

A LATE ROMAN LAMP DISCOVERED AT DINOGETIA, IN THE COLLECTION OF THE “PAUL PĂLTĂNEA” HISTORY MUSEUM OF GALAȚI

Costin Croitoru*

Abstract: *We present herein a late Roman lamp, novel, discovered at Dinogetia during the excavation campaign of 1954. The piece was retrieved based on a protocol, which we reproduce below, signed by then the Director of the former Regional Museum of Galați, thus entering, beside other archaeological materials, the collections of the institution from south Moldavia. Under such circumstances, the lamp – a local copy of the “north-African” products, remained unknown to the historiography, being important, on one hand, as it documents yet again a 6th century-level at Dinogetia and, on the other, because, though it may be accurately ascribed typologically and framed chronologically, no direct parallels are known for its decoration: radiant ribs set around the filing hole; a cross on the pipe, with the longer arm towards the filing hole; discontinued lines over the entire width of the rim – the “sparrow’s tail” motif.*

Key-words: *Dinogetia, lamp, “north-African” type, copy.*

The organisation of the (Lower) Danube region subsequent to the 1938 administrative reform was also synonymous with the presence at Galați of Constantin C. Giurescu, acting as a royal resident¹. Among other, his concern for tracking and rescuing “Antiquities” is noticeable by his instructions as an official, especially in terms of the finds from north Dobruja², so that the archaeological materials identified by chance³ be delivered to the Royal Residence. These thoroughly inventoried objects⁴ would enter the custody of the newly-established Regional Museum of Galați⁵, then the heritage of the “Paul Păltănea” History Museum of Galați, where they represent even today “the old fund”. Such “tutelary” tradition was also continued in the “Modern” period, said museal institution being actively involved in the research and preservation/restoration of some of the sites on the other bank of the river; consequently, a significant number of archaeological materials coming from there reached its possession. The examination of the documentary funds reveals a series of highly useful information for the reconstruction of some of the key data on these artifacts, otherwise “lost” in the “archaeology collection”.

For the presentation herein, of interest is a protocol signed on September the 16th, 1954, which we render hereafter: „Noi, Grigoriu Nicolae – directorul Muzeului Regional Galați, împreună cu tov. Secretar P. Moraru, Ing. Pășărică, deplasându-ne în zilele de 14 și 15 septembrie 1954 la cetatea Dinogetia (Garvăn) pentru reglementarea chestiunii paznicului cetății, începerea lucrărilor de restaurare și consolidare a zidurilor cetății și pentru a aduce material arheologic, constatăm prin

* Phd., “Carol I” Museum of Braila, e-mail: costin_croitoru1@yahoo.com.

¹ Negru, 2005, pp. 99-112.

² „O reală înțelegere a importanței cercetărilor arheologice a călăuzit pe d-l. prof. Constantin Giurescu, Rezident Regal al Ținutului Dunărea de Jos, să ia inițiativa unui vast program de cercetări arheologice, înscriind în bugetul Ținutului suma de un milion lei, grație căror mijloace Muzeul Național de Antichități a putut organiza noile șantiere în diferite centre ale Ținutului. La Dinogetia și Enisala săpăturile au început încă dela 15 Iulie și în curând vor începe la Troesmis. D-l. Rezident Regal Giurescu a vizitat în mai multe rânduri șantierele în plină activitate, interesându-se de rezultatele cercetărilor. Cercetările s-au îndreptat în deosebi în Dobrogea, deoarece acest pământ românesc este bogat în urme ale trecutului” cf. „Buletinul Ținutului Dunărea de Jos”, I, no. 22-23, 1939, pp. 4-5: “*Truly understanding the importance of the archaeological investigations, Professor Constantin Giurescu, a Royal Resident of the Lower Danube Region, initiated a large-scale programme of archaeological excavations, bringing to the Region’s budget the amount of one million lei, grace to which the National Museum of Antiquities could set up the recent excavation sites in various centres of the Region. At Dinogetia and Enisala, excavations commenced as early as July the 15th, and soon will start at Troesmis. Mr. Giurescu, Royal Resident, has visited on several occasions the fully active excavation sites, asking about the research results. The research targeted mostly Dobruja, as this Romanian land is rich in remains of the past*”.

³ Croitoru, Stanciu, 2007, p. 243.

⁴ Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 1940, *passim*. See also Croitoru, 2015, pp. 645-655.

