



JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Institute of Archeology and Art History of
Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca
Technical University Of Cluj-Napoca



JAHA
JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14795/j.v8i1>

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN-L 2360 – 266X



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No. 8.1 /2021

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Design & layout:
Petru Ureche

Studies

ARCHAEOLOGY

TROPAEUM TRAIANI: REVISITING THE FIELD FINDINGS OF CARL WILHELM WUTZER (1856) VS. EXCAVATION DATA OF GRIGORE TOCILESCU (1885) ON THE TRIUMPHAL MONUMENT

Abstract: The Triumphal Monument Tropaeum Traiani of Adamclisi, Romania is analyzed with reference to the survey published by the German Professor Carl Wilhelm Wutzer after his trip of 1856 in Dobrudja. Since 1882, Tocilescu excavated the ruin and appreciated past data, although there was enough criticism about the idea of considering the monument as built by Persians and geometrical figures of parapets as Persian letters. Most intriguing was, anyway, the information about the previous existence of a “fountain”, as well as of a “coffin-shaped marble vessel” on the upper part of ruin, as well as of some stone plates, according to the stories of an elder Bulgarian. Since the data of that epoch are scarce, they are worth to be re-evaluated. In this respect, a careful translation was done, with due attention to debatable findings. The pieces, images and symbols associated to the ruin and with stone parts were correlated with the stages of dismantling and decay, in the historical and religious context of the Ottoman period. The author’s correlations and interpretations are based on factual arguments, bridging the gap between the archaeologist’s concepts and local population perceptions and public memory in Dobrudja. Thus, a valuable historical information is recovered, and it was established that the three items of Wutzer report existed and were excavated by Tocilescu. Although they had other initial functions, they correspond to specific components of the hexagonal tower, some of them exposed in museum, other lost in time.

Keywords: *Tropaeum Traiani, Wutzer, basin-fountain, marble coffin, hexagonal tower.*

INTRODUCTION

Carl Wilhelm Wutzer (1789-1863) is important for historians and archaeologists due to his comprehensive data published after a trip through Romanian Principalities and Dobrudja (part of the Ottoman Empire) in 1856. The book of the renowned German military medical doctor, surgeon, naturalist and university professor includes field information about the general state of the Triumphal Monument Tropaeum Traiani of Adamclisi ruin¹, as well as about the neighboring places where some metopaes were seen in the XIXth century. An image of 1864, quite similar to what Wutzer

¹ WUTZER 1860, 254-259.

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DOI: 10.14795/j.v8i1.605

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN-L 2360 – 266X

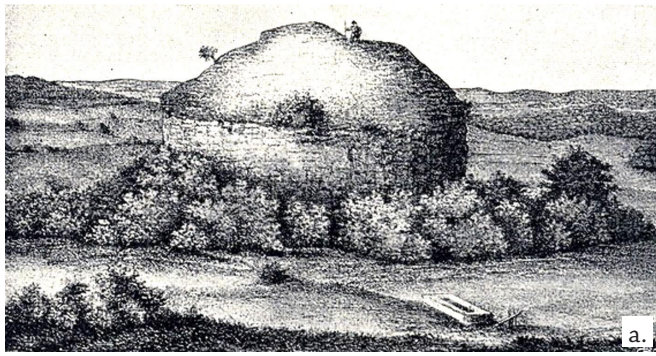


Fig. 1. The ruin of the Triumphal Monument Tropaeum Traiani in the XIXth century. a) aspect at 1864 (PETERS 1867); b) aspect after excavations of 1882 (TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a)

could have seen at 1856 was published few years later by K. F. Peters² (Fig. 1 a) and it was closer to what could be seen after the beginning of excavations by G. Tocilescu in 1882³ (Fig. 1 b).

From the comprehensive monograph of Tocilescu/Benndorf/Niemann 1895 (Romanian edition⁴ and German edition⁵), it is obvious that Tocilescu had read and appreciated the reports of Wutzer. But Tocilescu cited with some irritation the belief of Wutzer about the Persian origin of that construction and the equivalence of geometrical figures with some alleged Persian letters.

Tocilescu was much more disappointed because Wutzer considered that the purpose of the building was different, as he gave credit to a strange information about the purported existence until the beginning of that century of a “water source pouring from a coffin-shaped marble vessel” on the ruin’s top. Such pieces did no longer exist to be checked at the time of visit, while such an information, as well as others, were given by an aged Bulgarian whom “the gift of drunkenness was not missing”⁶, thus his allegations seemed to not deserve attention.

However, we may remark that Tocilescu was not a priori against old men memories, as he uses a Wutzer’s information about some pieces taken by a local Turkish Pascha and correlated it with recalls of another local elder; this way he identified in 1893 at the Imperial Museum of Istanbul the metopae no. 28, transported there in 1875⁷. Under these circumstances, although Tocilescu was fully against such information coming from a drunkard elder, we may think that such data from Wutzer need a reconsideration, since any testimonies of that period may prove valuable.

Since 1960’s, the information about the „source-fountain” and the „coffin-shaped marble vessel” was not commented anymore and went out of the research interest. The author of this paper considers that a new reading of the whole original text of Wutzer is necessary, as it was cited only by fragments. Thus, the re-evaluation of Wutzer trip historical context and reported data, in correlation with the Tocilescu’s excavations data, may prove to be useful to history, archaeology and even to engineering sciences.

² PETERS 1867, 143-144.

³ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 1.

⁴ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 10-12.

⁵ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895b, 9-11.

⁶ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 11.

⁷ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 12.

THE MAIN ARCHITECTURAL-CONSTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS AND THE POSSIBLE STAGES OF THE MONUMENT DISMANTLING AND/OR DESTRUCTION

In order to understand the field situation depicted by Wutzer, the figure 2 shows the main architectural-constructive external elements of the triumphal monument, as they were replicated at the site in 1977, in parallel with the internal initial structure, according to the best references on reconstruction (Furtwängler 1903⁸, Florescu 1965⁹, Florescu 1960¹⁰, Florescu 1976¹¹). Since Wutzer had seen in 1856 only a ruin and some dismantled pieces, we suggest an exercise of recalling the steps of dismantling and/or destruction of this construction, from IInd to XIXth century. In order to reach a decay, as from the initial state of fig. 2 to the ruin state of fig. 1, it was possible and necessary a succession of natural and/or anthropic actions, as follows :

- the collapse of the Trophy and trunk, as well as of the prisoners statues, caused most probably by an earthquake (Tocilescu/Benndorf/Niemann/A 1895¹², Georgescu 2014¹³, Georgescu 2015¹⁴);
- gradual dismantling and/or destruction of the truncated cone scaly roof tiles, of the hexagonal tower and of the balustrade with prisoners;
- dismantling (collapse ?) of the drum’s perimetral blocks, metopae, friezes and pilasters;
- local destruction of sidewalk and steps;
- erosion of the exposed zones of the Roman concrete core;
- covering with soil and vegetation of the ruin and neighboring zone.

THE CONTEXT OF INFORMATION GATHERING

Arriving in Dobrogea in September 1856, Wutzer was hosted in the house of a Bulgarian family from Rasova, on the Danube bank. He realized that the relationship between the host and his father, the elder Georgi Dima, was not good at all. It seems that the old man was dressed carelessly and wandered barefoot, but the worse was his habit to drink, whereas the excess of booze was blamed both by his son and

⁸ FURTWÄNGLER 1903, Taf. II.

⁹ FLORESCU 1965.

¹⁰ FLORESCU 1960.

¹¹ FLORESCU 1976.

¹² TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 6.

¹³ GEORGESCU 2014.

¹⁴ GEORGESCU 2015.

