

A HADRIANIC COLONNADE AT HISTRIA

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Abstract: In 2023, during archaeological excavations in the Main Gate – Main Tower sector, an entablature block with an inscription was discovered in the *f*-curtain wall of the Late Roman precinct wall at Histria. Being fully preserved, it provides important information about the colonnade in which it was incorporated. Eight other fragments, which were part of the same monument, allow us to propose hypotheses for the reconstruction of the colonnade's extensive arrangement and inscription. The inscription is a dedication of the Histrians to Emperor Hadrian, on the occasion of the construction of a monument during the time of the legate Sextus Iulius Maior (131–135). Unfortunately, the inscription does not provide clues about the architectural ensemble of which the entablature was a part. However, the architectural configuration describes the fragments as belonging to a portico, which could have been integrated into the enclosure of a larger public building, civil or religious, or possibly the portico of an important route.

Rezumat: În anul 2023, cu ocazia cercetărilor arheologice din sectorul Poarta Mare – Turnul Mare, a fost descoperit un bloc de antablament cu inscripție refolosit în curțina *fa* zidului de incintă târziu de la *Histria*. Fiind conservat în întregime, oferă informații importante despre colonada în care acesta era încorporat. Alte opt fragmente cunoscute, care făceau parte din același monument, permit propunerea unor ipoteze de reconstituire a unei desfășurări ample a colonadei și a inscripției. Inscripția este o dedicație către împăratul Hadrian din partea histrienilor, cu ocazia construirii unui monument în timpul legatului Sextus Iulius Maior (131–135). Din păcate, inscripția nu oferă indicii referitoare la ansamblul arhitectural din care făcea parte antablamentul. Cu toate acestea, configurația arhitecturală descrie apartenența fragmentelor la un portic, care ar fi putut fi integrat incintei unei construcții publice mai ample, civile sau religioase, fie porticului unei străzi cu caracter de reprezentare.

The archaeological research in the Main Gate – Main Tower sector started in 2000,¹ and the general objective is uncovering aspects of early Roman Histria (Fig. 1). Thanks to numerous previously discovered artifacts, and especially to the epigraphic and numismatic material, the Principate period is one of the best known historical periods of Histria. However, the appearance of the city during this time is not fully revealed. The precinct and the two thermal buildings, the only complexes more extensively investigated complexes so far, do not provide a coherent picture of Histria's urban structure during the Principate period.

Previous research at Histria has revealed that, in most of the area defined by the Roman-Byzantine precinct, the complexes from the Principate era are damaged or entirely destroyed by later constructions, which led to the initiation of the current research in the Main Gate – Main Tower area, where more substantial traces from the early Roman period have been identified, even though this zone has also been affected by interventions after the Principate epoch. The area underwent numerous transformations with the construction of the late precinct walls, as well as during the first archaeological investigations at Histria. Archive images or publications before World War II show, to some extent, the scale of these transformations. Our observations² indicate that the investigations carried out here have led to the destruction of complexes contemporary with the Late Roman fortification.

Nevertheless, the late precinct wall is an extensive “archive” of inscriptions, identified during research on the last fortification, particularly those undertaken by Vasile Pârvan.³ The precinct wall is equally an

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¹ Archaeological investigations in this sector are coordinated by a team from the National History Museum of Romania and took place between 2000–2008, 2013–2014, 2016–2019, and 2021–2024. The architectural studies are carried out by Virgil Apostol.

² Given the focus of the present article, this is not the right place to deal with the discoveries in this sector, which will be published in a forthcoming monographic volume. For preliminary data, see Damian, Băltăc 2003–2005 with additions in CCAR 2006, pp. 195–197; CCAR 2007, pp. 198–200; CCAR 2008, pp. 165–166; CCAR 2009, pp. 134–135; CCAR 2014, pp. 63–64; CCAR 2015, pp. 80–81; CCAR 2017, pp. 74–75; CCAR 2018, pp. 65–66; CCAR 2019, pp. 85–86; CCAR 2020, p. 211; CCAR 2022, pp. 222–223; CCAR 2023, pp. 199–200; CCAR 2024, pp. 222–223.

³ There are over 30 inscriptions; some were discovered and removed from towers and curtain walls, while others remain *in situ* (see, among others, ISM I, 20, 28, 33, 41, 62 a, 70, 79, 89, 91, 92, 111, 115, 150, 169, 252, 291, 302, 395, 300, 383, 404).