

The fourth Crusade in the Rhodope Mountain Area to the valley of river of Arda (Archaeological data)

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The Crusade is one of the most important events in political and economical history of West Europe and Balkans during the Middle Age Eras. In the historic science is perceived the term “The Crusade Era”. It started with congregations during 1095 and it ended in 1291 with the lost of the last “Sacred Places”. In this period of time 9 big military expeditions were organized from the West Kingdom toward the countries from East. The fourth Crusade has very important significance for the historical development of the Byzantium empery, countries from Balkan southeast and Bulgaria.

A lot of authors wrote for the knight movement through the Rhodope Mountain during the period of the fourth Crusade. Almost everyone used the evidences from Geoffrey of Villehardouin – Marshal of Champagne, in their workings. Geoffrey of Villehardouin is contemporary and participant in the described from him events during the Crusade. Without doubt the Geoffrey of Villehardouin chronicle is the main historical document for the Fourth Crusade. The undoubted qualities of his work – “The capturing of Constantinople”, in which he put his private notes. This work evidenced his big popularity and authenticity of the events [1]. Geoffrey of Villehardouin chronicle is not only exclusive spring for the Fourth Crusade but also for the initial history of the Latin Constantinople Empery. Moreover, it is one of the most important West European Springs for the history of Middle Age Bulgaria [2].

From big significance for the tracing of the road of crusader through the Rhodope Mountain have the archaeological researches of the Middle Age fortresses in the Valley of Arda River. As well as the location of these fortresses, which are mentioned in the chronicle of Geoffrey of Villehardouin as basic points in which the knights stayed in [3].

Essential evidenced material for the problem are the results from the archaeological researches of the area of the Antique and Late Antique roads to the valley of Arda River and these in the Rhodope Mountain of the territory of Smolyan [4]. In the bigger part these roads was used even the Middle Age Era [5], but big part of the roads are good preserved even in nowadays.

The aim of the current research is on the basis of the historical springs of the Fourth Crusades and the archaeological researches of the old roads and the Middle Age fortresses to the valley of River Arda in order to track, if it is possible, the knight’s road through the Rhodope Mountain toward the Middle Age castle called Estanimak.

According to the chronology of Geoffrey of Villehardouin the beginning of the Crusader expedition started from Adrianople and it is related with the Bulgarian King Kaloyan try to capture Didymoteicho [6].

After the decision to help the Didymoteicho fortress captured by the Bulgarian people, the crusaders went from Constantinople and after four days they reached to Adrianople, where they constructed their own camp. The distance from Constantinople to Adrianople, to the existence road even from the Rome Era – Diagonal road, which is used from the crusaders, is 156 Rome miles (or 231,191 km) [7]. In this way the area is plane, without overcoming the mountain massif and during a day the crusaders passed average 58 km.

In his working Geoffrey of Villehardouin wrote, that the crusaders chased continuous the Bulgarian leader Kaloyan who after he learned about their expedition toward Didymoteicho, he destroyed his besieged machines and he retreated toward his native country [8]. After that Kaloyan with his army stayed in the fortress Rodestyuk. On the fifth day after leaving the Adrianople, the crusaders made a camp in the fortress Fraim, where they stayed three days.

The next fortress through which the knights passed and for which Geoffrey of Villehardouin mentioned is the fortress Moniak. According to the chronicler it was located in the river of Arda and it is located of two days time from the fortress Fraim [9]. In the fortress Moniak the crusaders changed their initial aim and they took a decision to continue their expedition toward Estanimak, in order to help the besieged in it regent of the Latin empery – Rene de Three.

The short evidenced which the Geoffrey of Villehardouin gave us for the movement of crusaders through the Rhodope Mountain, did not give an opportunity to make exact location of the fortresses located on their road. The more important, is that the chronicler information marked the basic tracing points for the road direction of the crusaders in the Rhodope Mountain: Adrianople, Didymoteicho, Rodestyuk, Fraim, Moniak and Estanimak.