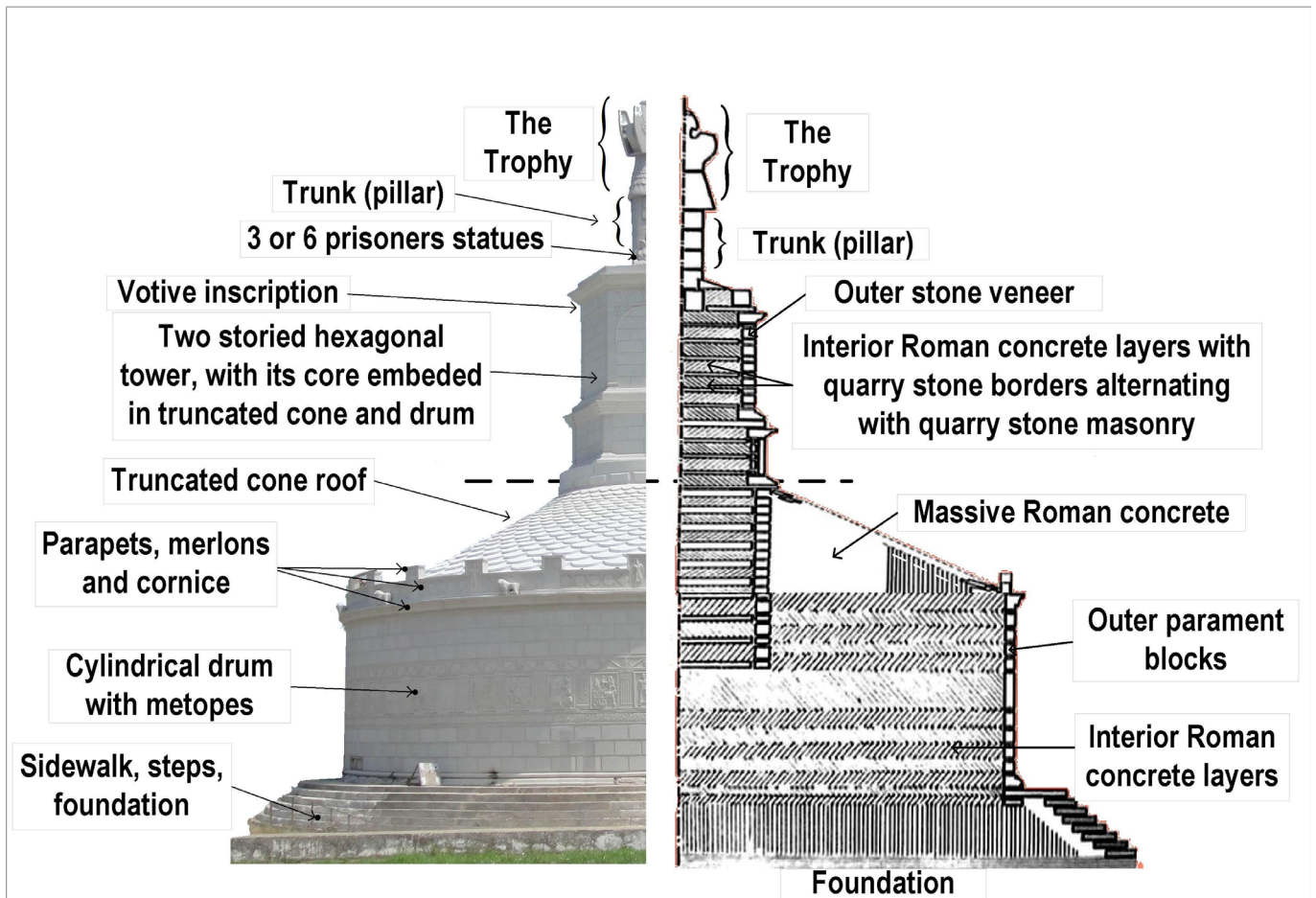


Fig. 2. The main architectural-constructive elements of the Triumphal Monument Tropaeum Traiani. The left side includes the author's notes on the current replica ; the right side includes the author's notes on the cross-section suggested by R. Florescu in FLORESCU 1976¹⁵ and I. Miclea and R. Florescu 1980¹⁶.

by the moral of the Bulgarian population. At his 67 years at the time of the visit, Wutzer was also a senior. Perhaps both his age and his medical profession and social experience allowed him to reach a certain empathy with the old man, so as to offer him some drink¹⁷. Thus, the old man Dima became voluble and the German guest recorded his story about the ruin of Adamclisi, besides what Wutzer was able to see directly.

Although we can also raise the question of the appropriate translator for Wutzer's trip, which would somehow excuse any inaccuracies, we note that the detailing was remarkable and Wutzer, as a German scientist, rigorously noted what he was told, and fountain and coffin were terms with specific meaning. Thus, it is of interest to start from the initial text and the subsequent translation of the Georgi Dima's story, which was rendered differently by others authors in the field.

The text in German is as follows:

„Eine sehr eigenthümliche Vorrichtung des Monumentes, die mir an Ort und Stelle nur angedeutet worden war, erhielt erst in Rassowa ihre nähere Aufklärung durch die Mittheilung eine bulgarischen Greises, welcher Georgi Dima hieß, der seine Jugendjahre in Adam-Kelssi-Köy zugebracht hatte, und welcher versicherte, als Knabe das Monument bis zu seiner Spitze öfters erklettert zu haben.

¹⁵ FLORESCU 1976.

¹⁶ MICLEA/FLORESCU 1980, 22-35.

¹⁷ WUTZER 1860, 261-262.

*Jene obere Endigung des halb eiförmigen Gebäudes erscheint nämlich noch heute abgeplattet; von dieser kleinen Plattform aus soll nun, nach übereinstimmender Versicherung der Anwohner, noch im Anfange des gegenwärtigen Jahrhunderts eine Fontäne ihr Wasser aus einem sargförmigen Marmorgefäße hervor nach abwärts ergossen haben.*¹⁸

The author's translation is as follows:

“A very peculiar device of the monument, which was only hinted at on the spot, received more detailed explanation only in Rassowa through the communication of an elder Bulgarian, whose name was Georgi Dima, who had spent his youth in Adam-Kelssi-Köy, and who assured that as a boy he had often climbed the monument to its top. That upper end of the half-egg-shaped building still appears flattened today; from this small platform, according to the unanimous assurances of the residents, a fountain is said to have poured its water downwards from a coffin-shaped marble vessel at the beginning of the present century “

If we read with care what Wutzer wrote in this case, we see that the unexplained aspects do not refer to what he saw at the ruin site but to what he got from the elder Georgi Dima. The text in German is as follows:

*„Der erwähnte Greis giebt an, daß er dort oben Steinplatten unordentlich und verschränkt liegen gesehen habe, zwischen denen das Wasser damals zwar nicht mehr in die Höhe sprang, aber doch in einer solchen Menge heror sickerte, daß es längs der Außenseite des Bauwerkes herabließ, und so zu dessen Zerstörung beitrug. Das erwähnte Marmorgefäß war damals schon verschwunden. Gegenwärtig ist keine Spur von Wasserabfluß wahrzunehmen*¹⁹

¹⁸ WUTZER 1860, 258.

¹⁹ WUTZER 1860, 258.

The author's translation is as follows:

"The very old man mentioned that he saw stone slabs lying untidy and twisted up there, between which the water no longer jumped up at that time, but it seeped up in such a quantity that it ran down along the outside of the building, and so contributed to its destruction. The marble vessel mentioned had already disappeared by then. At the moment there is no trace of water runoff"

In a carefully analyzed translation, we must note that the text seems to combine the statement of elder Dima about his childhood near the ruin of Adam-Kilisse / Adam Kelssi, which is certainly related, to the memories of other local people about the existence at the top of the ruin of a "fountain vessel" with a shape of "coffin", as source of a water flow. It turns out that the elder Dima had taken over in his mind what the inhabitants of several generations had unanimously declared, namely that they had once seen a fountain on the ruin. From the account transcribed by Wutzer, it results that it was no longer visible at the time of his visit, nor at the time of when the child Dima climbed on the ruin (probably sometime before 1800). In fact, it does not appear that as a child he personally saw a fountain or such a "coffin", he had seen only some irregularly placed and piled stone slabs and now the water no longer gushed but only flies or dripped from the ruin.

