-Krue culture is assigned “Romaioi” cultural attributes and context, usually without the possibility for a specifically ethnic determination.

According to Z. Vinski’s thesis, it has to do with a complex cultural group that contains elements of the ancient native population, Roman provincial traditions, Byzantium elements, certain early Slav influences, as well as local, i.e., regional features.<sup>13</sup> From what has been presented, the impression that is formed is that the culture is still given some kind of a broad “Romaioi” context, even though the concrete declaration on the issue of its ethnic attribution is avoided.

On the other hand, however, after carrying out a multi-layered analysis, J. Kovacevic directly points to the Romaioi, who lived in isolated regions, as the bearers of this particular culture.<sup>14</sup>

V. Popovic provides an especially scientific contribution in the clarification of this culture.<sup>15</sup> He presents a relatively well-founded and thoroughly elaborated thesis, according to which he recognises the Romanised, i.e.,

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present an insignificant part of the archaeological findings of the above-mentioned culture. Namely, in science there is a more general opinion that the above-mentioned fibulae represent rare early-Slav archaeological findings (VII - VIII centuries), which chronologically fully coincide with the findings of the Komani-Krue culture. Hence, for example, at the Sv. Erazmo site such a fibula was discovered, but it is quite damaged and it is used as secondary. For more on the finger fibulae, see: МАНЕВА, 1992: 23-27; ЧАУСИДИС, 1996: 303-316.

<sup>12</sup> For references on such views in science, see: МАНЕВА, 1997: 15-16 n. 19-24; ЕАДЕМ, 2006: 609-610 n. 22-27.

<sup>13</sup> VINSKI, 1971: 58-59.

<sup>14</sup> КОВАЧЕВИЌ, 1967: 281-290. Cf. МАНЕВА, 2006: 609 n. 19.

<sup>15</sup> For references of works that deal with the Komani-Krue culture, see: МАНЕВА, 2006: 609 n. 20.

proto-Roman population (Romanoi) as the bearers of this culture. Through the multi-layered analysis of the archaeological material from the necropolises, as well as the circumstances in which it developed, he manages to separate some common features concerning the assumed settlements of the representatives of the Komani-Krue culture. According to him, in most cases the Komani-Krue necropolises are located in the area just below the fortress near the Christian buildings. In addition, the necropolises are located near strategic and trade roads in areas rich in metal and wood. Their connection with the fortresses, or even with the medieval bishoprics (Krue, Lesh and Sarda), according to V. Popovic, allow the belief that all those places were connected, i.e., were in contact with Durres, the civil and church metropolis on this territory. Consequently, one could conclude that these are not centres that existed independently of the metropolis and each other, but, rather, are fortified settlements which, in those troubled times, had common military, economic and church interests. "Hence, the Komani-Krue culture is urban, post-Ancient, tardive Romano-Byzantine, and primarily Christian."<sup>16</sup>

In Macedonian historiography, part of the researchers generally accept the proposed thesis concerning the bearers of the culture, but at the same time, they recognise in it certain pagan elements of Slav or Avarian-Slav provenience.<sup>17</sup>

In more recent times, another very interesting assumption has appeared, attempting to define the Komani-Krue culture. Even though the claims made by V. Popovic concerning the relationship between the settlements in Dyrrachion, their significance concerning security, as well as that of supplying the metropolis with natural resources (wood and metals), and in general the entire context concerning the appearance and the survival of the culture, are accepted, there are still certain modifications and additions that are proposed. The belief that has arisen is that the bearers of the Komani-Krue culture are unidentified Byzantine federates-settlers, probably from the Asia Minor regions, who, at the end of the VI century, even before the more massive settling of the Slavs occurred, were deployed and settled in an orga-

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<sup>16</sup> ПОПОВИЋ, 1988: 231. Cf. DZIDROVA, 1998: 301-303; МАНЕВА, 1997: 13; ЕА-ДЕМ, 2006: 611; NALLBANI, 2004: 485.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. МАНЕВА, 1992: 14; МИКУЛЧИК & ЛИЛЧИК, 1995: 262; МИКУЛЧИК, 1996: 131-32. БАБИЌ, 1995: 160-161 makes an attempt to argue against V. Popovic's thesis in an inconclusive manner.

nised manner by the central authorities. The main reason for their assumed settling was the depopulation of the area, which was supposed to help and facilitate the survival of the Byzantium military, as well as the political and economic centres on the south-eastern Adriatic coast. Their ethnicity cannot be precisely established, but it is understood that they could not have been either Romans (Latin) or natives.<sup>18</sup> The presented views are an important contribution for different and modified identification of the Komani-Krue culture. Still, the basic and, it seems, the most acceptable understanding of the assumed function of the so-called “Romaioi” settlements, and the context in which they appeared and lived, fully coincides with the thesis proposed already by V. Popovic. However, one needs to neglect the significance of the specific ethnicity of the bearers of the culture.

