

Procopius' Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου – Basilica or Royal Residence/Treasury?

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ABSTRACT

Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου is one of many examples of *hapax legomena* place-names in Procopius' *Buildings*. The second part of this compound name is the personal name Ἀμύντας, here in gen. sg. Ἀμύντου, epigraphically attested in the Hellenistic-Roman period. We assume that in this example the personal name is connected with the most famous bearer of the name among all other rulers in Macedonian dynasty, that is to say, Amyntas III, the father of Filip II. Linguistic analysis in the article is more focused on interpretation of the first part of the name which is a substantive τὸ βασιλικόν from the noun βασιλεύς, ὁ, 'king', here in the nominative/accusative plural (τὰ βασιλικά) with omitted article.

Key-words: Procopius, De aedificiis, Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου, basilica, royal residence

In the article we intend to focus on a toponym from the historical record which perfectly reflects linguistic situation in the early years of Byzantine Balkans, to be more precise, in the VIth century AD. The place-name *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* is one of the 46 enumerated fortresses in Procopius' *Buildings*, from the list referring to Macedonia.¹ The fact that this fortress from the catalogue of the IVth Book took place between two, also unknown forts, makes its location and identification even more complicated. The authors who were trying to study Procopius' place-names tell us a bit, or rather, almost nothing about this toponym. Only Michael Vickers in an article related to other fortress from the list, *Therme*, mentioned that *the first recognizable of all Procopius' place names in Macedonia is just Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* which according to his opinion probably signifies ancient Macedonian capital Aegae which he places in Edessa opposed to Pella.² Thereby, the author didn't give us any

¹ Procopius, *De aedificiis*, IV. 4.3.

.....

Κολοβῶνα

Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου

Μελίχιζα

.....

² Vickers (1974), 10-11.

argument in favour of his thesis. From the only sentence in which he mentions *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* we can only conceive indirectly that the author emphasizes the opposition between the old and new Macedonian capital without giving explicit and reliable opinion on the localization of the fortress. First of all, the identification of the old capital Aegae with Edessa is outdated, inaccurate and today completely dismissed in opposite of the view of historian Hamond on identification of Aegae with present-day Palatitsia/Vergina proposed in the year of 1968, which was reinforced a decade later by the archeologist Manolis Andronikos' discovery of a palace, two Macedonian tombs and a great number of graves.³ In case we accept the opinion of M. Vickers that the fortress was located in Aegae⁴, we can conclude that the author apparently followed a theory by Hammond according to which, painted cist tomb (I) in the great tumulus in Vergina was the burial place of Amyntas III.⁵ Contrary to this, Eugen Borza claimed that, the remains of the deceased cannot be connected with Amyntas III in any way.⁶ The same opinion is shared by Hatzopoulos and Loukopoulou based on archeological grounds and according to the testimony of *unique relevant source – Strabo*.⁷

Obviously, linguistic analysis of the name of the fortress can help us in clarifying the problem of identification and location of the fortress. Let's start with the second part of this compound name – the personal name *Ἀμύντας*, here in gen. sg *Ἀμύντου*. The name *Ἀμύντας* is epigraphically documented in the Hellenistic-Roman period. Fanoula Papazoglou classifies it in the third group of so-called *Greek – Macedonian* names which in fact are names of Greek origin, which are recorded in Macedonia and remain typically Macedonian (such as *Ἄλκιμος, Ἀέροπος, Κλεῖτος, Λιμναῖος*).⁸ Although Miltiades Hatzopoulos intended to redefine the onomastic situation in Macedonia, at least in terms of this name he came to identical conclusion. Namely, according to his classification of the names recorded in Macedonia, the personal name *Ἀμύντας* is defined by him as *Macedonian with clear Greek etymology*.⁹ This personal name, among other uses is certainly the best known as dynastic name in the royal house of the Macedonians. Such connection in our case is amplified by using the adverb *βασιλικὰ* before the noun/personal name. Having in mind that the most famous bearer of the name among all other rulers in Macedonian dynasty is

³ As a matter of fact, Fanoula Papazoglou already in the year 1957 proved that Aegae and Edessa are two different cities: Papazoglu (1957), 111. Also: Papazoglou (1988), 133.