THE FATE OF THE WUTZER'S TEXT TRANSLATION

Reassessing the subsequent translation of the controversial passages may clarify certain aspects. In the Romanian edition of Tocilescu/Benndorf/Niemann 1895²⁰ where it is a citation of Wutzer, the Romanian term for "water spring" is used but in the German edition²¹ it appears translated as "Fontaine" (as in French!). In Tocilescu's Romanian and German monograph editions the "sargförmigen Marmorgefäße" is correctly translated by "marble vessel in a coffin shape"²².

Unfortunately, the subsequent translations did not try to find the facts behind words, instead they avoided the normal path. Florea Bobu Florescu's book first edition²³ and second edition²⁴ pleaded for the very high value of Wutzer's observations. They are considered as most important and precise in comparison with those of other travelers, remarking that Tocilescu was too harsh and unfair in his reaction, since he neglected the realist findings of Wutzer just because he believed in the Persian origin of the monument. The mention of Wutzer about the opinion of Professor Lassen, consulted on the Persian resemblance, is given as affirmative in the Romanian text of Florescu, but from our translation it results as negative, probably a grammar trap.

However, Florescu consider that there were some erroneous or confusing aspects in Wutzer's text and in order to prove them includes a quite extensive translation on three pages. In the first two editions, "eigenthümliche / peculiar" is translated as "very important" but the text changes into

"the fountain would have given its water through a pleasant form of marble vessel", being cut the original expression "in the shape of a marble-coffin". In the third edition²⁵ the text no longer mentions this information about the fountain (although it was the German edition and a German scientist had paid considerable attention and space in his book just to that peculiar device!).

This cut cannot be a result of a wrong translation, because Florea Bobu Florescu held a PhD degree from Germany²⁶ and that "coffin" was the contested and unsolved term. It seems that Florescu sacrificed the exact translation to get rid of that "coffin" that had upset Tocilescu so much (his version seems to indicate also an ornamental fountain but is quite hilarious, if a coffin shape is declared a "pleasant form"!!).

To understand this attitude, the context of the epoch needs a detailing. Wutzer had an enormous prestige in medicine and in academia, being elected Rector of Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn in 1836-1837 and 1854-1855²⁷, and his cited book cover a wide range of historical, economic, social and health issues in visited territories. However, he would have been considered an "amateur" in archaeology, especially since Tocilescu expressed his disappointment with Wutzer's ideas about the Persian origin of the monument and the decorations of some pieces. Thus, the trust in Tocilescu, Benndorf and Niemann opinions influenced many other researchers and the Wutzer text was not exploited on all meanings, as it deserved.

FACTS ABOUT A WATER SOURCE OR A FOUNTAIN BASIN

As a starting point of our research, we wonder what might look like a water source or a fountain at the top of the ruin. It is significant that in the original text Wutzer uses the term "fontäne" for the described source, which indicates in most cases a basin with a decorative role in which water falls after being blown into the air or when it flows from another source²⁸. (From *Latin - Fontanus/fontana*; from *font-*, *fons*; *English: fountain*; *French - fontaine*; *Italian - fontana* ²⁹). It follows that the received description led to such a basin shape and water flow. In fact, in German, the word for a fountain in the sense of a well (deeply) dug in earth is "brunnen", while "quelle" is a natural water source (Wikipedia B 2020)³⁰.

Although Wutzer considers as a first opinion that the ruin was a mausoleum, he also thinks about the possible technique for water supply that would have allowed the operation of an artesian well. His concern should not surprise us, because since antiquity the Greeks and Romans, and later even the Ottomans, made water supply with spectacular above-ground or underground aqueducts, from great distances.

²⁵ FLORESCU 1965, 31.

²⁶ ARHIVELE NATIONALE.

²⁷ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Wilhelm_Wutzer (accessed December 2020).

²⁸ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fontäne> (accessed December 2020).

²⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fountain> (accessed December 2020).

³⁰ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunnen> (accessed December 2020).

²⁰ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 11.

²¹ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895b, 9.

²² TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 11.

²³ FLORESCU 1959, 19-20.

²⁴ FLORESCU 1961, 21-24.

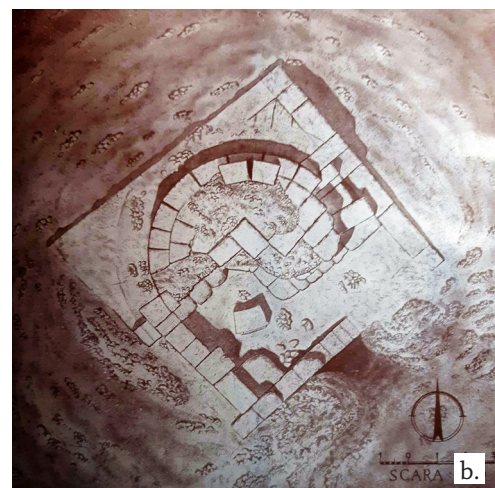
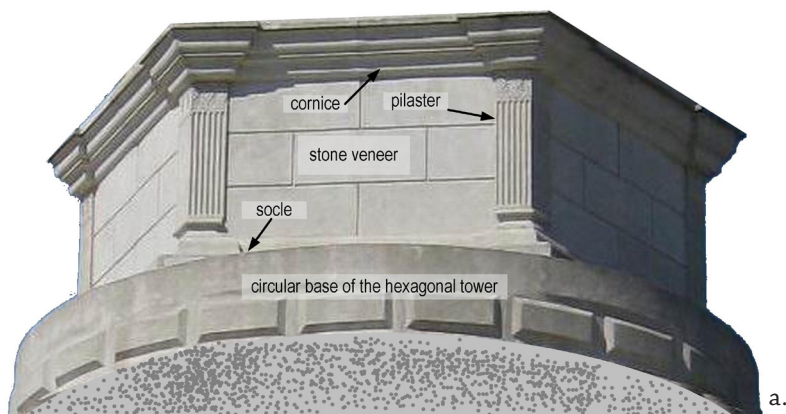