⁵ Croitoru, 2009, *passim*.

prezentul proces-verbal că au fost aduse următoarele piese, primite dela colectivul șantierului „Dinogetia”: un opaiț sec. VI – sectorul D – întreg (cu cruce), un plan al cetății cu rezultatele săpăturilor din anul 1953 (fotografie), una bucată bârnă arsă (sec. XII), una amforă de import sec. XII, cu toate supraînălțate – spartă, una oală tip slav (de fabricație locală) incompletă, spartă, una greutate război țesut (a 2-a jum. a sec. XI), un ciob terra sigilata de import, sec. II, un corn mic (împungător) sec. XI, una piesă tablă război de țesut, una fusaiolă, un picior pahar de sticlă, roman, de import (metropolă), una greutate de plasă pescuit cu două găuri, lunguiață, una greutate de plasă pescuit, rotundă, cu una gaură mijloc. Piesele de mai sus urmează a fi inventariate în registrul de inventar al pieselor muzeale (Secțiunea de Istorie), constituind proprietatea Muzeului Regional Galați⁶ (fig. 2). (*We, Grigoriu Nicolae – Director of the Regional Museum of Galați, together with comrade Secretary P. Moraru, Eng. Păsărică, travelling on the 14th and 15th of September 1954 to the fortress at Dinogetia (Garvăn) in order to resolve the issues regarding the fortress’s security, the start of the restoration and consolidation works of fortress walls and collect the archaeological material, we hereby record the following objects received from the team of the excavation site at “Dinogetia”: a 6th century lamp – sector D – complete (with cross), a layout of the fortress with the results of the 1953 excavations (photo), one piece of a charred beam (12th century), one 12th century import amphora, with over heightened handles – broken, one Slavic pot (locally made), incomplete, broken, one loom weight (second half of the 11th century), one import terra sigilata shard, the 2nd century, a small horn (piercer) of the 11th century, one piece of loom plate, one spindle whorl, a glass beaker leg, Roman, of import (metropolis), one two-holed fish net weight, elongated, one fish net weight, round, with a hole in the middle. Above pieces shall be registered in the inventory registry of the museal pieces (the History Department), in the property of the Regional Museum of Galați).*

In the lot of materials collected by the Galați-based Museum is distinguished a “6th century lamp – sector D – complete (with cross)”. As this lamp was not, to our knowledge, until present, even mentioned among the historiographic materials dedicated to the site at Garvăn⁷ as well as the fact it may be accurately ascribed typologically and framed chronologically, having though, as far as we know, no direct parallels in terms of decoration (which seems novel, at least in what the available literature is concerned), we proposed to present it below. Furthermore, we are surprised that the piece was accurately dated in the document above and that it does not seem to be known to the research team from *Dinogetia*, to whom at the time (mid sixth decade of the last century!), a present 6th-century level was less documented⁸: „problema succesiunii nivelurilor de locuire ale așezării feudale timpurii avea încă o serie de amănunte nelămurite complet; aceasta ne-a determinat să executăm în sectorul D un sondaj de dimensiuni reduse”⁹. (“*The details of the inhabitancy levels succession of the early medieval settlement are incompletely clarified; this made us excavate in sector D a small test-trench*”).

The history of the research at *Dinogetia* especially that of the 1954 excavation campaign is known¹⁰. The research team led by Gh. Ștefan included I. Barnea, B. Mitrea, M. Chișvasi, Șt. Constantinescu, Ex. Bujor, E. Comșa, P. Diaconu, N. Anghelescu, Gh. Popilian, M. Rusu and (at the time) students Gh. Bichir and Fl. Constantiniu. Said excavations’ campaign targeted the medieval sectors “B”, “E” (west tower no. 6) and “IV, 1”, results being confirmed (also) by the lot of archaeological materials which entered the collection in Galați (the fortress plan with the 1953 trenches is obviously that published¹¹, reproduced here too, fig. 3). Thus, „rezultate mai importante s-au obținut în sectorul B, unde s-a descoperit o încăpere pentru țesut (arcea), conținând resturi de țesături și legături de cânepă și in [...]. De o importanță deosebită sunt descoperirile din suprafața E și

⁶ Croitoru, 2009, p. 159, no. 189, fig. 54.

⁷ The excavation report of the campaign mentions only the find of a “lamp with a human face on the disk”, Ștefan *et al.*, 1955, p. 714.

⁸ For the site chronology see Barnea, 1984, pp. 339-346.

⁹ Ștefan *et al.*, 1955, p. 717.