⁴ Κονσταντακοπούλου (1984), 236.

⁵ Hammond (1982), 115.

⁶ Borza (1990), 297.

⁷ Hatzopoulos – Loukopoulou (1987), 43. Cf. Strabo, XVI, 2,10,15: “τὴν δὲ Πέλλαν ὥσπερ μητροπόλιν γεγονέναι τῶν Μακεδόνων τὴν Φιλίππου καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου πατρίδα.” Completely different opinion concerning the location of the old Macedonian capital was promoted lately by Panayotis Faklaris, but this is irrelevant for the discussion we offer here. Namely, Faklaris, on the base of topographic evidence, ancient testimony and recent archaeological discoveries concluded that Aegae was located on the eastern slopes of Mount Bermium, in the area of Kopanos of Nausa, cf. Faklaris (1994), 609–616.

⁸ Papazoglu (1977), 75.

⁹ Hatzopoulos (2000), 107.

Amyntas III (393/2 – 370/69), father of Filip II, we assume that Procopius' fortress is connected precisely to his name.

Regarding the first part of this compound name, our considerations are moving in two directions. Namely, the first part of the name is a substantive τὸ βασιλικόν from the well-known noun βασιλεύς, ὁ 'king', here in the nominative/accusative plural (τὰ) βασιλικά with omitted article. The first interpretation of the adjective βασιλικά in this compound name goes towards acceptance of the meaning of substantive neutrum τὸ βασιλικόν - 'royal house / palace/residence or royal treasury' as it is confirmed in dictionaries.¹⁰ According to Chantraine, the adjective βασιλικός which replaces the older form βασιλειος is used already by Herodotus¹¹, but it is particularly typical for the later development of the Greek language in the substantive τὸ βασιλικόν, denoting 'all that relates to the royal treasury'.¹² In the Pape-Benseler's onomasticon we found Procopius' toponym Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου interpreted as 'royal chair/capital'.¹³ All these data give us enough evidence to believe that the name of Procopius' fortress might be connected with the royal palace or royal treasury of the Macedonian king Amyntas III. The royal palace as part of the most significant buildings in Pella is confirmed by archeological excavations in the year of 1957, which showed that citadel comprised not only the height of the present day village of Palaia Pella, but also the height to the West of it.¹⁴

According to the opinion of most researches, who mainly refer to earlier sources, the relocation of Macedonian capital from Aegae to Pella was conducted during the reign of the Macedonian king Archelaos (413 - 399 BC).¹⁵ Onomastic materials and archaeological remains also confirm that the transfer of the capital was accompanied by a significant Macedonian migration to Pella.¹⁶ In relation to the question whether the Macedonian capital was transferred from Aegae to Pella during the reign of Archelaos or Amyntas, we assume that it would be correct to mention a study of Hatzopoulos/Loukopoulou, in which authors claim that Macedonian capital was transferred in Pella later, during the reign of the king Amyntas III.¹⁷ Also, they confirm that in early Byzantine period Roman Pella was already deserted, but archaeological and epigraphic data proved that despite the depopulation of the city, there was still a small settlement on ancient acropolis. Archeological investigation

¹⁰ Bailly *DGF*, s.v. βασιλικός, ἡ, ὄν 351; *LSJ Lexicon*: βασιλικόν (sc. ταμειῖον), τό, 'treasury', εἰς τὸ β. ἀπομετροῦσαι, τελεῖν, PSI4.344.17 (III B.C.), D.S.2.40, etc.; ὀφείλειν PRev.Laws5.1, al.; 'royal bank', OGI90.29 (Rosetta), PRein.13.19, al., BGU830.18 (I A. D.).