The first bearing point to the crusaders road toward the Rhodope Mountain after Adrianople is Didymoteicho. The fortress Didymoteicho is located in northeast Greece in eminence in the Northwest part of the contemporary town, in the left coast of Luda river before its infusion into Maritsa River. In this place during the Antiquity was located the town Plotinopolis – one of the significant town centers to the road Adrianople – Enez [10]. It is logical to suggest that the Rome road area from Adrianople to Plotinopolis, which passed to the right coast of Hebros river (Maritsa), was used even during the middle Ages and to this road the crusaders were passed from Adrianople to Didymoteicho. According to the ancient guides this distance was around 24 miles (or 35, 5 km).

The fortress Didymoteicho is planned very well and constructed for defense, in order to endure of extended attack. For effective defense of this fortress was used

unapproachable rock area, in which successfully was created powerful fortress wall, equipped with circled and squared towers (**Example 1**). The fortress wall construction is preserved very well and in some places reaches the height of 7 m (**Example 2**).

According to the evidences of Geoffrey of Villehardouin the next bearing point is the fortress Rodestyuk, in which King Kaloyan, chased by the crusaders – pulled back [11].

According to Boris Deribeev, the fortress Rodestyuk was located near village of Rogozino, west from town of Ivailovgrad [12].

Krasimira Gagova put Rodestyuk somewhere near the downstream of Arda River [13].

The implemented during the last decade archaeological researches of the Middle Ages fortresses in the region of Ivailovgrad showed that near village of Rogozino was located the medieval fortress called Lyutica [14], but the fortress Rodestyuk was located in the locality called Balak Dere near the village of Huhla [15], near town of Ivailovgrad. For the medieval town – fortress Lyutica and its location near village of Rogozino write more about the researches – Ivan Velkov [16].

If we accept the proposed localization for the two upper-mentioned fortresses we can concluded that after Didymoteicho the crusaders went to northwest to the left coast of Luda river toward the inner sides of the Rhodope Mountain. It is possible that even the contemporary road, of Didymoteicho through the Greek villages Mani, Ladi and Zones of Ivailovgrad, to be traced onto the ruins of ancient road Didymoteicho – Lyutitsa – Rodestyuk. Near village of Ladi the road was left the Valley of Luda River and it was continued to northwest with 60 degrees deviation of axis north – south.

For the fortress Lyutica, which is the biggest from the located in the region of Ivailovgrad medieval fortresses, the most detailed information we can receive from the researches of Boni Petrunova [17]. Having in mind the fortress location and territorial scope, this fortress played big role in the defended system of the Middle Ages Bulgarian Country [18] (**Example 3**).

Another fortress, for which we receive information not only from the historic springs, but also from the archaeological excavations, is the fortress Rodestyuk. As we mentioned before, it is located in the locality of Balak dere near village of Huhla.

The beginning of the regular archaeological excavations of the fortress in the locality of Balak dere dated from 2007 [19]. The fortress borders are established, which has total area around 10 acres and the three building basics are revealed. The archaeological discoveries, discovered during the excavation period, are related toward the period of the Late Antique Era (IV – VI century) and the Middle Ages (XI – XIII century). The numismatic material is consisted from anonymous Byzantium

coins from XI century and the Constantinople Latin imitations' from the first quarter of XIII century.

The main function of the fortresses Lyutica and Rodestyuk was to secure the roads from Didymoteicho to the south border of Bulgaria. It is not occasional the case and the election of the area about their construction. They are located in places with very good view near the road area from Didymoteicho toward the inner sides of the Rhodope Mountain.

The distance between Didymoteicho to the fortress in the locality Balak dere, to the existence even nowadays short road, which probably was used from the crusaders, is around 42 km.

The identifying of Rodestyuk with the fortress in the locality of Balak dere showed that on this place road passed to the right coast of Arda river. Ivan Velkov mentioned in his researches from 1939 about the existence of old road in the vicinities of Ivailovgrad **[20]**.

After the fortress Rodestyuk the road was continued to the right coast of Arda river as it crossed the river somewhere in the vicinities of village of Kamilski dol. From their, in direction southwest, it went into the area of village of Malki voden. The road continued to north and through the locality of Kanchov turn is started to climb the Rhodope Mountain part "The Forest". It passed around 1,3 km east from the village of Malki voden. In this region it passed east from the cult complex "The deaf stones" and around 800 m northeast from it it changed its direction to west toward "St. Marina" peak.