¹⁰ Ștefan *et al.*, 1955, pp. 713-752; Ștefan *et al.*, 1967, p. 20.

¹¹ Ștefan *et al.*, 1955, pp. 714-715, fig. 1; Ștefan *et al.*, 1967, p. 12, fig. 2.

IV, 1. În E s-au descoperit patru bordeie suprapuse (37 A – 37 D). S-au descoperit în nivelul 37 A-C indicii că bordeiul respectiv era un atelier de olar. În IV, 1 s-au identificat de asemenea patru niveluri de podele cu patru cuptoare corespunzătoare, reprezentând în genere refaceri ale aceleiași locuințe. Aici s-a descoperit și o bucată dintr-o plasă de pescuit¹² (“significant results were obtained in sector B, where a loom room was discovered containing fabric remains and hemp and flax bindings [...]. Of special importance are the finds from surfaces E and IV, 1. In E were identified four overlapping huts (37 A – 37 D). In level 37 A-C were identified traces indicative of a potter’s workshop in respective hut. In IV, 1 were also identified four floor levels with four corresponding ovens, generally representing the reconstruction of the same house. There was also found a fishing net piece). However, the “excavation report” is slightly different. If this sector was published as follows: “in sector D there were also recorded the traces of a surface house just below the surface”¹³; in fact, there are four houses dated over the 10th – 11th centuries¹⁴. Therefore, it seems that the artifact which shall be discussed below was not identified within an inhabitancy feature but, *passim*, or below the level of one of the mentioned huts, like for instance the case of the *lorica* fragments “found under the floor of hut 37 A-C” and dated sometime to the interval of the 4th – 6th centuries AD¹⁵.

The piece, which we identified in the collection of the Museum of Galați under inventory number 2.404, is confirmed by the specific mark and records in the inventory registry of the collection. It is a complete *monolychnis* lamp. Its sizes are as follows: length = 10 cm, width (maximum disk diameter) = 6 cm.

474	1954	18 2404	Un opoit Lut ars - VII de la Dinogetia	Din pasta de proastă calitate de culoare cenușie, ars secundar, usor ciobit la extremități, ornamen- tatie relief în unghieri, înălțurite și o cruce. Cu 2 orificii, de formă lungiata. Dimensi: 10 cm lung, 6 cm lat	Potrivita	Donatie de la Șantierul arheologic Dinogetia prin pr. verbal din 16 sept. 1984. Adus de N. Grigoriu
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Fig. 1. Excerpt of the Inventory Registry of the History Museum of Galați.

In terms of its manufacturing technique, the piece was modelled in a good quality mould and it was relatively carefully finished. The material is a fine, good quality clay, dark-brown, solid, dense, with limestone and mica particles in composition, used as degreasers. It was covered with a greyish-brown engobe, adhesive, fallen here and there. The body is elongated, the disk oval along the length, marked with a relieved rib, divided, thus forming a nozzle pipe, which also includes the wick hole. The wide bevelled rim is outlined on the edge by a rib; the leaf-shaped handle, set obliquely on the rim extends slightly relieved, ring-shaped; the filing hole, small, round, in the middle of the disk is at its turn marked by a rib in relief; the wick orifice, rather broad, is oval; the base is flat, ring-shaped. The disk is decorated with radiate ribs set around the filing hole, the pipe with a cross having the arm longer towards the filing hole and rim with discontinued lines – the “sparrow’s tail” motif, on the entire width.

In the scholarly literature, this lamp type is well-known, its north-African origin being recognized due to the many models and moulds originally identified at Alexandria (termed for a while also “Egyptian lamps”, then due to the disk decoration as “Christian lamps”)¹⁶, however subsequently, once with the extension of the archaeological excavations, their main production centre moving to north-west Africa, primarily in *Tunisia*¹⁷. The classical shape has an elongated, flat body and a long nozzle in its extension. The rim is vertical, disk small, round and slightly concave, provided with one or two filing orifices. The disk is delimited by a rim divided in front the nozzle thus forming a pipe with parallel sides, also including the wick hole. The handle is leaf-

¹² Ștefan *et al.*, 1967, p. 20.

¹³ Ștefan *et al.*, 1967, p. 20.

¹⁴ Ștefan *et al.*, 1955, p. 723.

¹⁵ Ștefan *et al.*, 1955, p. 717.

¹⁶ Menzel, 1969, p. 90; Iconomu, 1986, pp. 90-91; Diaconescu, 1995, p. 256.

