



Early Byzantine Baths

No less interesting to see are the early-Byzantine baths of Nessebar, intriguing with their water supply system located in tunnels that had a strategic importance for the city. It is supposed that the early Byzantine baths in Nessebar were built in the 6th century during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian I the Great (527-565 ACE).

The Imperial Baths are located in the lowest part of the northern shore of Nessebar, north of the church "St. Ivan". The researchers studied about 2/3 of their area - the vestibule, the central hall and the room with the pools. The remaining area of the baths will probably forever remain an unsolved mystery, because it lies beneath the later construction of the city. The remains of the thermal baths are surrounded by architecturally unique residential buildings dating from the 16th - 19th centuries, such as the houses of Diamandi and Captain Pavel. In ancient times, the thermal baths offered a lot of entertainment, which today takes place in the cozy places of relaxation and delicious food spread in the city.

Historically, the baths in Nessebar are associated with the foundation of the Bulgarian state and its founder, Asparuh, as well as with the then ruler of Byzantium, Constantine the Fourth - The Beard (Pogonat). His name is associated with his coronation, during which the crown was found to be too big for his head. Filling in the gaps with some material, part of Constantine's beard was stuck, causing him to shout "The beard, the beard!". From there, his nickname remained - The Beard (Pogonat).

So, what was the role of the baths for the recognition of the Bulgarian state by Byzantium?

Constantine Pogonat, known for his numerous marches to Bulgaria with the aim of conquering it, suffered two crushing defeats from the Bulgarian ruler Asparuh in 681 ACE, whom he wanted to capture. Before the march, Konstantin Pogonat (29 years old) stopped in Nessebar under the pretext that he had to treat his gout, which was interpreted (understood) by his army as an escape, and this helped the Bulgarians win an important battle for their country, which changed the history of the Balkans with the Emperor's declaration in recognition of the Bulgarian state. The first campaign of the Byzantine troops against Asparuh Bulgaria was in April 681, in which they were defeated at Lake Rasim in the Danube Delta. The second crushing defeat of the Roman troops, led by Leuctus was in June 681 in a Balkan Mountain pass. Leuctus was captured and released on the condition that a peace treaty will be signed between

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Bulgaria and Byzantium. The treaty was signed in August 681. With it, Byzantium officially recognized the state of Bulgaria, ceded a large part of its territory to Bulgaria and undertook to pay a huge annual tax in money and goods to the Bulgarian state.

The story of the 1400 years old Byzantine baths, apart from their role in the recognition of the Bulgarian state by Byzantium, is often accompanied by the romantic love story between the brother of the Emperor Constantine the 11th, Dimitar Palaeologus and the beautiful Bulgarian Theodora, the daughter of the governor of Constantinople, Pavel Asen, from the Asenev's dynasty. The imperial family was against this love, which forced the despot Dimitar Paleologus to leave the imperial capital and start living in Nesebar with his beloved, as despot of the Black Sea.



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