According to us, on "St. Marina" peak is the supposed place for the next bearing point – the fortress Fraim. The distance between the fortresses Rodestyuk and Fraim to the existence mountain road is around 38 km. Their area observations showed that as a whole the road followed the direction of southeast toward northwest. B. Deribeev mentioned in his researches for short roads in the region of town of Ivailovgrad, some of them was used from the crusaders **[21]**.

The location of the fortress Fraim is an essential moment for the tracing the road of the crusaders in the Rhodope Mountain. For this fortress we have only with the evidences of Geoffrey of Villehardouin, which said that the crusaders are passed the distance from Adrianople to Fraim for 5 days. The ancient guidebooks data and the made area observations showed that the actual distance of the line Adrianople, Rodestyuk, Fraim is around 115 km, in this way the knights are passed around 24 km per day.

The first evidences for the fortress Fraim location we find in the notes of the French traveler Ogyust Vikenel **[22]**. According to his notes this fortress is located there where the Krumovitsa river is flow into the Arda river. Also, the same location about the fortress Fraim gave Konstantin Josef Jirecek, which obviously used the notes and the map of Vikenel **[23]**.

Ivan Velkov search Fraim east from village of Efrem, municipality of Haskovo and south from the peak of “St. Marina” of the East Rhodope Mountain “The forest” [24]. Obviously, the ruins from the fortress of peak “St. Marina” are escaped from the author view, after he wrote that “There are no clues from the fortress”. When did not succeed to find the fortress called Fraim in the mentioned area, Ivan Velkov is joining toward the Konstantin Josef Jirecek opinion for the location of the fortress near the Valley of Krumovitsa River [25].

For the location question of the fortress Fraim we receive information even from Vasil Zlatarski, which in his researches preserved the opinions of Konstantin Josef Jirecek and Ivan Velkov [26].

Pavel Deliradev in his work “Contribution toward the Historical geography of Thrace” make a short comment about the location of the Middle Age fortress Fraim. Without giving details, Deliradev accepted that this fortress was located in the region of the villages of Ribovo and Potochnitsa, municipality of Haskovo [27].

Anastas Razboinikov gave more detailed investigation about the question of the location of the fortress Fraim [28]. He located the fortress Fraim near the nowadays village called Efrem, municipality of Haskovo, using the historical springs about the Fourth Crusade and the Turkish registers about the villages. In total the proposed from Anastas Razboinikov location theory about the fortress Fraim is right, although that in his researches there are lack of archaeological observations of the area.

In 1982 B. Deribeev published his book called “Ahrida. The unknown land” [29]. Moreover, in it the author comments the problem about the location of the fortresses mentioned in the chronicles of Geoffrey of Villehardouin during the expedition of the crusaders in the Rhodope Mountain. For the location of the fortress called Fraim, Deribeev accept that it was located in the outfall of Krumovitsa River [30].

Dimcho Aladzhov in his researches give more common information about the location of the fortress Fraim [31]. He mentioned about the fortress ruins in the Rhodope Mountain ridge “The forest”, which is similar with the mentioned from Geoffrey of Villehardouin fortress Fraim. The fortress walls were created from crushed stones, merged with white mortar. From the description of D. Aladzhov there are not enough clear where exactly the location of the mentioned from him is ruins of the fortress walls.

During 2011 and 2012 were implemented systematic investigations of archaeological places in the region of the complex called the Deaf stones, in the Rhodope Mountain massif “The forest”. An area around 40 sq. m. is researched [32]. The only one renovated medieval fortress in this region, which can be identified with the fortress Fraim is this, located on the peak of “St. Marina”.

K. Gagova gave information that the fortress Fraim was located near the nowadays village of Efrem, municipality of Haskovo [33].

When we have in mind our area observations, compared with the historical springs for the Fourth Crusade and the Archaeological researches in the locality of Deaf Stones we can accept that the fortress Fraim is similar with the ruins from the old fortress on the peak “St. Marina”, which is northeast from village of Efrem. Evidence for our opinion in the first place are architecture ruins from the fortress on peak “St. Marina”, which are the most impressive in the whole East Rhodope Massif “The forest” and they consist the area around 10 acres. In contrast we must noticed that the fortress near village of Rabovo, where is one of the supposed places of the fortress of Fraim, the area around it is barely 1 acre. But the fortress near the outfall of the Krumovitsa river, where Fraim is also located, is from the period of The Late Antiquity (V – VI century) [34].

