

# A WALL FACING RESEARCH: THE THERMAE IN TOMIS

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**Keywords:** Tomis, roman bath, Lentiaron, late Roman masonry.

**Abstract:** The Thermae of Tomis<sup>1</sup> have not benefitted from convincing archaeological research, and the researchers have not been provided with the results, but only with general descriptions meant for popularising the monument. In the following, we attempted to recover a part of the built architectural aspects, before the vestiges of the edifice, in a dramatic state of decay, lose their relevance. The wall facings of four rooms (A, B, C, and D) are analysed, as well as the archive documents, highlighting previously unrecorded aspects.

**Rezumat:** Termele Tomisului nu au beneficiat de o cercetare arheologică convingătoare, iar rezultatele nu au fost puse la dispoziția cercetătorilor, decât sub forma unor descrieri generale, de popularizare ale monumentului. În studiul care urmează am încercat să recuperăm o parte din aspectele arhitectural constructive, înainte ca vestigiile edificiului aflate într-o dramatică degradare să își piardă relevanța. Sunt analizate parametrele zidurilor a patru încăperi (A, B, C și D) și documente de arhivă, punându-se în evidență aspecte neconsemnate până acum.

## History of the site research

The vestiges of the “Thermae” are part of an ensemble of remnants belonging to ancient Tomis (Fig. 1), found below the western cliff of the Peninsula of Constanța, that was uncovered and researched starting from 1958,<sup>2</sup> when the first two sections were excavated at the wall belonging to the Roman Mosaic Building. The first section was made along the north-eastern wall, at the time called “with pilasters”, whose vestiges were probably visible before the excavations, as was the north-eastern wall of the “Thermae”. This could be identified on a German aerial photogram from the World War One period,<sup>3</sup> and also on an illustrated postcard edited by the Germans. The ruins were embedded in the slope of the cliff from the toes of which there began the territory that at the time belonged to the modern harbour, which was also signalled on the map published by Pârvan.<sup>4</sup> In parallel with the works at the Roman Mosaic Building, the museum began salvage excavations at around 150–200 m south-east, where the ruins of a building were found, with large chambers and basins paved with marble slabs,<sup>5</sup> as well as the wall of the Thermae highlighted in 1960.<sup>6</sup> In an old survey<sup>7</sup>, two walls south-east of the retirement home appear, in the north-western area of the Thermae, at a time when only the wall that supported the cliff was known, probably prior to 1964.

Another plan drafted after the end of the research at the Roman Mosaic Building and the Thermae,<sup>8</sup> eliminates the pair of walls. Here, the remains uncovered west from the Thermae as early as 1961<sup>9</sup> have the written designation of “Warehouses”. From Canarache, we discover that immediately next to the “Lentiaron” and closely connected to it, there are “six storage spaces 12/8 m large with walls 1.2–1.3 m thick.”<sup>10</sup> In an attempt of reconstruction, it was considered that the storage rooms could be in continuation of the edifice with basins north-west from the Lentiaron, where their name was written down without them being drawn (Fig. 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Canarache 1960; Canarache 1961 a; Canarache 1966; Canarache 1967; Bucovală 1973; Bucovală L'édifice; Bucovală 1982; Vulpe, Barnea 1968; Barbu 1972; Rădulescu 1968; Rădulescu 1970; Rădulescu 1972; Rădulescu, Scorpan 1975; Rădulescu 1991.

<sup>2</sup> “The excavations that began in 1958 on the territory of Tomis have continued the next summer...” (Canarache 1960, p. 1)

<sup>3</sup> Because the aerial photogram of the port from 1917, is small and the enhanced detail is not very concluding either, we did not include these in the illustrations (Șambra 2019–20, p. 9, Fig. 4).

<sup>4</sup> Pârvan 1915, plan.

<sup>5</sup> “We have discovered along this line three large drinking water basins, plastered and paved with marble slabs, connected to aqueducts.” (Canarache 1966, p. 9)

<sup>6</sup> “We have cleared these walls for a length of circa 20 m and a height of approximately 5 m.” (Canarache 1960, p. 6)

<sup>7</sup> Plan P3, 1961.

<sup>8</sup> Canarache 1960, p.1; Plan P5.

<sup>9</sup> Canarache 1966, p. 9, note 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.