

STATUE BASES WITH HONORIFIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM HISTRIA IN THE EARLY ROMAN PERIOD

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Abstract: The article focuses on a group of 17 monuments, which were considered mainly *cippi*, altars, bases, or simple blocks. These have been discovered in the Late Roman city wall, studied from an epigraphic point of view, and put back in the wall. Only two of them, now exposed at the site museum, could be studied also from the perspective of their functionality. Both present traces characteristic of the fastening of a bronze statue. These are monolithic rectangular bases with mouldings, and were made of local limestone. Most inscriptions originate from the second half of the 2nd century to the first half of the 3rd century AD. The bases on the other hand mark a fashion change in the display of the honorific statues during the 2nd century AD, being much taller and slenderer than the previous types of bases. Furthermore, in the practice of honouring by dedicating statues, a growing importance is given to the emperors, members of the imperial family, and of the Roman administration. The honoured members of the local elite also have ties to the Roman government through their titles and offices, being involved in the imperial cult. The inscription content and the monuments' autopsy lead to several other observations concerning the occasion on which the statues have been erected, the reuse of the monuments, or the context display.

Rezumat: Plecând de la un grup de 17 monumente interpretate în principal drept *cippi*, altare, baze sau simple blocuri, articolul are în vedere o analiză a practicii de onorare prin înălțarea de statui în epoca romană. Acestea au fost descoperite în zidul de incintă roman târziu de la Histria, studiate din perspectiva epigrafică și reasezate la loc. Formula epigrafică indică faptul că avem de a face cu baze de statui onorifice. Două exemplare, expuse azi lângă muzeul sitului, care au putut fi studiate și din perspectiva funcționalității, prezintă urmele specifice încastrării unor statui de bronz. Grupul de baze analizat aparține aceluiași tip de bază monolită rectangulară cu muluri, realizată din calcar local, și se concentrează cronologic în a doua jumătate a secolului al II-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al III-lea p. Chr. Articolul punctează câteva din implicațiile, pe care le are acest grup de monumente pentru cunoașterea practicii dedicării de statui la Histria. Sunt avute în vedere în primul rând schimbările petrecute în această practică în epoca romană față de secolele anterioare. Se constată pe de o parte o trecere de la tipul de bază joasă și lată din marmură, la cea înaltă și zveltă realizată din calcar local, precum și concentrarea dedicațiilor în jurul familiei imperiale și a guvernării romane. Conținutul inscripțiilor și autopsia monumentelor au permis și alte observații legate de ocazia cu care era ridicată statuia, refolosirea monumentelor, sau contextul de expunere al acestora.

The habit of dedicating honorific statues is known at Histria since the Hellenistic period through two statue bases, but especially through a series of decrees that contain references about the awarding of such honours.¹ For the Roman period the honorific decrees have been preserved in the form of *tituli honorarii*, on monuments whose functionality was seldom clarified. The sculptural evidence is also insufficient to be correlated with the epigraphic; the pieces that could belong to this category are too fragmentary to be taken into consideration.² The present paper focuses on a group of 17 monuments bearing inscriptions, which have been interpreted until the present as *cippi*, altars, bases, or simple blocks, and which prove to be statue bases, and therefore represent a bulk of evidence for the statuary habit at Histria in Roman times. They were catalogued as bases by the first editor, Vasile Pârvan, and were afterwards integrated in the corpus of inscriptions in different chapters, only four being considered statue bases,³ while the other as being dedications in general.⁴

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¹ Hellenistic statue bases: ISM I 70, 71; on the statuary habit in the Black Sea area, see Panait Birzescu 2016, pp. 53-69, with the bibliography. A short review with catalogue on the epigraphic evidence of statues in the *proxenie* decrees from the Black Sea area, see Cojocaru 2013, pp. 323-341.

² Eight fragments belonging to larger than life size statues are recorded at Histria for the Roman period, see Alexandrescu Vianu 2000, p. 69, cat. 39, 66, 67, 74, 78-81. To the same category there can be added another fragment of marble foot on its plinth, now lost, published by Pârvan 1916, p. 655, cat. 38. Concerning the emperor statues the most relevant piece is the portrait of Antoninus Pius, discovered at Vadu, but originating most probably in Histria, Alexandrescu Vianu 2000, cat. 90.

³ ISM I 177, 181, 178, 179.

⁴ ISM I 74, 77-80, 83, 86, 88, 89, 91-95.