In the southeast foot of peak “St. Marina” is located the big cult complex “The deaf stones”, in which onto the cultural layers from the Early Bronze Era and the Early Iron Era are discovered architecture ruins from the Early Christian and Middle Age church. In the implemented excavations in the period 2008-2013 are discovered significance number of Byzantium Bronze coins, each from the period of the dynasty of Komninite [35]. As well as a Latin imitative coin from XIII century [36]. Bigger interest for the current research represents the results from the archaeological excavations of the church. She is three-shipped basilica with one semi-circle Apse from east [37].

From discovered archaeological discoveries (ceramics and coins) the scientists dated the church in the period XI – XII century. According to them in this place during the Middle Age Era monastery complex was existed. The future archaeological researches will show when and under what reasons this monastery stopped to exist.

Archeological excavations on peak “St. Marina” until now are not implemented. In 2008 in the same locality are implemented area researches. It is cleaned a profile which was formed during the construction of forest road. The ceramic material was discovered in this profile. It clearly depicted the medieval layer, which lay onto cultural layer from the Early Iron Era [38].

The implemented from us observation on the peak “St. Marina” discovered concentration of different sizes crushed stones without clues from masonry mortar. The formed in the peak walls are orientate to the world directions. Significance fortress was existed in this place. Her geographical coordinates are: E 25°56`47``; N 41°43`45``.

The second moments who give us an opportunity to locate the fortress Fraim in the region on the peak “St. Marina”, is the distance between the fortress and Adrianople, which according to our data is around 115 km. This distance in the unknown and hiding uninterrupted surprises from attacks – Rhodope Mountain is

normally to be passed from the crusaders from five days, as wrote by Geoffrey of Villehardouin.

The complex analyze of the data from the historical springs and the results from the archaeological researches on the peak “St. Marina” and the locality of “The deaf stones” showed that in this region during the Middle Age Era is existed significant complex consisted from the fortress and monastery complex. North from him was traced a road, which was passed to the high parts of the Rhodope mountain massif called “the forest”. The width of the roadbed was around 2,00 m and onto it there were not put stone layout. This road researches showed that it was existed from the Late Antiquity and it was represent deviation from the East in Rhodope Rome road [39]. This forest road which is used even today from the people from the near villages probably was used from the crusaders in their expedition toward the next fortress called Moniak.

In west from peak “St. Marina” the road was passed entirely to the mountain massif ridge “The forest” through the localities: Bivaka, Kirechnitsa, Slivkite, Yarjili cognac and The blue peak. Near village of Down Sadievo this peak is directed to south, where it was connected with the Ancient road to the Valley of Arda River, traced from the Rome period [40]. Two day travel after the fortress Fraim to the valley of Arda river according to the evidences of Geoffrey of Villehardouin was located the fortress Moniak [41].

For the location of the fortress Moniak in the historical books are told different opinions.

Based on the description of Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Konstantin Josef Jirecek in his “Travel to Bulgaria” he mentioned that the fortress Moniak was located in the Valley of Arda River [42]. Iv. Velkov gave the same information about Moniak [43].

In 1977 in the working of Ivan Balkanski called “East Rhodope Mountain fortresses” proposed the most detailed information about the fortress Moniak [44]. According to him the fortress was located 2 km south from village of Shiroko pole, municipality of Kurdzhali and 6 km east from the Kurdzhali town. In his publication the author gave common plan of the fortress.

The fortress Moniak is situated of mountain eminence above the left coast of Arda river (**Example 4**). She is one of the biggest medieval fortresses in the Rhodope Mountain with total area of 18 acres. The construction of his walls is preserved of the height of 3,00 m. The fortress was reached by a road, traced from the West side of the eminence. In order to construct the road, the rock area was chipped and roadbed was formed with width of around 2,00 m (**Example 5**). The fortress entrance is located of the West side and it was secured from squared tower (**Example 6**). From the inner side the door was bolted with massif wood fence, which is entered into a nest, made in the entrance page (**Example 7**). According to Iv. Balkanski the ground floors of some of the towers of the medieval fortress in the

Rhodope Mountain was used even for water resources, which forced them to use hydrophobic mortar with impurity of crushed stones [45].

