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X/2024

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ISSN 2457 – 3809

ISSN – L 2457 – 3809

<https://cicsaunibuc.wordpress.com/revista/revista-online>

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A New Milestone from the Reign of Maximinus Thrax, discovered at Istros (Romania)

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<https://www.doi.org/10.31178/cicsa.2024.10.7>

Abstract: The paper presents a milestone that attests the restoration of a road connecting *Istros* to the settlements south of it, during the reign of emperor Maximinus Thrax.

Keywords: Istros/Histria, Roman road, Maximinus Thrax, territory, Late Roman spolia

The article presents a relatively new epigraphic discovery, made in 2017 on the acropolis of *Istros* / *Histria* (Istria, Constanța County, Romania), in the *Acropolis Centre-South* Sector,¹ coordinated by a team from the „Dinu Theodorescu” Laboratory of Archaeology (Faculty of History, University of Bucharest).

The excavation, which started in 2013, uncovered an *insula* built in the 6th c. AD, repaired and modified in the second half of the same century, and with a last phase of repairs/changes in the internal plan at the beginning of the 7th c. AD. The stone was discovered in a debris layer in a baulk between two trenches, therefore in a secondary position (Fig. 1), in a space conventionally called **NNSp04**.² This space seems to have been created in the *insula*’s first phase and was separated from **NNSp05a** to the north by the projections of **Z007**. In the second phase, **Z009** was added between the two projections of **Z007**, so that it left in its western end an almost 1m-wide entrance. We do not know to which wall the epigraphic monument came from, and therefore from which construction phase.

Given the bad preservation of the stone, we used *Reflectance Transformation Imaging* (RTI)³ to enhance the reading of the text (Fig. 2). But it was impossible to obtain a good photograph/3D model, so the current illustration serves more to understand the general characteristics of the block, than for reading the actual text.

¹ For further information on this excavation, see the preliminary report for the 2019-2020 (Bottez *et al.* 2024), with the complete bibliography in n. 1.

² Bottez *et al.* 2024, 210, fig. 4.

³ We would like to hereby thank Prof. Adam Rabinowitz (University of Texas in Austin) for creating the RTI model and Dr. Dragoș Hălmagi for the epigraphic indications.

Milestone (Fig. 3). Fragmentary limestone column (Hmax 0.64 m, circumference 1 m). Discovered in 2017 in the *Acropolis Centre-South Sector*, in **baulk C006-C024**, square E₁, **context 6001/24001**, at +0.31 m; inventory no. 915/2017. At present in the *lapidarium* of the Histria site museum. Four rows are preserved; the height of letters 3.5-4.5 cm; space between rows 2.5-3 cm. The writing is very badly preserved. Date: 236-237 AD.

[*Imp(erator) Caes(ar) C(aius) Iul(ius)*]

[*Verus Maximianus Pi-*]

[*us Fel(ix) Invictus*]

[*Aug(ustus) et C(aius) Iul(ius) Verus*]

[*Maximus nobiliss-*]

1 *im(us) Caes[ar re]sti-*

tuerunt per

Fl(avium) Lucillianu-

m leg(atum) pr(o) pr(aetore) m(illia) p(assum)

vacat

- - - -

L. 1-2: the formula *restituunt* allowed for the clear identification with a milestone.

L. 3-4. Flavius Lucillianus is already attested as a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, as our inscription is identical to a *milliarum* discovered in Corbu,⁴ and attributed to the secondary road connecting *Istros* to the settlements at Săcele – Vadu – Corbu, leading southwards.⁵

Translation:

„The Caesar and Emperor Caius Iulius Verus Maximins, Pius, Felix, Invictus Augustus, and the Caius Iulius Verus Maximus, the most noble Caesar, had <this milestone> redone, under the supervision of Flavius Lucillianus, pro praetorial imperial legate. A thousand paces.”

*

⁴ ISM I, 321; Tocilescu 1900, 211, no. 40 (= CIL III, 14462); Doruțiu-Boilă 1964, 133, no. 9; Panaite 2010, Vol. II, 27, no. 27

⁵ Panaite 2010, vol. I, 110.

It is clear that, given its initial use, as well as the traces of cutting that show the stone was reused as building material in the Late Roman *insula* Ia, we can safely assume it is in fact in at least its tertiary position. The stone was maybe brought from the Istrian territory at the end of the 3rd-beginning of the 4th c., when the city was rebuilt following the Gothic raid in the decades before.

The monument marks the repair of the afore-mentioned road during the reign of Maximinus Thrax. As the commentary of ISM I, 320, in early 238 AD the province of *Moesia Inferior* was revolting against the emperor, which means the road and its milestones must have been restored at a prior date.

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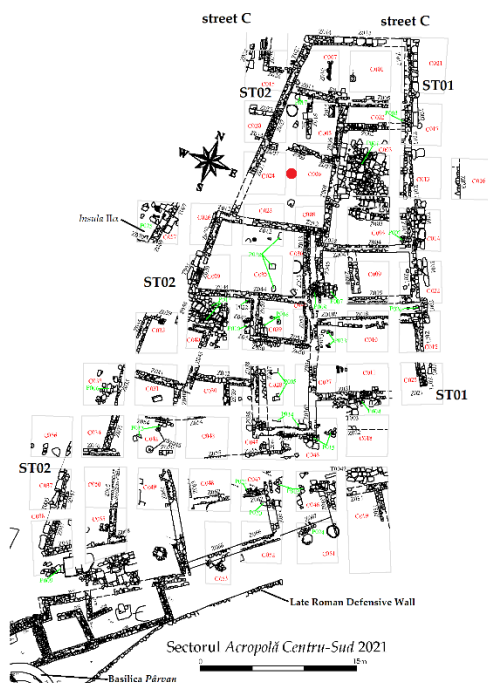


Fig. 1. Discovery spot (red dot) on the general plan of the Acropolis Centre-South Sector



Fig. 2. The RTI model



Fig. 3. The milestone