

NOTES ON THE URBANISM OF TOMIS – THE STREET NETWORK*

Teodor Nicolae Bănică**

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Abstract: Recognizing the importance—and even the necessity—of having a general plan to accurately document the vestiges uncovered at a site like Tomis, we created an initial version in 1990. This version incorporated notations from a similarly designed plan dating back to the Canarache era. An update followed in 1992, which was distributed to relevant institutions. The idea remained dormant until Dr. Architect Mărgineanu reviewed the plan and encouraged us to publish it. This has now become somewhat urgent, due not only to the persistence of incorrect hypotheses in the specialized literature – stemming from limited historical sources – but also to frequent misinterpretations. Accurate documentation of excavations must meet certain essential requirements, without which proper placement and interpretation of surveys is compromised. While the street layout of Tomis has been addressed before, the lack of a unified approach has made it difficult to evaluate those results as a cohesive whole.

Rezumat: Înțelegând utilitatea și chiar necesitatea unui plan general pe care să se poată amplasa corect releveele vestigiilor dezvelite într-un sit ca Tomisul, am realizat o primă variantă în 1990, cuprinzând și notațiile unui plan de concepție similară din epoca Canarache. O reactualizare a lui a fost realizată în 1992 și a fost distribuită instituțiilor interesate. Ideea a rămas în suspans până când doamna dr. arhitect Mărgineanu a văzut planul și m-a îndemnat să-l public. Acest lucru a devenit cumva urgent și din cauza unor ipoteze incorecte apărute în literatura de specialitate, datorate insuficienței surselor istorice, dar și unor interpretări eronate. De asemenea ar fi nevoie ca documentarea săpăturilor să țină cont de anumite exigențe, în lipsa cărora un relevu bun nu poate fi amplasat corect. Trama stradală tomitană a mai fost abordată, dar lipsind o abordare unitară, rezultatele nu pot fi evaluate corect în ansamblu.

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** Independent researcher; e-mail: teodorban@gmail.com

In the 1990s, we developed a plan of the archaeological discoveries in Tomis up to that point. Though not exhaustive,¹ that firstly started from the need to have an overall image of the ancient city’s vestiges, an essential tool for evaluating sites of interest to architects and urban planners (Fig 1).² This initiative was prompted by the 1987 uncovering of a new section of Street A³ and of the ancient residential complex,⁴ initially researched in the excavations undertaken in the ‘70s by a team of archaeologists from the Constanța museum (Fig 2).⁵

Besides the westward extension of Street A, several other significant structures were identified: a building with at least two bays (approx. 9 m each) northwest of the Jalea Museum, a construction to the southeast that could have been an extension of the baths in the cathedral park,⁶ and further north, the utility trench encountered a large building with at least three bays, located opposite the cathedral.⁷

The support of the plan was a topographic survey at a scale of 1:2000.⁸ The contemporary street network was copied onto tracing paper, resulting in a sheet of approximately 183/110 cm. In 1992, a more or less up-to-date completed version was made, with updates drawn on heliographic copies of the 1990 plan (Fig 3). That year, data on archaeological vestiges and monuments were requested by DMASI Bucharest and the mayor’s office, so this plan was also distributed to those interested.

¹ To a large extent, the graphic records of many unpublished excavations up to the ‘80s could not be found.

² The author was hired in 1986 by OJPCN Constanța to draft the documentation for “releasing the sites from archaeological load” (the office operated in the MINA headquarters, with the same administration). A second version of the plan, which was distributed to interested institutions, was drafted in 1992 on a hard copy of the first plan, where the necessary additions and corrections were made in colour and with a legend (since 1991, we were the representative of DMASI Bucharest for Dobruja).

³ Further, for coordination with other works, the names given by Nastasi will be adopted, but the known ancient streets will be noted with capital letters, the supposed ones with Greek letters, and the known gates will be numbered from east to west.

⁴ Bănică, survey 1987-8, in the 1990-92 plans, and transposed into “PUZ peninsula 2012”; Teodor 2016, slide 16.

⁵ Rădulescu *et alii* 1973, p. 334, fig. 1; Rădulescu, Scorpan 1975, pp. 10-11, fig. 1.

⁶ Along the route of Elisabeta Boulevard, a utility trench intersected a hypocaust with a carved stone masonry suspensura, and at the intersection, a multi-layered floor was documented, one of which was made of marble slabs. Further north, a slip of the installation ditch on Muzeelor Street revealed another hypocaust with round brick suspensurae.

⁷ The outer walls were thicker, and the total width was around 18 meters.

⁸ Developed by IPJ Constanța.