B. Deribeev gives information about the location of the fortress Moniak in his book [46]. The author allowed, without engaging an opinion, that this fortress was in proximity with some big geographical, administrative and military center, which has an important role in the administrative management of the East Rhodope Region during the Middle Ages.

Information about the fortress Moniak we find in the researches of K. Gagova – “Thrace through the Bulgarian medieval period. Historical geography”. The author allowed that this fortress can be located in south from nowadays town of Havsa (Turkey), to the road for Enez [47].

For now in the historical science is accepted the opinion that the fortress Moniak is identical with the hill fortress, stayed around 2 km south from the village of Shiroko field, in the high left coast of Arda river. The location of this place corresponds with the historical information of the archaeological researches of the area. The distance from the peak “St. Marina” where we accept that the fortress Frain was located to the hill over the village of Shiroko field, where the fortress Moniak was located to the old road in the mountain massif called “the forest” is around 58 km.

In the fortress Moniak the crusaders stayed around 5 days and they changed their own initial plan for Kaloyan chasing. Here in decreased numerical people, they decided to go to the fortress Estanimak and to help of besieged in the fortress regent Rene de Three [48].

But which road they used for the science is still mysterious. Nor one of the authors wrote for the problem about the movement of the crusaders from Didymoteicho to the Rhodope Mountain, did not say categorically opinion about this question based on specific area researches.

B. Deribeev allowed that from Moniak to Estanimak the crusaders used the more convenient and shorter road through the villages of Komuniga, Panichkovo and Lenovo, i.e. road which is traced the contemporary asphalt road from Kurdzhali to Asenovgrad. [49]. His opinion, marked under the line of his popular book called “Ahrida” is not proved with data from area archaeological researches and in this stage remains in the sphere of proposals.

According to V. Zlatarski from Moniak the crusaders went to the west of the Valley of Arda River. After that to the valley of Borovitsa river and through the village of Topolovo are reached to the fortress Estanimak [50]. If the knights passed using this road this means that after village of Topolovo the must sidestep to the northeast slopes of the mountain part Dobrostan and to reach Estanimak from north. From north toward the fortress Estanimak an ancient road until now is not discovered and barely was it existed. So the proposed from Zlatarski version about the crusaders expedition is accepted only in the area to the valley of Borovitsa river, because we

have archaeological data about it. It is necessary to be defined that using the road to the valley of Borovitsa river the Latin army did not deviate in northeast from village of Topolovo, but it continued in northwest and to the valley of the Yugovska river reached to Estanimak.

The results from the area researches of the ancient road, through the Topolov canal, which is part of the East in Rhodope Rome road **[51]**, showed that in the southern part of the Rhodope Mountain part “Black ridge”, in the localities of Preleza and Ahmed caves, in the nowadays reserve called “Kormishos”, the road through the Topolov canal was deviated to northwest to the valley of Yugovska river toward town of Laki. Near these localities, in direction southeast, there are clues from old road, which direction is to the Valley of Borovitsa River. As a whole this area is with direction northwest – southeast. The road was descended to the left coast of Borovitsa river, crossed the area of the Kurdzhali villages of Murga, Voinovo and Nenkovo and during the left coast of Arda river is reached to the fortress Moniak. The end northwest point of the road to the Valley of Borovitsa River is the valley of Yugovska river in her infusion into Chepelarska river.

It is character for this road that almost the whole area – from the Valley of Borovitsa River to the Yugovska river valley passed through deep and steep regions. Near village of Yugovo this road was connected with the old road, which was descended to the northeast slopes of the Radyuva Mountain. The approximate distance between the fortresses Moniak and Estanimak to the valley of the rivers – Borovitsa and Yugovska is around 90 km.

For the crusaders expedition through the Rhodope Mountain toward the fortress Estanimak existed even third version, which until now is not commented in the historic books. The researches of the old roads to the Valley of Arda River and the Rhodope Mountain in the region of the towns of Smolyan and Asenovgrad give us a reason for this.