¹⁷ Deneauve, 1969, pp. 71-239; Bonifay, 2004, *passim*; Topoleanu 2012, p. 187; Topoleanu, Croitoru, 2015, p. 166/167.

shaped, sharpened in the upper part and everted. The round flat base is occasionally marked by a plastic cord, joined to the handle by a vertical rib. The disk and rim are always richly decorated with geometric, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motifs or with Christian symbols¹⁸. The north-African lamp started its evolution in the 4th century AD, however most types developed in the 5th century AD, their variants being also known in the following centuries: “pagan lamps” (4th – 5th centuries AD) and “Christian lamps” (mid 5th century – 6th century AD)¹⁹.

As ones of the most diffused lighting objects of the late Roman Antiquity, the north-African lamps also appeared in the Danubian provinces²⁰, especially in *Schythia Minor*, at *Tomis*²¹ or *Halmyris*²². Past the original products, imported, the north-African lamps were duplicated /copied in the European and Micro Asian workshops²³. This is also the case of the lamp herein, which seems to be a local copy of a north-African prototype with whose general morphology it complies, with parallels (not identical in terms of decoration, which is somewhat simplified) in *Scythia Minor* or *Moesia Secunda* (at *Iatrus*²⁴). The *Dinogetia* lamp may be ascribed based on the convex, bevelled rim, not vertical as with the “classical” specimens to a local workshop, most likely even Moesian. As previously noted, the general body shape and some of the decorative elements are present at Argos²⁵ or Athens²⁶, in the 6th century AD. Most numerous parallels come though from Dobruja (*Tomis*²⁷, *Halmyris*²⁸, *Capidava*²⁹, *Durostorum*³⁰, *Enisala*³¹), presumptively there originating also those with unknown find spot, spread in private collections³². Lamps in this type³³ are dated similarly, from the end of the 5th century and especially over the 6th century AD (most known specimens come from undated archaeological contexts³⁴, their chronological framing being established based on analogies; an exception are the finds at *Halmyris*, where all lamps of the type emerged in datable features³⁵). Obviously, in the area must also lie the workshops, the main centre being likely *Tomis*³⁶ (see also the find of certain moulds in the “Roman building with mosaic”, making the “more recent variant of the lamps deriving from the 4th – 5th century AD north-African types”³⁷).

The north-African lamps discovered in Romania seem to belong especially to type Hayes II³⁸ (= Atlante, X), represented both by import specimens as well as local copies³⁹. They emerge only in the 5th century, becoming preponderant by the end of the century, so that in the 6th century it is almost the single type recorded⁴⁰.

¹⁸ Topoleanu, 2000, p. 189; Topoleanu, 2012, p. 187. See Diaconescu, 1995, pp. 256-259 with the discussions and essential bibliography relative to the typological and chronological framing of the “African lamps”.

¹⁹ Ennabli, 1976, *passim*; Weidemann, 1990, p. 82; Părau, 2006, p. 34.

²⁰ Părau, 2006, pp. 29-67.

²¹ Iconomu, 1967, pp. 26-28; Papuc, 1976, pp. 201-205; Iconomu, 1986, pp. 89-92.

²² Topoleanu, 2000, pp. 189-194; Topoleanu, 2000a, pp. 272-278.

²³ Perlzweig, 1961, pp. 9-10; Bruneau, 1965, pp. 117-118; Abbiani, 1969, 13-14.

²⁴ Gomolka-Fuchs, 1982, p. 169, taf. 69/573.

²⁵ Bovon, 1966, p. 91, no. 639, 642-643, pl. 17.

²⁶ Perlzweig, 1961, pp. 183-184, no. 2591, pl. 41.

²⁷ Iconomu, 1967, pp. 27-28, fig. 55-56; Băluță, 1994, pp. 222-223, no. 106, pl. VIII/2.

²⁸ Topoleanu, 2000, pp. 203-205, no. 525-530; Topoleanu, 2000a, p. 277, no. 64; Suceveanu *et al.*, 2003, p. 220, no. 15, pl. LVII/15.

²⁹ Opreș, 2003, p. 166, 174, no. 433, pl. LXIII/433.

³⁰ Mușeteanu, 1992, pp. 177-178, 210, no. 340, pl. 53.

³¹ Iconomu, 1967, pp. 27-28, 144, no. 754, fig. 171.

³² Sandu, 1981, p. 169, no. 20, pl. IV/4a-b; Topoleanu, 2012, pp. 190-191, no. 113.