¹¹ *LSJ Lexicon*: s.v. βασιλειον, τό, 'kingly dwelling, palace', X.Cyr.2.4.3, etc.; more common in pl., Hdt.1.30, 178, Arist.Oec.1352a11, etc.; 'seat of empire', 'capital', Plb.3.15.3, D.S.19.18, Str.1.2.25; 'royal treasury', Hdt.2.149: pl., Isoc. 3.31.

¹² Chantraine *DELG*, 169; *LSJ Lexicon*: s.v. βασιλικός; βασιλικόν (sc. ταμειῖον), τό, 'treasury', εἰς τὸ β. ἀπομετροῦσαι, τελεῖν, PSI4.344.17 (iii B.C.), D.S.2.40, etc.

¹³ Pape's, *Handwörterbuch der Griechischen Sprache*.

¹⁴ Petsas (1978), 133.

¹⁵ Kanatsoulis (1948), 77-82; Edson (1970), 36; Hammond – Griffith (1979), 139-40, 150.

¹⁶ Hansen – Nielsen (2004), 805; Hammond – Griffith (1979), 56; Hatzopoulos (1996), 171-73.

¹⁷ Hatzopoulos – Loukopoulou (1987), 41-44.

showed that here was situated an old royal residence.¹⁸ Authors conclude that it is quite natural this small settlement, which was most probably renewed and re-fortified by Justinian, to be named *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου*. They support their opinion by the fact that this place was very often recorded by the travel writings from a much later period with the names *Palatia* and *Palatitzia*.¹⁹ Selene Psoma shares the same opinion regarding the relocation of the Macedonian capital in Pella during the reign of Amyntas III mostly based on the testimony of Xenophon.²⁰ Eugen Borza considers this thesis worthy of attention but, still, not convincing enough.²¹ Nade Proeva in the historical commentaries added to the Macedonian translation of the famous work of the archaeologist Delacoulonche, although not categorical in her assertion, still favours the thesis that the transfer of the Macedonian capital from Aegae to Pella was conducted during the reign of Archelaos, although the archeologist himself presents opposite opinion.²² She considers that the title *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* does not necessarily mean that Amyntas transferred the capital from Aegae to Pella. Namely, the royal court/palace could have been built or substantially expanded during the reign of Amyntas and it is therefore named after him. Bearing in mind the fact that the difference in the period of the reign of Archelaos and Amyntas is only several years, we can conclude that it is possible that Archelaos started and Amyntas finished the construction of the royal court and therefore the place which survived in the following years could be named after him.²³

Anyhow, regardless of which viewpoint we prefer, it is more logical to assume that Procopius' fortress associated with the name of Amyntas, (having in mind that he was on the throne after Archelaos) was situated in the new Macedonian capital Pella or its surrounding and certainly not in Aegae as Vickers assumes. The opinion that the fortress *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* is situated on the acropolis of Pella gave us Despina Papakonstantinou - Diamantourou in a famous monograph on Pella.²⁴

Concerning the meaning of a substantive 'royal treasury' we can say the following. One Greek geographer Strabo, describing in his VII book the capital Pella, gives us the information, that there was located the Macedonian state treasury for a long period of time.²⁵ This is, also, confirmed by the Roman historian Livy.²⁶ The treasury of the Macedonian state

¹⁸ Makaronas (1960), 81; Siganiidou (1981), 51-53; eiusdem (1982), 61-62.

¹⁹ Meletios (1807), 473; Pouqueville (1832), 451-52.

²⁰ [Psoma](#) (2001), 225.

²¹ Borza (1990), 296; Borza (1995), 131.

²² Delacoulonche (2000), 178.

²³ This is the opinion of the historian Prof. Nade Proeva verbally expressed in discussion on this issue.

²⁴ [Παπακωνσταντίνου-Διαμαντούρου](#) (1971), 93-4.

²⁵ Strabo, *Geographica*, VII, 20: 7a.1.20.12: "Πέλλα ἐστὶ μὲν τῆς κάτω Μακεδονίας ἣν Βοττιαῖοι κατεῖχον· ἐνταῦθ' ἦν πάλαι τὸ τῆς Μακεδονίας χρηματιστήριον".