During the medieval era the most used road from the Aegean Sea to the Rhodope Mountain toward Estanimak and Philippopol was the road, traced north from Xanthium, through Radyuva Mountain, the Valley of Yugovska River and this of Chepelarska river **[52]**. The significant part of the area on this road was used even before Rome Era **[53]**. This road was used even from the French traveler Ogyust Vikenel who in 1847 supported from the Turkish parliament, started several scientific expeditions for the Rhodope Mountain region researches **[54]**. In geographical relation the area of this road in bigger part crossed the territory of Smolyan municipality. Nowadays in this distance is constructed one of the most important roads, relating Republic of Bulgaria with Republic of Greece.

There are no doubts that this important road artery was known of the crusaders and it is logical that from secure consideration that they will prefer this road when they go toward the fortress Estanimak.

After the fortress Moniak the road of the crusaders probably continues to west from the left coast of Arda river, and after it – to the left coast of Borovitsa river. 700 m south from village of Nenkovo, municipality of Kurdzhali is located so called “The medieval bridge”. This is the most convenient place to pass the river of Borovitsa in which there is a bridge **(Example 8)**. Going on the right coast of the river the road was continued to southwest toward the locality of Gazanlak tepe, where there are ruins from the old fortress. In this region the width of the roadbed reached around 2, 5 m. In order to construct this roadbed, the rock coast of the river was chipped and for roadbed was used the rock **(Example 9)**.

When leaving the Valley of Borovitsa River the road continued again in the left coast of Arda river. Near village of Banite the road changed his direction to west over left coast of Small Arda river. It crossed the area of the Smolyan village of Kutela and of around 1,5 km north from village of Momchilovtsi it was connected with the road from the Aegean Sea toward Estanimak and Philippopol **[55]**. This road was directed north to the slope of Radyuva Mountain toward the Pashaliitsa hut. After the hut the road descended to northeast of the steep slope over the Yugovska river toward village of Yugovo and the Bachkovo monastery.

Detailed information about this road gave us the French traveler Paul Lukas, who in 1706 visit this road during his journey from Asenovgrad to Drama **[56]**. For the road area, north from Bachkovo monastery toward the Asen`s Fortress wrote in their researches Rosica Moreva and Ivan Dukov **[57]**. The road clues are still preserved even today after the metochion of the Bachkovo monastery under the eminence “St. Dimitar”. Somewhere after the Bachkovo monastery the road passed on the left coast of Chepelarska river. The road transferred with bridge the small river of Lukovitsa and in northwest direction is continued toward the ridge. From there, in south direction the road was directed toward Philippopol. Little before the road to reach the ridge peak there was a local deviance, which was lead toward the fortress Estanimak. In the fortress it went through a gate of the west side. The rock layout of the road near the fortress Estanimak is formed through rock massif to be chipped (Example 10). The area of this road is included in touristic route.

The distance between the fortresses Moniak and Estanimak under so proposed area of the road of the crusaders is around 100 km. Because of the hard and unknown for the knights` mountain terrain which suggested slow and attentive movement, this distance without many problems can be passed for three days, as wrote Geoffrey of Villehardouin.

For the crusaders road toward the fortress Estanimak are possible both upper mentioned versions – the first one during the valley of the rivers Borovitsa and Yugovska and the second one, during the Radyuva mountain. As we noticed the road in the left coast of river of Borovitsa to the end point – the valley of Yugovska river, passed through deep defiles and high and steep ridges. In the unknown territory the road can be relatively more dangerous from organizing enemy attacks.

The archaeological researches showed that the road in the Valley of Arda River and Radyuva Mountain is easier to pass and the surprises from eventual enemy attacks could be smaller.

After the exposed facts and arguments we can accept that the army led by Geoffrey of Villehardouin during the expedition time after Moniak toward the fortress Estanimak is passed to the traced road even from the Rome period to the left coast of Arda river and Radyuva Mountain. Coincidentally, the road through Radyuva mountain was used even from the European travelers, who visited the Rhodope Mountain during XVIII century and XIX century.

Geoffrey of Villehardouin evidenced about this our opinion. He said that the crusaders could be so close to the castle Estanimak that they could see it **[58]**.

The location of the medieval fortress Estanimak is very good choice. It is located in high rock and unreachable peak. The only access to the fortress is from the southwest side, where the terrain is more slanting. From this side the road is discovered which was descended in south toward the Valley of Chepelarska River **[59]**. This is the only possible place, from where the crusaders could try to reach the fortress, as said by Geoffrey of Villehardouin.