Fig. 3. The possible real source of the „fountain basin” on the ruin of the Tropaeum Traiani Monument in the local public memory of the XVIIth to XIXth centuries in Dobrogea; a) a part of the hexagonal tower base (author’s sketchup based on the current image of the reconstruction at the site); b) drawing of the circular base stones remnants above the square embedded tower, as they were in the 1960’s (FLORESCU 1965³²).

As Tocilescu³¹ points out, the supply of water from springs or from deep wells was vital and difficult in the local conditions of that time. A well or a spring fountain were important objects in the local public mentality in Dobrogea. Many local Turkish villages had names related to fountains, springs or lakes, and the construction of public spring fountains was an important component of Ottoman investments, or endowments of sultans and sultan’s wives, as well as of religious or charitable foundations. The Turkish settlers of Dobrogea used many pieces from the triumphal monument as fountain springs troughs.

Today we know that there was a Roman aqueduct that supplied water to the fortress Tropaeum Traiani, relatively close to the monument, about which the locals could have learned in the nineteenth century. This may explain some legends about an underground tunnel, so a part of the problem seems related of a reality and certain connections cannot be ruled out.

If we agree to look about a “fountain basin” on the ruin, let’s remind some archaeological data. On the top area of the frustoconical roof, over the square tower embedded in concrete, began the base of the hexagonal tower lower part. The reconstruction depicts a row of 73 cm high blocks, over which was a 45 cm high ring and then a 58 cm high profiled base, 6 corner pilasters of some 2.05 m height (with stone plates as veneer) and a cornice of 58 cm. Thus, the height was some 3.70 m and the base diameter of approx. 8-9 m. The white Sarmatian limestone had a marble appearance (Florescu 1965³³).

In a stage that would have followed the dismantling of the veneer and / or the core of the upper part of the tower, probably long before 1800, the remaining lower part of the tower would have looked a lot like a hexagonal basin (Fig. 3a). The other crafted stones of the base amounted to 1.80 m in height and enough beautifully stone pieces could remain

visible for a long time at the lower part. We cannot rule out the possibility that some treasure hunters or stone seekers may have first dismantled the remaining part of the masonry of the hexagonal tower or dug next to it in deposits. Even after erosion and / or the disappearance / taking of some stone blocks, the remaining ones of the tower’s base could constitute an enclosure, a circular basin. There are field data that show that some of the stones of the base of the circular tower over which the hexagonal tower had been built could be seen until they were covered with the reconstruction structure in 1977 (Fig. 3b).

As a result of dismantling, erosion or digging, it was possible that an enclosure was formed on the ruin’s crest. That would be filled with snow in winter and when it began to melt in spring, or in seasons with heavy rainfall, water would flow a time or even to gush, apparently like a spring, through the joints between the worked stones, and to maintain in the memory of the villagers the image of that “marble fountain”.

Alternatively, from the evaluation of the account we can conclude that if water did not gush or flow from the “fountain” as in the past, the reason could have been that, long before 1800, the area of that basin had been dismantled or covered with deposits. The explanation of elder Dima was that water still existed but would have infiltrated and leaked in large quantities from the top over the edges of the drum, and thus explained the destruction of the building, which could have the significance of a recurring, long lasting seasonal phenomenon.

FACTS ABOUT A MARBLE „COFFIN”

The next questionable information received by Wutzer was about a „coffin” that formed a common body or was associated as functionality with the „spring-fountain”. It may seem a pure fantasy, without a solution in the interest of our investigations. A „coffin” is an object with known funerary and religious symbolism. But if the aged Georgi Dima kept them in memory for a lifetime, without seeing them, the fountain and the coffin, as associated objects, they

³¹ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 4-5.
³² FLORESCU 1965, 683.
³³ FLORESCU 1965, 301.

