

## Ματιόπολις a *Harrax* in the Early Byzantine Toponymy

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The site name Matiopolis (Ματιόπολις) appears only once in the Early Byzantine written sources - it is an annotation about Dionysopolis in the anonymous *Periplus Ponti Eixini*. The earlier publishers and all commentators until present consider the information a wrong interpolation made by the compiler and support the opinion expressed by Vosius as early as 1639 that the name is probably a misinterpretation of the toponym Martianopolis. The anonymous *Periplus Ponti Eixini* is an Early Byzantine compilation built upon books written by Pseudo-Scymnos, Menippus and Arrian as well as other books, which did not survive till nowadays. However, the work in its current mode contains also some original parts with a high level of reliability and trustworthy Early Byzantine origin, which give grounds to date its compiling back to a date not earlier than the second half of the 6th century. Among the original parts is the annotation about the change of the name of Dionysopolis to Matiopolis, a fact which should be accepted as a real historical event even if it is not confirmed by another source. The review of the available written sources reveals that the the name Dionysopolis was mentioned for the last time having an exact date when related to a catastrophic flood caused by an underwater earthquake which happened in 544-545 and affected the town's vicinity as well. There are firm reasons to suppose that Dionysopolis suffered also

from the Kutrigur invasion in 559. The disappearance of the name from the official nomenclature in the reign of Justinian I fits very well the zealous Christian policy led by the emperor and aimed at elimination of the pagan relicts and reminiscences. This resulted in a large-scale change of sites names in honor of members of the emperor's family or popular Christian martyrs. Analysis of the first part of name Matiopolis does not provide any possibilities for finding familiar praenomen or nomen, known from the prosopography or the hagiography and topical for the studied time span. However, recognizing the phonetic and orthographic changes for the period, we could easily recognize in the first part of the name, the ancient Greek adjective *Ματαιιος*, one of whose numerous meanings is „empty, desert“. With view to the endured catastrophic disasters in the 540-es and the 550-es and the tolerated by state authorities impetuous development of the newly established near-by urban (anonymous so far) center, the change of e of the name of Dionysopolis to Matiopolis in the sense of „empty, desert town“, seems a completely natural and logic act.

Notwithstanding the origin, official or common, in the second half of the 6th century the former Dionysopolis was already known by its contemporaries far beyond its boundaries as Matiopolis - a name wrongly overlooked by previous researchers.