³³ Iconomu, 1967, type XXX; Iconomu, 1986, type XLVI.

³⁴ Iconomu, 1986, pp. 92-94.

³⁵ Topoleanu, 2000, p. 203.

³⁶ Iconomu, 1986, p. 172.

³⁷ Iconomu, 1976, pp. 135-146.

³⁸ Hayes, 1972, pp. 310-313.

³⁹ Topoleanu, Croitoru, 2015, p. 166/167.

⁴⁰ Diaconescu, 1995, p. 257.

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Fig. 3. The layout of the excavations at Dinogeția (the 50-60'ies, *apud* Ștefan *et alii*, 1967).

Fig. 4. Late Roman lamp discovered at *Dinogeția*.



Fig. 4. Late Roman lamp discovered at *Dinogeția*.

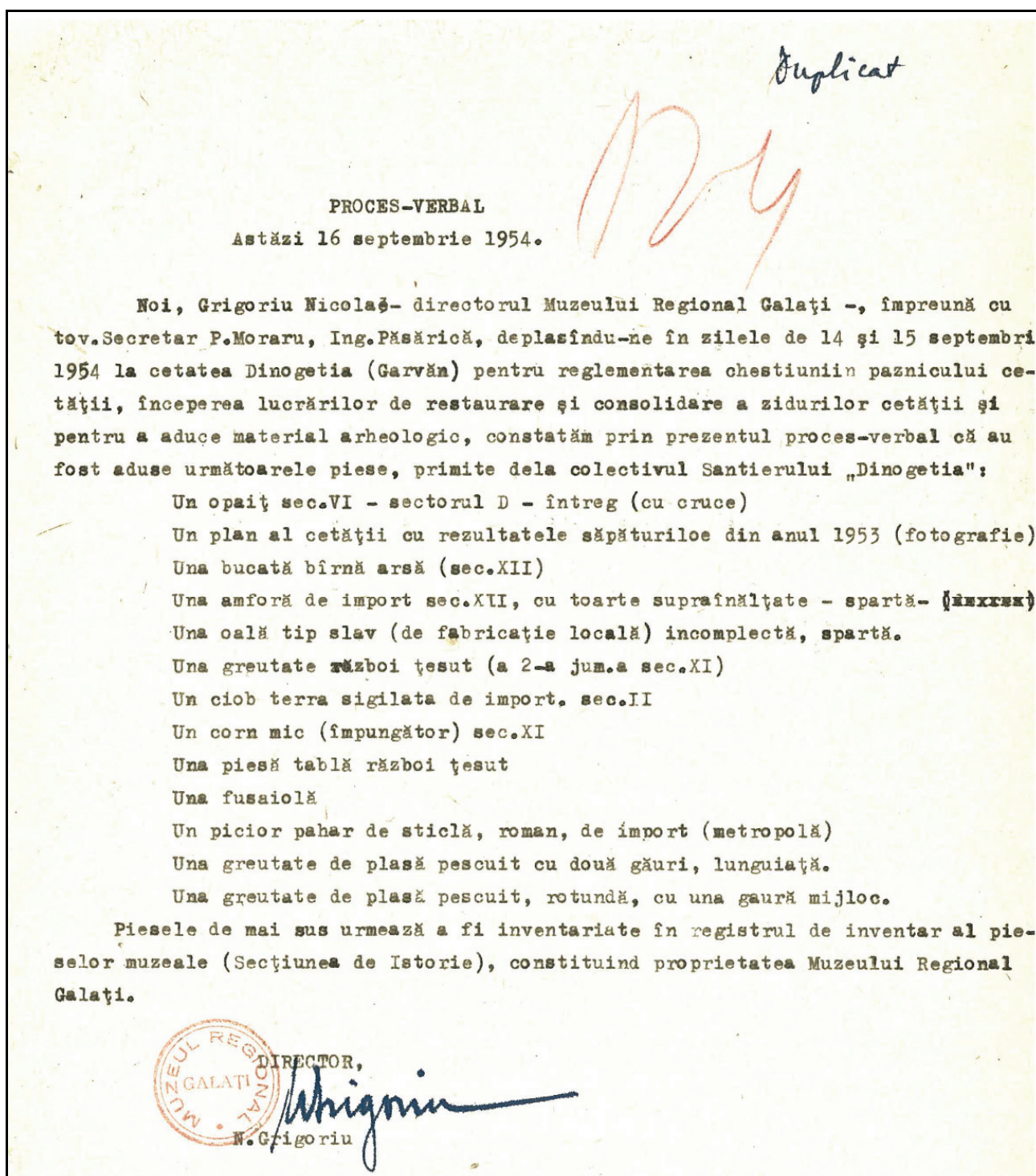


Fig. 2. Protocol signed on September the 16th, 1954 (*apud* Croitoru 2009).