In more recent times, E. Maneva has once again looked into this complex issue and, from the detailed analysis of a grave from the Komani-Krue necropolis in the Sv. Erazmo area, come up with affirmative conclusions for its, in general, “Romaioi” cultural attribution, with the possibility that its bearers were Byzantine settlers-federates who did their military service in the border areas of Byzantium. Thus, one may conclude that the primary significance of the bearers of this culture, who probably enjoyed a privileged military social status, was their determination as Byzantium border federates, while their ethnic background, which remains unclear, is of secondary significance.<sup>19</sup>

The presented conclusions that refer in general to the Komani-Krue settlements, whose necropolises were discovered, offer sufficient material for analysis. Out of the four sites, three that are part of the Komani-Krue culture, and especially those from the Ohrid region (“Kozluk”, “Sv. Eraz-

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<sup>18</sup> DZIDROVA, 1998: 301-303. Cf. MANEVA, 2006: 610, 613-614.

<sup>19</sup> MANEVA, 2006: 613-614; BOWDEN, 2003: 73-75 also does not take a position on the issue of the specific ethnic attribution, pointing out that it was insignificant in the given local social context. NALLBANI, 2004: 486, on the other hand, independently reaches a conclusion that the members of the Komani-Krue culture were most probably the successors of soldiers, senior representatives of the central authorities; high ranking officers in the Romaioi army who most probably had a federative province between the IV and the VI century. In another place, NALLBANI, 2005: 282, in a detailed analysis of a Komani grave, establishes the presence of Roman tradition and nomad influence that prejudice the barbarian federates in Byzantium service.

mo” and “Nad Selo”), are located exactly along the route of the famous Via Egnatia road, to the northwest of Lychnidos. The remaining, fourth, site (“Ciganski Grobista”), in the Struga area, is also in close vicinity to the road, and was without a doubt connected to it. Based on the wealth of findings, we should undoubtedly point out the sites “Sv. Erazmo” and “Ciganski Grobista” (a village in the Radolista-Struga area), where the necropolises of the Komani-Krue settlements were discovered.

The necropolis near “Sv. Erazmo” seems to have been linked to the fortified settlement, which was located just above the necropolis. As a matter of fact, the necropolis is located in the south-western foothill of Kuliste or Gradiste, which was most probably used by the population from the fortress and is known to have been in use in the VI century.<sup>20</sup>

From the findings so far, it is impossible to establish the exact location of the settlement, the rich necropolis of which was discovered in the vicinity of the village of Radolista. The other two sites are “Kozluk” and “Nad Selo” – the village of Orovnik, and for the time being they cannot be linked to separate settlements. At the “Kozluk” site, which is located between Ohrid and the “Sv. Erazmo” site, dual-use tools (pickaxe), jewellery and ceramics, typical of the Komani-Krue culture, were found.<sup>21</sup> The findings were neither excavated from the necropolis, nor numerous enough to be linked to the fortified settlement on the Kuliste or Gradiste hill and the “Sv. Erazmo” necropolis, which were in the vicinity. Furthermore, the earring, which is the only finding typical of the Komani-Krue culture from the “Nad Selo” site – the village of Orovnik, was found by chance,<sup>22</sup> and, for the time being, at least, does not represent a sufficiently strong argument for the existence of a Komani-Krue settlement at that location or in the vicinity.

It seems that V. Popovic is absolutely right when, while listing the bishopric centres, such as Krue, Lesh and Sarda, in regard to the Komani-Krue culture, and their possible existence in the course of the VII and VIII centuries, makes no mention of the city of Lychnidos<sup>23</sup>, which, in the previous period, was also a bishopric centre. Up to now, from the wealth of archaeological material found in the numerous sites in the heart of Ohrid, no

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<sup>20</sup> МАЛЕНКО, 1977: 141-142; МАНЕВА, 1992:181.

<sup>21</sup> МАЛЕНКО, 1985: 287.

<sup>22</sup> МАЛЕНКО, 1985: 291; МАНЕВА, 1992: 174.

<sup>23</sup> ПОПОВИЧ, 1984: 224; ЕАДЕМ, 1988: 231.

finding that may be linked to the Komani-Krue culture has been identified. Hence, it is logically believed that “Sv. Erazmo” was a necropolis of a fortified settlement, which probably existed on the Kuliste or Gradiste hill in the course of the VII and probably for the most part of the VIII century. It was 5 kilometres away from Lychnidos.