In conclusion we can say that for this problem we do not have a lot of information. We are consciously restricted ourselves onto the notes of Geoffrey of Villehardouin which affected the research.

Good information about the expedition of the crusaders offered the results from the archaeological excavations of the medieval fortresses in the East Rhodope Mountain. This information is completed from the researches of the area of the old roads to the valley of the rivers Arda, Borovitsa and Yugovska, which in their side gave an opportunity to establish the approximate distances between the fortresses, marked as bearing points in the beginning of the working. The same distances were used in the contrast analyze attached as method of our work. Significant difficulty for the following the road in the valley of Arda river are the created contemporary colossal facility, which to big degree changed the geographical view of the area from where the road passed and these facilities destroyed the road clues.

During his first expedition from Constantinople to Adrianople, untroubled and recognizing the road the crusaders passed around 58 km average per day. After they went in the unknown and difficult to pass Rhodope Mountain massif, it was really normal the crusaders to pass around 25-30 km per day.

From the historical springs we learned that during the Rome Era the normal one-day military expedition in the plain areas is around 20-24 miles (or 30 -35 km) per day **[60]**. However, during the transportation of the state post from the messengers, which went really faster, they had a chance pass the road – on a horse around 50 Rome miles (or around 74 km) per day **[61]**.

The ancient author evidences in contrast with the evidences of Geoffrey of Villehardouin and the actual distances between the fortresses, marked in the research, showed that the knight army which was consisted of cavalry, squires and pedestrians, was went significantly fast not only in the plain but also in the mountain areas.

The proposed from us version about the crusaders road through the Rhodope Mountain is based of the complex researches which include the data from the historical springs, the archaeological researches of the medieval fortresses, located to road direction and our private observation of the area in order to establish the old road areas in the Rhodope Mountain. Our future researches will complete and adjusted our opinion, with which we hope to provoke wider scientific discussion in order to clarify this important and interesting problem.

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(SUMMARY)

A lot of authors were written about the knight movement through the Rhodope Mountain during the time of the Fourth Crusades. Almost each of them in his work used only the evidences of Geoffrey of Villehardouin, which chronicle is not only initial spring for the Fourth Crusade and for the initial history of the Latin Constantinople Empery, but also is one of the most important East European springs for the history of the medieval Bulgaria.

Big significance for tracing the road of the crusaders during the Rhodope Mountain has the archaeological researches in the medieval fortresses in the Valley of Arda River and the location of some of them, mentioned from Geoffrey of Villehardouin as basic bearing points, in which the knights stayed in.

Essential evidenced material about the problem is the results from the archaeological researches of the Antique and the Late Antique roads in the Valley of Arda River, which without doubt are used during the Medieval Era, but big part of their areas, are good preserved even today.

The aim of this report is by using the historical springs for the Fourth Crusades and on the basis of the archaeological researches of the old roads and the medieval fortresses in the Valley of Arda River to track the road of the knights in the Rhodope Mountain toward the Medieval fortress called Estanimak.

According to the chronicles of Geoffrey of Villehardouin the beginning of the expedition of the crusaders during the Rhodope Mountain started from Adrianople and it is connected with the experience of the Bulgarian king Kaloyan to capture Didymoteicho. When he learned about the expedition of the crusaders toward Didymoteicho, Kaloyan went into the fortress called Rodestyuk.

The next two fortresses through which the knights were passed according to the evidences of Geoffrey of Villehardouin were Fraim and Moniak. For the fortress Moniak the author wrote that it was located near Arda river, but for the fortress Fraim he only mentioned that it was located of 2 days travelling from the fortress Moniak.

The short evidences which Geoffrey of Villehardouin gave us about the movement of the crusaders through the Rhodope Mountain did not allow making good location of the fortresses, located in their road. More important is the fact that the information of chronicler marked the basic points for tracing the direction of the crusaders road in the Rhodope Mountain: Adrianople, Didymoteicho, Rodestyuk, Fraim, Moniak, Estanimak.

The first bearing point during the crusaders road toward the Rhodope Mountain is Didymoteicho. The next fortress is Rodestyuk after Didymoteicho, which was also located in this direction. The implemented during the last millennium archaeological researches of the medieval fortresses in the region of Ivailovgrad showed that the fortress Rodestyuk is similar to the ruins of the ancient fortress in

the locality of Balak dere, near the Ivailovgrad village called Huhla. There is no doubt that after Didymoteicho the crusaders went in northwest direction using the left coast of Luda river toward the inner side of the Rhodope Mountain.