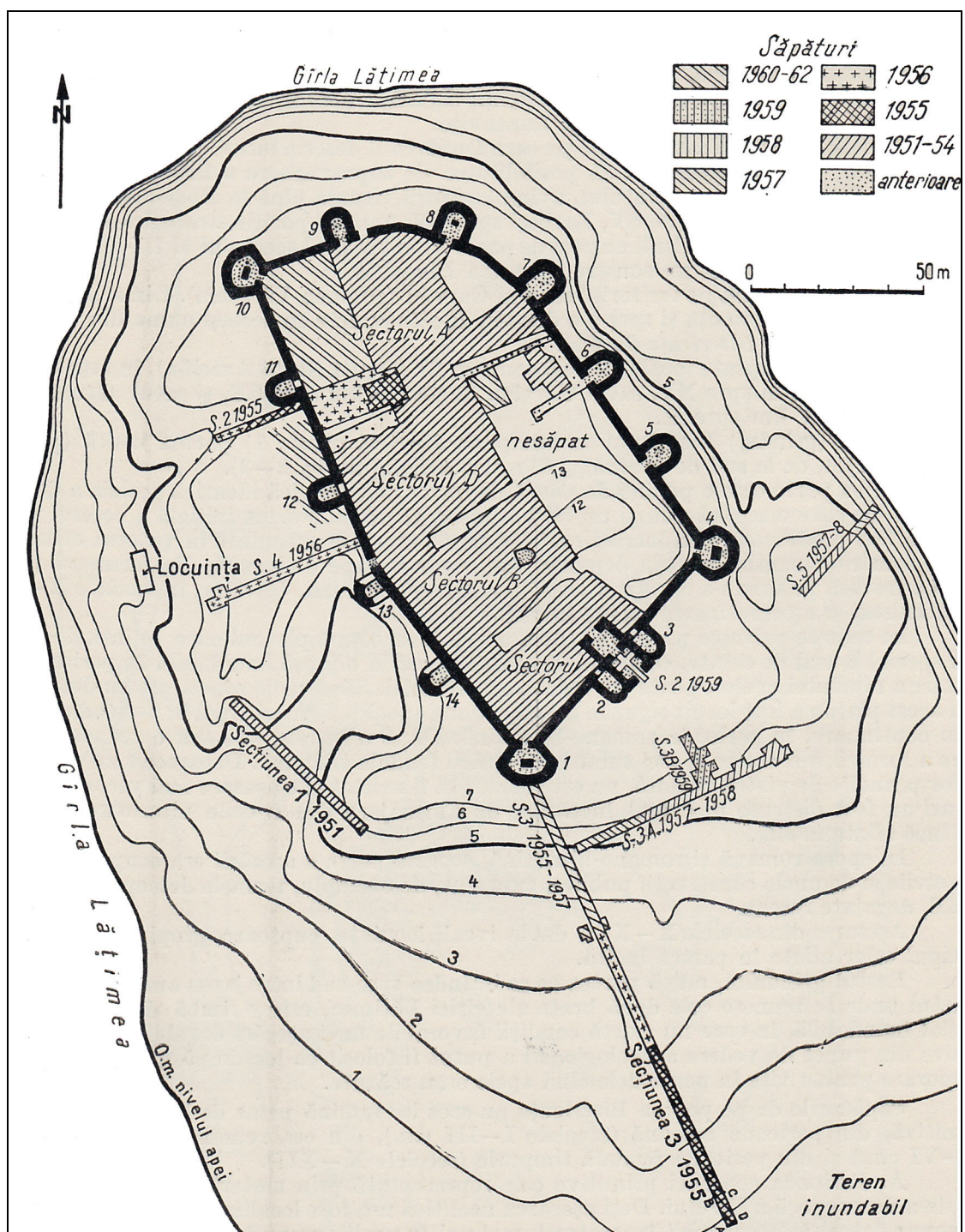


Fig. 3. The layout of the excavations at Dinogoția (the 50-60'ies, *apud Ștefan et alii*, 1967).