The next feature of the Komani-Krue culture is that in a number of cases it has been established that there are churches in the vicinity of the necropolises of this type. Here I would especially like to point out the example with the “Sv. Erazmo” necropolis, which spreads inside and around an early Christian building. Even though the church was in ruins, it nevertheless displayed the Christian character of the culture.<sup>24</sup> The graves that are identified as belonging to the Komani-Krue culture in the “Sv. Erazmo” necropolis are located in the central and northern nave of the monumental three-nave basilica and outside it, in the north.<sup>25</sup> The second Komani-Krue necropolis in the Ohrid-Struga valley, the one at the “Ciganski Grobista” – village of Radolista, site, was also partly in and around the three-nave early Christian basilica, which was in ruins.<sup>26</sup>

The conclusion that the Komani-Krue necropolises are located in areas rich in metal ore and timber<sup>27</sup> may also be confirmed in the case with the location of the “Sv. Erazmo” and “Ciganski Grobista” necropolises. It is a well-known fact that the Ohrid area, especially the Debarca region, is rich in metal ore and timber resources that have been used from the most ancient of times. In addition to this region being rich in metal ore (iron, copper, silver), we should also make mention of the numerous findings of slag, as well as the knowledge that periodically, starting from ancient times, through the Middle Ages and during the Ottoman period, mints existed in Ohrid.

As the final in the series of common features that the Komani-Krue settlements shared is the assumption that all these settlements were connected to Durres, i.e., that they did not exist independently of the metropolis and, rather, that they were, as a matter of fact, fortified settlements, which, during that restless era, shared common military, economic and church inte-

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<sup>24</sup> POPOVIC, 1984: 224; EADEM, 1988: 231.

<sup>25</sup> МААЕНКО, 1985: 288; МАНЕБА, 1992: 181. Cf. МАНЕВА, 2006: 611.

<sup>26</sup> МААЕНКО, 1985: 292; МАНЕБА, 1992: 224.

<sup>27</sup> POPOVIC, 1984: 224; EADEM, 1988: 231. Cf. DZIDROVA, 1998: 302.



rests.<sup>28</sup> It would mean that the two assumed fortified “Romaioi” settlements that were in the vicinity of the “Sv. Erazmo” and “Ciganski Grobista” necropolises, in the course of the VII and VIII century, at which time they probably existed, had contacts with Durres and with some of the other Komani-Krue settlements.

In science there are unconfirmed beliefs according to which the appearance of the two Komani-Krue settlements in the Lychnidos area should be linked to some kind of hypothetical penetration from Durres towards Lychnidos along the Via Egnatia road. Allegedly, this took place in context of the military settling of Emperor Justinian II (685-695), with Kuver and the Sermesians. Namely, in the late 80s and early 90s of the VII century, the above-mentioned Byzantium Emperor managed to expel them from the Keramesian Plain.<sup>29</sup> Even though it seems appealing, we believe that the presented opinion lacks arguments that back it up.

In regard to the possible beginnings, specifically of the hypothetical Komani-Krue settlement at Sv. Erazmo, some of the latest archaeological findings may be made use of. It has been established that the earliest coin found in the area of the basilica dates back to 562, to the time of Emperor Justinian I, i.e., around the second half of the VI century the basilica was destroyed. It was already mentioned that the Komani-Krue graves were located within the northern and central nave of the basilica, but the important finding is that the skeletons were mainly dug out at the level of the mosaics, or maybe around 10 cm below them. This very fact means that from the assumed time of the destruction of the basilica, up until the graves were dug, at least several decades must have passed, and in the meantime, a new layer of soil of at least 1.5 m was created, which was the necessary depth to dig a relatively shallow grave. Hence, E. Maneva rightfully concludes that the Komani-Krue graves could not have been dug before the VII century,<sup>30</sup> with a strong likelihood that it happened in the first and second decade of the VII century.

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<sup>28</sup> ПОПОВИЧ, 1984: 224; ЕАДЕМ, 1988: 231. Cf. ДЗИДРОВА, 1998: 302-303; МАНЕВА, 2006: 613-614.

<sup>29</sup> ПОПОВИЧ, 1987: 125-126.

<sup>30</sup> МАНЕВА, 2006: 611. Accompanied by information and explanations provided by Prof. E. Maneva, Ph.D., for which we express our gratitude.

On first sight, bearing in mind the numbers and the sheer magnitude of the Slav penetrations and their settling at the end of the VI and the first quarter of the VII century in the Balkans, it is difficult to imagine that so deep in the continental background of Durres, “Romaioi”, probably federative fortified settlements could have survived in the course of the VII and VIII century. Even more since the settlements in the vicinity of Lychnidos were rather far off from the relatively compact area that was the centre of the Komani-Krue culture. Almost all of the Komani-Krue settlements in present-day Albania are incomparably closer to the seaside and the city of Durres than those two in the Ohrid-Struga valley.

