



## The Fishing Routine

Fishing on Nessebar Island is as old as the town itself. It is only a small part of the maritime history of Nessebar and cannot be commented on without being related to it.

Nessebar had strategic importance for the movement of ships between the Black and the Aegean seas, because the vessels had to pass by the peninsula on their way to Athens. According to the ancient authors, wheat for Athens was coming with these ships from the Northern Black Sea.

The foundation of the town of Nessebar is the Thracian fishing village, originally called Menabria, which means the city of Mena, the founder of the settlement.

Long before the Greeks crossed the Bosphorus and entered the Black Sea, the Thracians traded with other settlements on the Black Sea coast, as well as with the rich cities along the Mediterranean Sea, reaching even Egypt in the 12th-11th centuries BC.

The previous of Mesembria-Nessebar were clever people. Seafaring and fishing were very important to the city and they had to master the art of politics to protect the city from Persian, Celtic and Roman invasions. There are evidences that the rulers of Mesembria maintained friendly relations with the Celtic Kingdom of Cavar and also with the ruler of the Pontic Kingdom, Mithridates. Unlike the neighboring Apollonia, Mesembria was not subject to plunder by the Romans, because it voluntarily placed itself under their authority.

The port of Nesebar, sheltering fishermen, traders and travelers for thousands of years, is a remarkable national value and pride due to its long-lasting and significant history for the fate of many generations. It is a source of legends, myths and reality of the past and, we hope, of a wisdom for future of the city. A tale of faith and hope on a peninsula surrounded by endless blue sky and sea, immersed in greenery and gentle shade, with an amazing aroma of flowers, bushes and trees. The port of Nesebar continues to be a major import and export center on the Black Sea coast from the time of the Thracians until today. Already in the Bronze Age, in the 2nd millennium BCE, today's Nesebar Peninsula was visited by ships sailing from near and far coasts. The said has been proved by the numerous stone anchors found in the water area of today's port. The Bronze and Early Iron Ages are also attested on the mainland of the peninsula with the ceramics discovered from the early period of its Thracian history.

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Two ceramic fragments of East Greek pottery with images of sirens from the beginning of the 6th century BCE show that already in this early age the local Thracians maintained contacts with the eastern Mediterranean territories.

The practice of fishermen is associated with dozens of rituals based on beliefs, superstitions, myths and customs.

For example, on the day of the first catch at the beginning of the season, if the weather is not good, the fishermen go to the harbor and do not return home before the weather gets improved.



The fishing season opens with a holy water ritual, which takes place on the pier where the fishing boats stay. The priest sprinkles all fishermen with holy water, each of them takes some of it in a bottle and sprinkles his boat and nets.

It is believed that the first who does so will have the biggest catch of the season. Part of the holy

water is taken home, and put in front of the icon of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the fishermen.

Another custom is for the captain of the fishing boat to tear off the head of the first fish caught, make the sign of the cross with it, and sprinkle the blood of the fish on the heads of the fishermen in the boat.

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