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REPORT ON THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE WALLS OF ASSERIA

Summary

The fifth phase of conservation took place in 2005 and 2006. It included the continuation of wall restoration in the western city gate area, in accordance with the methodology applied in previous protective campaigns.

After removal of the accumulated deposits of soil, small stones, and overgrown vegetation in the area behind the preserved lateral walls of the western gate to the city, their reconstruction followed. As in this case the walling technique consisted of square and rectangular stones, called *"opus quadratum"*, local stone was used – a layered limestone of the identical composition, working, and texture as the original Roman stone from the nearby quarries. The worked stones used in walling were detached from large stone blocks called "*feta*", with a thickness of 15 to 30 cm, and varied lengths from 18 cm to 60 cm, and a variable width ranging from 25 cm do 40 cm. The sharp edges on the face of the worked stone were knocked off by perpendicular blows from a chisel, and the resulting gently angled edge extended for some 7 to 10 cm in depth, leaving a slightly elevated surface in the center of the block, a type of stone known locally as a "*bunja*". This manner of working does not leave an edging band on the stone, called "*anathyrosis*", which always appears on the large blocks in the corners of the defensive walls of Asseria, and which represents yet another higher level of stone carving, requiring the use of additional tools – fine and precise chisels.

Regularly carved blocks of the same height were placed on a bed of lime mortar and washed stone aggregate 2 to 3 cm thick, and thanks to the layered placement the use of smaller stones and bricks in a layer for levelling was avoided – "*System der Ausgleichschichten*".

Care was taken in building that they did not cover each other and did not collide with the vertical joints, and the wall was additionally reinforced through the placement of transverse blocks – the key to the *"diaton"*.

The back of the wall was formed of broken stone remaining from the stone carving sunk into an abundant layer of lime mortar –*"opus coementitium"*. At the juncture of the lateral walls and pilasters – jambs that lay on the massive threshold of the *propugnaculum*,

blocks with two or three regularly worked faces were carved and placed, serving as reinforcement for the edge sections or prominent parts of the wall.

The reconstruction was aiming for a presentation layer 0.6 m to 2 m in height, while the average wall width measured 60 cm or two Roman feet. In this fifth stage of works, the southern lateral wall from the gateway to the face of the defensive rampart was reconstructed in a total length of 12 meters.

The gaps in the wall were filled water resistant lime mortar to the edge of the worked blocks, so as to make them different from the original wall, which was filled in a different technique where the edges were covered with 2-5 cm of mortar.