²⁶ Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 44, 45: "consul a Pydna profectus cum toto exercitu die altero Pellam peruenit et cum castra mille passus inde posuisset, per aliquot dies ibi statiuia habuit, situm urbis undique aspiciens, quam non sine causa delectam esse regiam <anim>aduertit. sita est in tumulo uergente in occidentem hibernum; cingunt paludes inxsuperabilis altitudinis aestate et hieme, quas

was situated in the fortress on a small island near Pella called Phacos, in the middle of swampy lake called by Macedonians *Borboros* (today Ianitza Lake). This second citadel in Pella may also be the point where we can place Procopius' fortress.

Another consideration about the meaning of the first part of the composite name *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* is based on different interpretation: as nom. sg. of the Latin noun *basilica*, Romanized form from the originally Greek word *βασιλική*. In the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium we find the explanation of the term: *Basilica βασιλική*: 'a type of church building'.²⁷ *Basilica* is used as a standard type of church until VIth century AD, but it was, also, built in the latter period, although rare. A similar interpretation we can find in the dictionary of Dimitrakou.²⁸ Sophocles under the entry *βασιλική*, sc. *οἰκία* (*basilica*) gives us the interpretation: 'basilica, early Christian church'.²⁹ Haralambie Mihaescu in his famous work on the Latin language in Southeast Europe in the section in which he writes about lexis of Latin inscriptions, in the group of Christian expressions mentions the term *basilica* with the following explanation *basilica, secular building and place for meetings, and later the church*.³⁰

The Roman colony of Pella, which has received that status at the time of Augustus, was founded according to findings on the ground, about 1,5 km west of the Hellenistic settlement, north of the place which is known under the name Baths of Alexander the Great, beside the old road Via Egnatia, on a terrace called in the Ottoman period *Alaklisi*, today's *Aji Apostoli*.³¹ Archaeological excavations have shown that there was a settlement protected by a wall dated from the IIIrd century AD, significantly smaller than the Hellenistic one. Material findings – remains of buildings, coins, pottery from IVth and Vth centuries AD confirm the continuation of life of the colony in the early Christian period. Precisely from this period is the early Christian basilica which is considered to be destroyed, on basis of the excavated walls, in the beginning of the VIIth century AD, but the place remained inhabited in the next few centuries.³² Walls toward north and south show us that there was not only one church, but a broader memorial complex. At the same time, the presence of the remains of wall a little further to the east proved the ability of the basilica to be connected with the whole protected complex. These findings were convincing enough archaeologist Antonios Petkos to believe that the fortress named *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου*, literary witnessed by Procopius, was located right here. Therefore it would represent the proof that the site prolonged its existence during the VIth century AD.

restagnantes faciunt <amnes. ar> Phacus in ipsa palude, qua proxima urbi est, uelut insula eminent, aggeri operis ingentis imposita, qui et murum sustineat et umore circumfusae paludis nihil laedatur. muro urbis coniuncta procul uidetur; diuisa est intermurali amni et eadem ponte iuncta, ut nec oppugnante externo aditum ab ulla parte habeat, nec, si quem ibi rex includat, ullum nisi per facillimae custodiae pontem effugium. **et gaza regia in eo loco erat;**"

²⁷ The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium (1991), I, 266.

²⁸ Δημητράκου, *Μέγα λεξικόν*, 136: "βασιλική, τύπος ναοῦ χριστιανικοῦ κατ τὸ σχέδιον τῆς ἐν Ῥώμῃ βασιλικῆς στοᾶς".

²⁹ Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, 302.

³⁰ Mihăescu (1978), 310.

³¹ Petsas (1978), 39.

³² Πέτκος (2003), 63-79; Πέτκος (2003), 98-101.

The word *basilica* which is substantive from the adjective βασιλικός, -ή, -όν ‘royal’, in the feminine gender βασιλική (sc. στοά) ‘hall’ as we have seen, primarily meant a place where the king resides and had a secular meaning. In Roman time it was a building used for large assemblies and serving as a market and law court generally located in the center of the city. Later on, with the spread of Christianity, the *basilica* served as the standard church type until VIth century AD, so the term was taken over to denote a church. Eusebios of Caesarea was among the first who used this term to denote the meaning of church.

