

# THE ROMAN BATHS IN TÂRGȘORU VECHI

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**Abstract:** Started as an archaeological investigation of the medieval ruins from Târgșoru Vechi, the research began gathering more and more data about the Roman epoch. At the end of the '70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the excavation revealed a building placed at about 50m from the Roman fort limits: the Roman baths, which remained unpublished. A recent project aiming to highlight the medieval and Roman monuments from Târgșoru Vechi was the reason for resuming the research in the years 2014-2015, results which are the subject of this contribution. The authors present a description of the baths observing the degradation of the monument during the 40 years that passed from the moment of discovery. Besides portraying their architectural characteristics, the authors formulate several hypotheses regarding the aspect and function of the baths' compartments and a new building is identified, older than the baths, dating from Roman times as well.

**Rezumat:** Pornită ca o cercetare a vestigiilor medievale, arheologia a descoperit la Târgșoru Vechi importante vestigii aparținând epocii romane. Cercetările, încă inedite, de la sfârșitul anilor 70 ai secolului XX, în mod special, au dezvelit o construcție plasată la aproximativ 50 m față de limitele castrului roman, interpretată ca fiind termele castrului. Proiectul recent derulat de punere în valoare a monumentelor medievale și romane de la Târgșoru Vechi a dus la reluarea cercetării în anii 2014-2015, rezultatele făcând subiectul acestei contribuții. Autorii prezintă o descriere a băii arătând degradarea monumentului în cei 40 de ani trecuți de la indentificare. Sunt precizate câteva ipoteze privind aspectul și funcțiunea compartimentelor băii și este identificată o clădire anterioară, datată tot în epoca romană.

Originally, the purpose of the archaeological research were the medieval ruins from Târgșoru Vechi, nobody knowing that the site is much more complex and full of surprises. One was the large Cerneachov culture necropolis;<sup>1</sup> the other was the Roman epoch fort and baths.<sup>2</sup>

In 1956, a first trench (I A) was traced where "the most numerous and more representative archaeological materials"<sup>3</sup> have been identified during the field survey already completed in spring, during the same year.<sup>4</sup> Two river stone platforms, interpreted either as constructions or pavement, represent the first Roman era structures identified at Târgșoru Vechi. Here the very first Roman materials were found, especially pottery. But the most important were the bricks with the stamp of *Legio XI CLAVDIA P.F.* Unfortunately, most of them were discovered in the fillings of medieval pits.<sup>5</sup> The campaigns from 1957-58 (trenches I A2, I A4, I A5 and I A6) and data from trench I A9 confirm a more accurate chronology at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Next, in the area where the Sântana de Mureș - Cerneachov cemetery was investigated, in 1960 and 1961, more Roman structures were researched: seven pits, a kiln and a large stone structure, with an unknown function.

Summing up, the Roman fortification can be precisely dated with the help of coins minted by emperors Nerva and Trajan and 10 stamped bricks of *Legio XI CLAVDIA P.F.* at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

The '70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represent a special moment for Roman archaeology at Târgșoru Vechi. This was the time when two important buildings were investigated, especially in the 1976-1978 campaigns. One was a stone structure with an apse on the southern side, connected to a stone pavement, the other were the baths.<sup>8</sup> If the first one can be placed within the presumed limits of the fort, the second is at about 50m south of the south-western corner of the fort (Fig. 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Diaconu 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Tzony, Diaconu 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Diaconu *et alii* 1959, p. 620.

<sup>4</sup> For an evolution of the investigation concerning the Roman epoch in Târgșoru Vechi: Măgureanu *et alii* 2012, p. 166-168.

<sup>5</sup> Diaconu *et alii* 1959, p. 625, fig. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Diaconu, Constantinescu 1962, p. 537.

<sup>7</sup> Diaconu 1965, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Tzony, Diaconu 1979, p. 263.