

A MOULD USED FOR MANUFACTURING METAL CROSSES DISCOVERED IN THE VICINITY OF THE EPISCOPAL BASILICA FROM HISTRIA

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Keywords: Roman-Byzantine age, *Scythia*, *Histria*, mould, cross.

Abstract: A mould for manufacturing metal crosses was found during the 2013 excavations in the Centre-North sector from Histria, in a chamber located in the close proximity of the northern axis of the atrium of the Episcopal Basilica (1a). The crosses were probably used during the religious services taking place in the Histrian *basilica*.

Cuvinte-cheie: Epoca romano-bizantină, *Scythia*, *Histria*, tipar, cruce.

Rezumat: În cursul campaniei de cercetări din 2013 de la Histria, cu ocazia săpăturilor din sectorul nord-estic al cetății a fost descoperit un tipar de cruce, în apropierea axei nordice a atriumului Basilicii Episcopale. Crucile erau probabil destinate serviciilor religioase desfășurate în basilica histriană.

Archaeological excavations during the summer of 2011 that took place in the Centre-North (CN) sector at Histria allowed for new investigations in an area located north of the Episcopal Basilica¹. The archaeological research aimed to gather maximum information regarding the evolution of this particular sector during the last phase of the city's existence, mainly during the 6th century AD. During the 2013 excavations, alongside the usual vitrified fragments and pottery sherds, the above-mentioned area yielded a stone mould, used for manufacturing metal crosses. The present paper presents the artefact together with a few hypotheses and comments.

The item was uncovered in a layer of *debris* excavated while opening a new square (C14) located north of the northern annex of the Episcopal Basilica's atrium² and in the near vicinity of the

street west of the basilica. The excavation of this area permitted the observation that north of the first addition that had previously been excavated³, there was a second one (R1a – Fig. 1), linked to the first one. It is worth mentioning that the two chambers communicated with one another through a 1.85 m wide access way, while the altimetric level of the two floors was comparable. Moreover, the same materials (stones and soil – employed as mortar) had been used for the construction of the walls of the two chambers. R1 and R1a were constructively linked, with the exception of their western side, which was made of stone and mortar, a reminiscence of the previous structure that had been re-used. The excavation suggests that the two chambers were constructed and used in the same time, most probably tightly connected to the whole ecclesiastic assembly. Future research will hopefully confirm this hypothesis.

As in the case of chamber 1a, in chamber R1 (under excavation) the same stratigraphic situation was observed: one level (level IV) corresponding to two phases: phase IVA dating to the first half of the 6th century AD and phase IVB dating to the second half of the 6th century AD⁴.

Stratigraphically, the mould was found in the *debris* overlapping the IVB archaeological level, corresponding to the second phase of existence of the basilica. Since the artefact appear within the *debris* and not on the above-mentioned level, we do not exclude the possibility of an earlier dating of the item, respectively to the chronology of level IVA.

¹ The excavations started through the good-will of the regretted prof. Alexandru Suceveanu, who allowed the present author and Irina Nastasi to excavate this small perimeter.

² Suceveanu 2007, p. 21.

³ Suceveanu 2007, p. 49, pl. XXVI.

⁴ Suceveanu 2007, p. 17.

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