In the fifth day after the crusaders left Adrianople they stayed in the fortress Fraim. There are no evidences about the location of this fortress. The authors located this fortress in different places: One of them near the village of Efrem kyoi, near to Edirne, another authors near the village of Potochnitsa, near Kardhali and third one near the village of Efrem, the municipality of Haskovo. When we compare the data from the historical springs with the results from the archaeological researches and the our private observations of the area, we accept that the fortress Fraim is located of the peak “St. Marina” in the village of Efrem, where there were big medieval complex.

After Fraim the road toward the fortress Moniak, which is located in the village of Shiroko field, municipality of Kurdzhali, is passed on the ridge of the East Rhodope Mountain massif “The forest” and near village of Dolno Sadievo was descended toward the valley of the Arda River. In this distance during the Rome Era was passed the roadbed of the East in Rhodope Rome road – one of the main Rome roads in the Rhodope Mountain, which was used during the Middle Ages. The distance between the fortresses Fraim and Moniak to the existing in this direction old road is around 58 km which can be passed for 2 days as wrote by Geoffrey of Villehardouin.

The fortress Moniak is a key center in tracing the movement of the crusaders during the Rhodope Mountain. During their stay in the fortress they decided to go to the fortress Estanimak, which is located near the town of Asenovgrad. The distance of the two fortresses on the existing old road is around 110 km and it was passed from the knights for 4 days. It appeared the logical question, for which we still cannot find an answer, which road the knights were used toward Estanimak. The more scientists supposed that their road continued through the canal, which nowadays connect the towns of Kurdzhali and Asenovgrad, which is not impossible, but a little probability. The lack of the necessary archaeological researches to the problem of this stage did not give an opportunity this opinion to be accepted unreservedly.

However, it exist another version, which probably is more authoritative. This version is based on the archaeological researches, according to which during the Era of the medieval centuries the most important road from the Aegean Sea through the Rhodope Mountain for Plovdiv was those, traced north from town of Xanthium (Greece Republic) and during the Radyuva Mountain reached to the medieval town called Estanimak. The layout of this medieval road was described from the Greek author K. Asdraha. In the bigger part it followed the layout of the mentioned already East in Rhodope Mountain Rome road.

With big probability we can accept that after the fortress Moniak the crusaders were passed during the road traced in the Valley of Arda River even from the Roman period and using the vicinities of the Smolyan village of Momchilovtsi they went to

north to the medieval fortress through Radyuva Mountain. When they descended to the Yugovska river defile and the defile of Chepelarska river, they reached to the medieval castle called Estanimak.

This road was used from the French traveler Paul Lukas, who in 1706 used this road when he traveled from Asenovgrad for Drama.

In this way, the proposed from us version of the crusaders road through the Rhodope Mountain is based of the complex researches which included the data from historical springs, archaeological excavations of the medieval fortresses located to the road direction, and our private area observations in order to establish the layouts of the old roads in the Rhodope Mountain. The future archaeological researches will complete and adjust our opinion, with which we hope to provoke wider scientific discussion in order to clarify this problem.

ANOTATIONS:

Example 1: View from the fortress Didymoteicho – view from south (Photos: M. Madzharov).

Example 2: The northwest entrance of the fortress Didymoteicho (Photos: M. Madzharov).

Example 3: Plan of the fortress Lyutitsa (B. Petrunova)

Example 4: View from the fortress Moniak – view from east (Photos: M. Madzharov)

Example 5: Sector from the layout of the road toward the fortress Moniak (Photos: M. Madzharov).

Example 6: Part of the entrance and the tower of the fortress Moniak (Photos: M. Madzharov)

Example 7: The nest of pawl door of the gate of the fortress Moniak (Photos: M. Madzharov).

Example 8: The old bridge in the village of Nenkovo – view from east (Photos: M. Madzharov).

Example 9: Part of the layout of the road south from the village of Nenkovo – view from south (Photos: M. Madzharov).

Example 10: Part of the layout of the road in the fortress Estanimak (Photos: M. Madzharov).