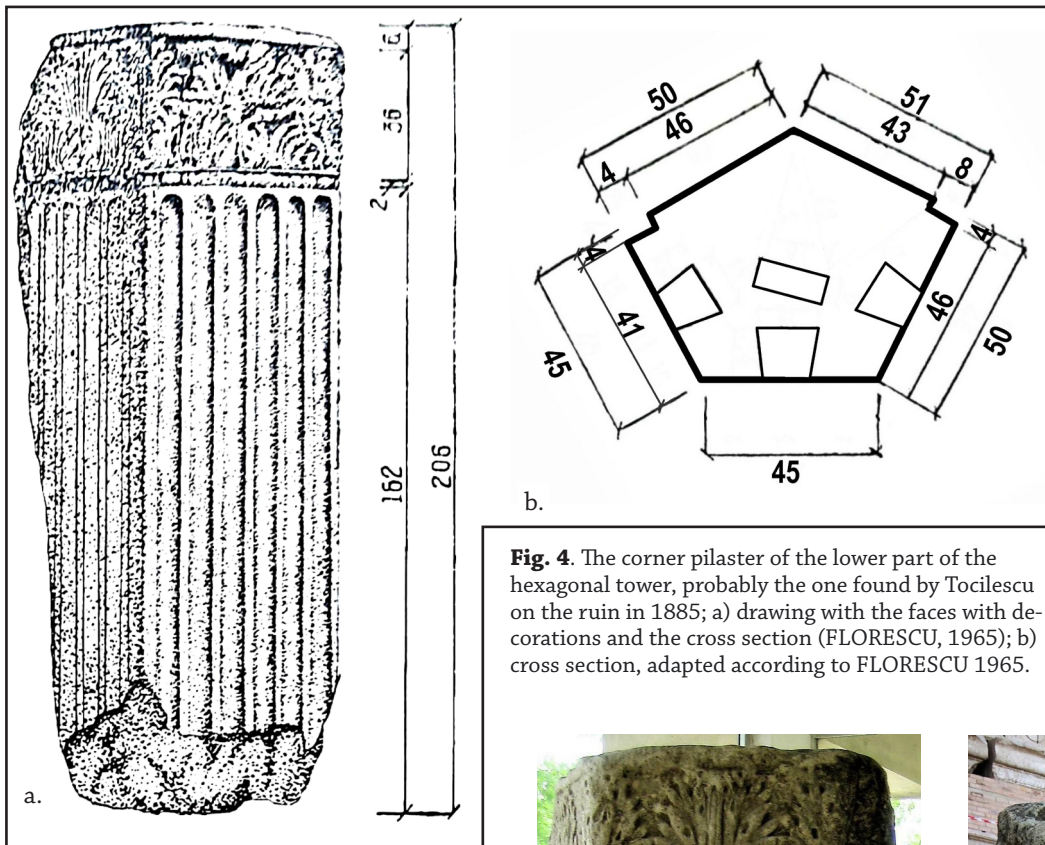


Fig. 4. The corner pilaster of the lower part of the hexagonal tower, probably the one found by Tocilescu on the ruin in 1885; a) drawing with the faces with decorations and the cross section (FLORESCU, 1965); b) cross section, adapted according to FLORESCU 1965.

were strongly embedded in the local public memory. As a result, we may assume that a generation or more ago these objects existed and had a specific typology, which could not be easily forgotten, it is known that many old people remember better the things of childhood or youth than those of yesterday.

In order to settle the problem of the coffin shape, let us remember that after the discovery in 1885 by the mayor of the village, the teacher Ionescu and Tocilescu of some inscriptions on the ruin, Tocilescu also found also there (in the south), a pilaster of the lower hexagonal tower. In fact, Tocilescu³⁴ writes: „Near the fragment on the tower was found a half column from the hexagonal base of the trophy” ... In Chapter III „Construction” of the cited book, Niemann writes at page 48: “...one of these pilasters, very damaged, was found just above the monument; another in a better state of preservation, at the foot of the building; fragments of four others were used as tombstones in nearby cemeteries. These angular pilasters have an outer angle of 120°; they therefore belong to the supposedly hexagonal construction; their height is 2.05 m”. From all publications it results that the pilaster had a length of about 2 m, having a pentagonal cross section with sides of 45-50 cm, floral ornaments on two sides at the

top, some grooves along it (fig. 4).

In the tables of Florescu³⁵ there are recorded two pilasters at the bottom of the tower and one fragmentary at the top. We did not find data to clarify the reference to that pillar „of better conservation”, found somewhere at the base of the drum, but which does not appear in publicly available inventories. Since the information comes from the chapter written by Niemann in German and translated, we checked the German edition of



Fig. 5. The corner pilaster of the lower part of the hexagonal tower, probably the one found by Tocilescu on the ruin in 1885, exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of the Museum Complex „Tropaeum Traiani” Adamclisi; a) the pilaster - the front side, faces with decorations; b) the pilaster - the back side, broken and with missing material (photos of the author).

³⁴ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 21.

³⁵ FLORESCU 1965, 344.

the book and the expression „at the foot of the building” is actually translated from „also at the feet”; we assume that it refers to the drum and Tocilescu added to the „building” knowingly.

In the Archaeological Museum of the Museum Complex „Tropaeum Traiani” Adamclisi we identified this pilaster of the hexagonal tower lower part, whose faces have the respective ornaments on two sides (fig. 5 a), and the back is really very damaged, with much material missing (fig. 5 b), being probably the one found on the ruin in 1885. In publications and in Museum there is another pilaster from the lower part of the hexagonal tower, which was carved and used as a fountain trough in the village of Cetate, being recovered in 1958 (Florescu 1965³⁶); is exposed near the pillar shown in fig. 5. Although the pentagonal shape is the same, in Florescu³⁷, the dimensions of the section differ partially from those given by Sâmpetru, 1984³⁸, probably the measurements were made in another area or were of the other pillar.

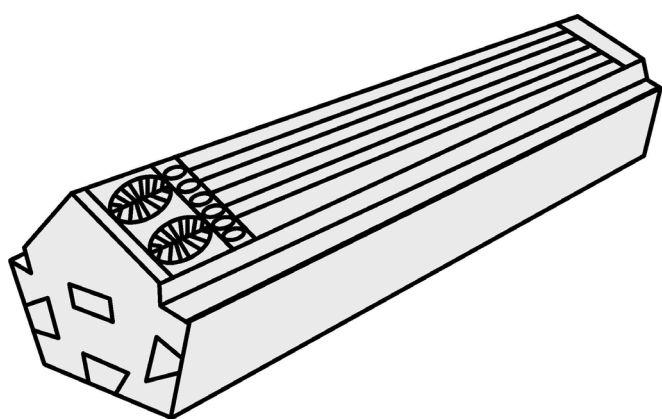


Fig. 6. The corner pilaster of the lower part of the hexagonal tower rendered in perspective in a position similar to the one in which it could remain after the fall and was probably found by Tocilescu (author's sketchup).