We would like to point out another testimony related to the name of the king Amyntas III, which could justify the interpretation of the substantive βασιλική ‘church/basilica’. Namely, the later source Aelius Aristid gives us information on the first and sole examples of deification before Alexander the Great in Macedonia which is precisely the case with the rulers Amyntas III and Filip II.³³ The scholiast on Demosthenes is even more accurate when informs of the temple dedicated to Amyntas, so called *Amynteion* built in Pindna.³⁴ Christian Habicht in his study on pre-Hellenistic ruler cults, among others, accepted the cult of the living king Amyntas III in Pindna as a historical fact.³⁵ On the other hand there are opinions which seriously question the credibility of data which imply that Amyntas received imperial cult in Pindna during his lifetime.³⁶ The historian Nade Proeva believes that it is actually funerary temple for burial customs,³⁷ because the *cult of dynasty* is confirmed by ancient Macedonians and there is no evidence of the imperial cults before Alexander.³⁸ Considering the fact that the existence of the temple named *Amyntaion* is evident, Pindna, although unlikely, could be, also, potential location of Procopius’ fortress.

Considered from the linguistic perspective, our toponym Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντων is, most probably an elliptical variant of the name. According to the first assumption it would have been primal adjective βασιλική (ἐκκλησία, οἰκία, στοά), whose meaning is ‘royal assembly / house/ hall’, later taken over only by βασιλική, which receives a meaning ‘church/basilica as early Christian church’. This interpretation is confirmed by the archaeological findings of early Christian church in the place that we mentioned. In the latter case it could be

³³ Aristides, Rhet. Aelius, *Symmach.*, 480, 18: “οὔτε γὰρ τῆς ἀξίας τῆς ὑμετέρας τοὺς ἔξω θαυμάζειν οὔθ' ὑπερβάλλοισθ' ἂν Ἀμφιπολίτας καὶ Πυδναίους, ὧν οἱ μὲν ἔθνον ὡς θεῶν, οἱ δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ νεῶν εἶχον δεικνύναι. ἀλλ' ὅμως τοὺς μὲν ἐξέβαλεν, ἡνίκ' αὐτῶν ἦν διακορῆς, τοὺς δ' ἀπέσφαττεν ἐν τῷ νεῷ τοῦ πατρὸς, ὁμνὺς ἔτι, καὶ τὰς σπονδὰς αἰ σφαγαὶ κατελάμβανον.” Also see: The Cambridge ancient history, Vol. 7, Part 1, 90.

³⁴ Scholia in Demosthenem, *Orationes* 1, 41a, 1: “Πύδνα πόλις Μακεδονίας. αὕτη ἀπέστη τοῦ ὑπακούειν Φιλίππῳ, καὶ ἐστράτευσε κατ' αὐτῆς καὶ περὶ ταύτην τοιοῦτόν τι συνέβη· ὡς γὰρ κάκεῖ τινες προδεδώκασιν, εἶθ' ὕστερον γνόντες ὅτι οὐκ ἂν αὐτῶν φείσαιτο, ἔφυγον ἐπὶ τὸ Ἀμύντιον ἱερὸν τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ.”, Roisman – Worthington (2010), 442.

³⁵ Habicht (1970), 12-13.

³⁶ Roisman – Worthington (2010), 161, f. 52. Cf. K. Dahmen, chapter 3: “Late evidence attests the existence of a Temple of Amyntas in Pindna, but nothing is known about the circumstances that occasioned his cult and there are serious reservations about the quality of our sources for it”; Bugh (2006), 27 f. 60.

³⁷ Proeva (2014), 171, 192.