On the other hand, however, there are still strong indications that V. Popovic’s conclusion concerning the inter-connection of the Komani-Krue settlements and separately of each of them with the city of Durres refers equally to the two Komani-Krue settlements in the Ohrid-Struga valley. We have already emphasised that their location was not by chance. While the “Sv. Erazmo” necropolis was located along the Via Egnatia itself, the other necropolis, “Ciganski Grobista”- the village of Radolista, was in close vicinity to the same road. There is an evident link of these settlements to this important road, which even after the Slavs settled, remained partially functional. As a matter of fact, communication could have also been achieved via the less important roads, such as, for example, the auxiliary and difficult to pass side roads of the Via Egnatia, or the road along the Crn Drim, which, in the vicinity of present-day Struga, was connected to Via Egnatia. The fact that Dyrrachion, and a very significant part of the Komani-Krue settlements in present-day Albania, as well as the two settlements around Lychnidos, expanded on the area of the already former province of New Epirus, goes in favour of the possibility that their, until recently, belonging to one administrative unit had certain influence on the possible maintaining of the old contacts with the Dyrrachion (Durres) metropolis.

When we compare the burial ways, the appearance of the tombs and the archaeological material from the sites in the Ohrid-Struga valley, with those of the other Komani-Krue sites, we can see that there are no differences whatsoever. Even though part of the discovered jewellery, tools, weapons and ceramics originate from local workshops, how can one explain their common features unless there was mutual communication? Consequently, how can one explain the findings of the imported and better-quality Byzantium products? All this leads directly to the fact that there probably was

communication among the Komani-Krue settlements, and of all of them with the city of Dyrrachion (Durres).

When we look into the position of the assumed fortified Komani-Krue settlement, i.e., the Kulista or Gradiste hill where it was located, we may see that compared to the hill on which the city of Lychnidos spreads, it is higher, steeper, harder to access, and, what is very important, from the northern and north-western side it is connected with a ridge to the rest of the hills of the mountain massif. Therefore, from a security aspect, the Kuliste or Gradiste hill, mostly due to its great height and its connection with a mountain massif, was suitable for defence from the hill on which the city of Lychnidos was set, and which was lower and isolated. Did some of the inhabitants of Lychnidos, having survived natural disasters and/or frequent and strong Slav pressures upon the city, find shelter in the nearby higher and better fortified settlement on the Kulishte or Gradishte hill? If that is the case, then did their initial temporary stay turn into a more permanent one? Or, perhaps the above-mentioned fortress was settled by Byzantium federates-settlers in an organised manner?

These questions cannot be answered for the time being, but we need to assume that whoever the bearers of the particular culture were, they had to have had some kind of interaction with the Slavs, or if they were the Byzantium federates-settlers, then with both the native-Romaioi and the Slavs.

We have already mentioned that the areas identified as the hubs of the Komani-Krue culture (northern and central Albania) were less stricken by the Slav colonisation. That may have been one of the reasons for probably the longer existence of those Komani-Krue settlements (VII – VIII century).

For the time being, the assumed survival of two Komani-Krue settlements along the Via Egnatia road, in the immediate vicinity of the former city of Lychnidos, may be an indicator of a smaller Slav settling and presence in the earliest period.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, there are also indications that those two settlements specifically could probably have survived in the course of the entire two century period while this culture existed. The dominant Slav toponymy indisputably shows that the area around Lake Ohrid was massively inhabited by Slavs. However, it still allows the possibility that the settling happened

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. DŽIDROVA, 1998: 303.

gradually, or that the area was settled on a grander scale later, which cannot be established from the toponymy research. The relative distance from Durres and from the area that was the hub of this culture may have also represented a burdening circumstance for the longer survival of the settlements around Lychnidos.

It really seems that it is impossible to establish in a more precise manner how long the Komani-Krue settlements managed to survive in the Slav surrounding after the assumed Slav colonisation took place. Perhaps their important function was exhausted after the consolidation and the strengthening of the Byzantium rule in Dyrrachion (the foundation of the Dyrrachion theme), as well as after the more massive and deeper expansion of Christianity, and the beginning of the restoration of the bishoprics in the deeper continental background of Dyrrachion. All that started taking place at the beginning of the IX century.<sup>32</sup> In any case, the survival of the two settlements along the Via Egnatia road should mean that for Byzantium they had a kind of substitutive role on account of the devastated Lychnidos from numerous aspects.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. MANEVA, 2006: 608; СТАНКОВИЋ, 2002, 280.

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