It is known that the stone from which many of the pieces of the monument were made was visually similar to marble. But what no author has noticed and published so far is that the length, shape, and pentagonal cross section

of this pillar, especially when placed horizontally, with the outer edge and the two faces with ornaments facing up, all of them are very similar to those of a Turkish coffin or sarcophagus, in the shape of those displayed in Ottoman Muslim mausoleums „türbe”. (Fig. 6)

We do not know if the local villagers of Georgi Dima's childhood or even he had seen the interior of a mausoleum with „türbe” sarcophagi. In Dobrudja, the “türbe” mausoleums dedicated to Sari Saltuk or Ali Gazi Pasha (Fig. 7 a) from Babadag were the closest to Rasova or Adamclisi (less than 200 km). At a considerably greater distance, at Edirne (some 600 km) there were numerous marble sarcophagi, including the mausoleum “türbe” of Fatma Sultan, visible in the open air in the cemetery (fig. 7 b). In the capital of the Ottoman Empire, in Istanbul or in Bursa (at some 700-800 km), mausoleums with coffins of this shape were built for all the sultans and their families. The mausoleum „türbe” of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent existed since 1566 in Istanbul (fig. 7 c).

In 1856 Dobrogea was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for over four hundred years, and near Rasova and the ruin of Adamclisi there were villages with Turkish and Tatar inhabitants, as well as Muslim cemeteries. Rasova was a frequented crossing or landing point of the Danube, both by Turkish and foreign travelers, and there were Ottoman authorities circulating in the empire, they knew their religion and history, and they could make such comparisons.

We do not rule out that in the Rasova area coffins similar in shape could have been seen at funerals, to Turks with higher social status, because even today, coffins of such shape are used in Turkey at funerals during transportation to the cemetery. It seems natural that the information from the Turkish villagers also reached the child Georgi Dima, who found out what that stone from the ruin looks like. The shape of the coffin, like of the Orthodox Christians, but with the top (lid) rather flat, could be imagined by Romanians or local Bulgarians, especially if the fallen pilaster remained laid with the other three visible unworked surfaces and the rest to be buried in deposits.

As the ruin had a Turkish name but with Christian meaning (“Adam-Kilisse”, i.e. “The Church of Adam” or “The Church of Man”), it was no wonder that there was a „coffin”...!



Fig. 7. Turkish “türbe” sarcophagi from the Ottoman era; a) Ali Gazi Pasha “türbe”, Babadag³⁹; b) Fatma Sultan “türbe”⁴⁰, Edirne; c) The Mausoleum “türbe” of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, Istanbul (reproduced by permission from Madain Project⁴¹).

³⁶ FLORESCU 1965, 52.

³⁷ FLORESCU 1965, 304.

³⁸ SÂMPETRU 1984, 113.

³⁹ FATMA SULTAN.

⁴⁰ ALI-GAZI PASA.

⁴¹ MADAIN PROJECT

Technically speaking, because the pilaster was found on top of the ruin, we can reasonably assume that it remained laid along the slope, with much of the back surface in contact with the roof, which gave it more stability in comparison of the transverse placement. It is very possible that the remaining pilaster had an end close to the area of the base of the hexagonal tower or in contact with it, so that the „coffin” seems to form a common body with the „fountain” created by the circular enclosure of the base and when water accumulates it flowed along it, which might have seemed a natural functional association, similar to a spring.

The technical data⁴² show that the connection of the pilasters to the adjacent slabs and to the core of Roman stone and concrete was made only at the top with large pieces of wood in the shape of a swallow’s tail. This way of connection could favor the detachment from the Roman masonry core of the veneer, under the seismic action, first at the bottom, while the detachment could be total after forcing / destroying the connectors from biological degradation, earthquake, freeze and thaw or by people’s actions.

In a credible hypothesis, a pilaster could be detached and slip or roll in different situations, falling on the truncated roof, on the sidewalk or steps, depending on the level at which it was mounted and other random factors (as it happened to the few recovered pilasters). The hypothesis of a seismic action is justified by the fact that if it had been a human intervention, the pillar would have been pushed out of the edge of the slope, to be taken over after the fall.

Because any roof tiles, even broken ones did not remain under the pilaster found by Tocilescu in 1885, we can conclude that at the time of the collapse they were no longer there, so the fall occurred after the tiles had been taken, whole or destroyed by the fall of other upper pieces. The pilaster was gradually covered by dust deposits. It would not have been excluded that the pillar was later covered more and more by the earth thrown to the side by those who had dug to make the gallery on the east or by other excavations of the deposits on the frustoconical roof.

The pilaster found on the roof was heavy, well over a ton, so it was difficult to pick it up. Perhaps being assimilated with a sarcophagus „türbe” there were also religious restraints. It is interesting that these two pilasters of the lower floor of the tower, of approx. 2 m (of the six existing ones) did not break, probably because they fell from a lower height, possibly on a consistent layer of deposits existing on the cone, so later as historical time.