³⁸ Proeva (2014), 160.

considered as βασιλικόν (ταμειῖον) ‘royal treasury’ or βασιλικόν (sc. δῶμα) ‘palace’, which is, according to our opinion, more acceptable explanation. First of all, it is more receptive from a viewpoint of semantics, since the second part of the compound name is a personal name of the Macedonian king Ἀμύντας, the toponym can hardly have the meaning of church complex. Namely, when Christians adopted some elements of paganism they usually *Christianised them*, therefore, many saints have pagan names, but none of them as far as we know, bears the name of Ἀμύντας. It is, also, more acceptable in linguistic terms because the first word of the composite name Βασιλικὰ (Ἀμύντου), is nominative/accusative plural neuter, and not nominative feminine.

Conversely, Historian Robin Lane Fox believes that the link between Procopius' fortress with Pella and historical king Amyntas III, *remains only brilliant conjecture, not guaranteed by the geography of the very late list in which it occurs.*³⁹ In favour of our thesis which identifies Procopius fortress as royal court/ residence, maybe even royal treasury, we have to say the following. We must not forget that even in the context of the same list we are not able to define the exact time of building/restoring and the location of each fort mentioned by Procopius, but, still, the possibility remains open that among others, there were *old* place-names (especially when in the list of Macedonia we have place-names like: Χάραδρος, Κύρρου, Βάβας, Κάλαρνος, Πέλεκον). Moreover, it does seem likely that these lists of toponyms were based on other sources and, probably, on so-called *official lists* which certainly reflect older forms of place-names. However, we also can't deny the fact that toponymy is the most conservative part of the language, *the language of the soil* as our prominent linguist Petar Hr. Ilievski once stated, *guard of linguistic memories which survive human generations and buildings*. Further, forts in Procopius' list of Macedonia are not divided as author usually does, so there is a high probability that the fortress was not in the group of new built, but in the group of restored ones.

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³⁹ [Fox](#) (2011), 230.

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Прокопиевото утврдување *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* – базилика или кралско седиште/трезор?

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РЕЗИМЕ

Предмет на интерес во прилогот е утврдувањето *Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου* забележано од историчарот Прокопиј од Кајсареја во IV-тата книга на панегирикот *De aedificiis*. Локализацијата и идентификацијата на топонимот е отежната од неколку причини. Од една страна, во историскиот спис тврдината се наоѓа меѓу две подеднакво непознати утврдувања во списокот што се однесува на Македонија, а од друга, поради фактот што истото не е посведочено кај други антички или средновековни автори, па можеби од тие причини не било предмет на поопстоен научен интерес. Со филолошка анализа на ова сложено име заклучивме дека, вториот дел од името е личното име *Ἀμύντου*, во конкретниот пример во генетив еднина. Ова име, епиграфски потврдено во хеленистичкиот и римскиот период е поврзано, најверојатно, со најпознатиот носител на истото од сите владетели на македонската династија, Аминта III, таткото на Филип II. Лингвистичката анализа во прилогот е фокусирана на првиот дел од сложеното име, *τὸ βασιλικόν* од познатата именка *βασιλεύς, ὁ*, ‘крал’, овде во номинатив/акузатив множина (*τὰ βασιλικά*) со изоставен член. Првата опција за интерпретација на именката би било гледиштето според кое примарното *βασιλική* (*ἐκκλησία, οἰκία, στοά*) ‘кралско собрание/куќа/сала’ е подоцна преземено и претставено само од *βασιλική*, што го добива значењето ‘црква/базилика како ранохристијанска црква.’ Од друга страна, можно е и поинакво толкување на значењето на првиот дел од сложеното име. Оваа втора интерпретација оди во правец на прифаќање на значењето на супстантивот *τὸ βασιλικόν* (*ταμιεῖον*), ‘кралски трезор/ризница/благајна’ или *βασιλικόν* (*sc. δῶμα*), ‘кралска палата/двор’. Според наше мислење ова толкување е поприфатливо, не само граматички, туку и од гледна точка на семантиката.

Клучни зборови: *Procopius, De aedificiis, Βασιλικὰ Ἀμύντου, базилика, кралска резиденција*