From the correlation of the dimensions of the cross section (maximum horizontal width of about 90 cm and maximum height at the top of the section of about 70 cm) with the fact that the pillar had not been observed by Tocilescu until then, it results that it was buried in earth deposits and vegetation, which could be at least 70 cm thick. Even if the pilaster was partially buried in the soil deposits, if the upper part characteristic edge could be seen, the idea of a “türbe” coffin immediately appeared to a Turkish ethnic. In fact, the Turkish people called the Roman ruin also „kümbet” (from „gonbad” in Persian) which means vault, dome but especially mausoleum with a conical roof in Seljuk

⁴² SĂMPETRU 1984, 114-115.

funerary architecture⁴³.

The pilasters on the upper floor, with approx. 4 m length, fell from a higher height and broke into several pieces. Because their fragments were taken over, they had been not covered by deposits and thus were accessible to the Turkish inhabitants in the last waves of settlers in the 18th and 19th centuries. For this reason, as a working hypothesis (partially justified in seismic conditions), we can consider that their collapse occurred much earlier than those in the lower tower but not very early. A pilaster of the six of upper tower was found as a tombstone in the cemetery near Adamclisi, there are four contiguous fragments, three of which have been preserved and was published by Georg Niemann (Niemann 1898)⁴⁴; in the museum is exhibited the largest part, which includes the relief of the connection with the arch next to the face with the inscription.

FACTS ABOUT SOME STONE PLATES

The elder Bulgarian’s account of those „irregularly placed, piled stone plates” was not often commented or disputed, but there are data from the articles and especially from Tocilescu’s book that provide us with positive arguments. Thus, the stone plates memorized by Georgi Dima from his childhood should be the very fragments of votive inscription found in 1885 by the mayor of Adamclisi, the teacher and Tocilescu on the ruin⁴⁵, along with the pilaster. We see them actually figured to the east and in the drawing in fig. 1.b (Tocilescu/Benndorf/Niemann/A 1895).

These fragments had the letters OR DIVI RVA (a fragment later broken) and TXIII ... (the triangular fragment, the largest), as can be identified in the reconstitution of the votive inscription proposed by Tocilescu⁴⁶ (fig. 8 a) and are exhibited in the museum (fig. 8 b). The broken pieces have irregular shapes and considerable dimensions (some over 1 m, with a thickness of about 30 cm), so that being dropped inclined and / or superposed in different positions would have been visible for a long time, until they were covered with deposits and allowed the child Dima to see many of them in 1800.

It is probable that initially there were more pieces left on the ruins but because they did not have any religious significance to prevent their use, some fragments were taken and used in cemeteries, where Tocilescu found them. The remaining slabs may have been later covered with either natural deposits or earth and other stones from the excavations in the eastern gallery. Considering the fact that in assemblage they were framed by the pilasters of the upper tower part, the fall of the inscription could occur simultaneously with them.

As a synthesis of the evaluations, figure 9 shows a possible image of the ruin of the Tropaeum Traiani Monument in the XVIIth-XVIIIth centuries or earlier, with the three elements described by elder Georgi Dima to Wutzer.

⁴³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gonbad> accessed (accessed December 2020).

⁴⁴ NIEMANN 1898, 138-142.

⁴⁵ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 20-21, 51.

⁴⁶ TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895a, 124.

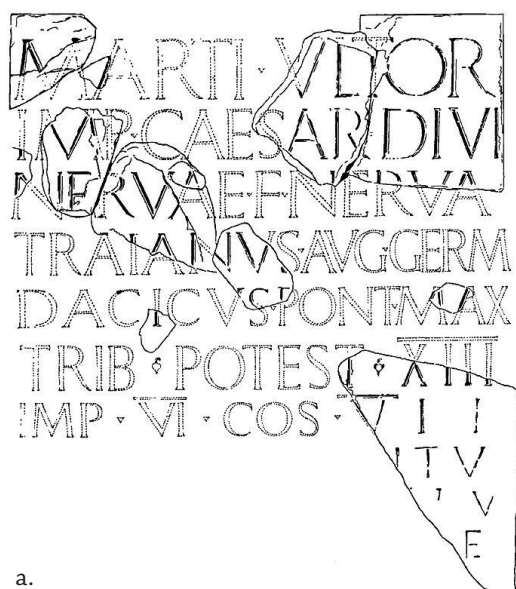


Fig. 8. The votive inscription slab of the Triumphal Monument: a) the reconstitution by TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895; b) few fragments recovered by Tocilescu, exhibited in the Archaeological Museum Tropaeum Traiani from Adamclisi (author’s photo).

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the re-evaluation of the data obtained over 160 years ago, the most contradictory information about the ruin of the Triumphal Monument Tropaeum Traiani of Adamclisi is confirmed.

So far, this part of Wutzer’s text has not been analyzed or interpreted in the key in which we presented it in this article, neither by Tocilescu, nor by other researchers of the Tropaeum Traiani monument, either Romanian or from abroad. We consider that the explanation is that all

the efforts of interpretation and dating of Tocilescu and his collaborators, or even of those who contradicted him, focused on the problem of the succession of metopes, the dating of the construction and the correlations with Roman history. They were not concerned with the possible resemblances to elements of Ottoman civilization, from the Middle Ages to contemporary history.

Our correlations and interpretations have concluded, with numerous arguments, that those three elements (a circular row of stones from a „fountain basin” associated

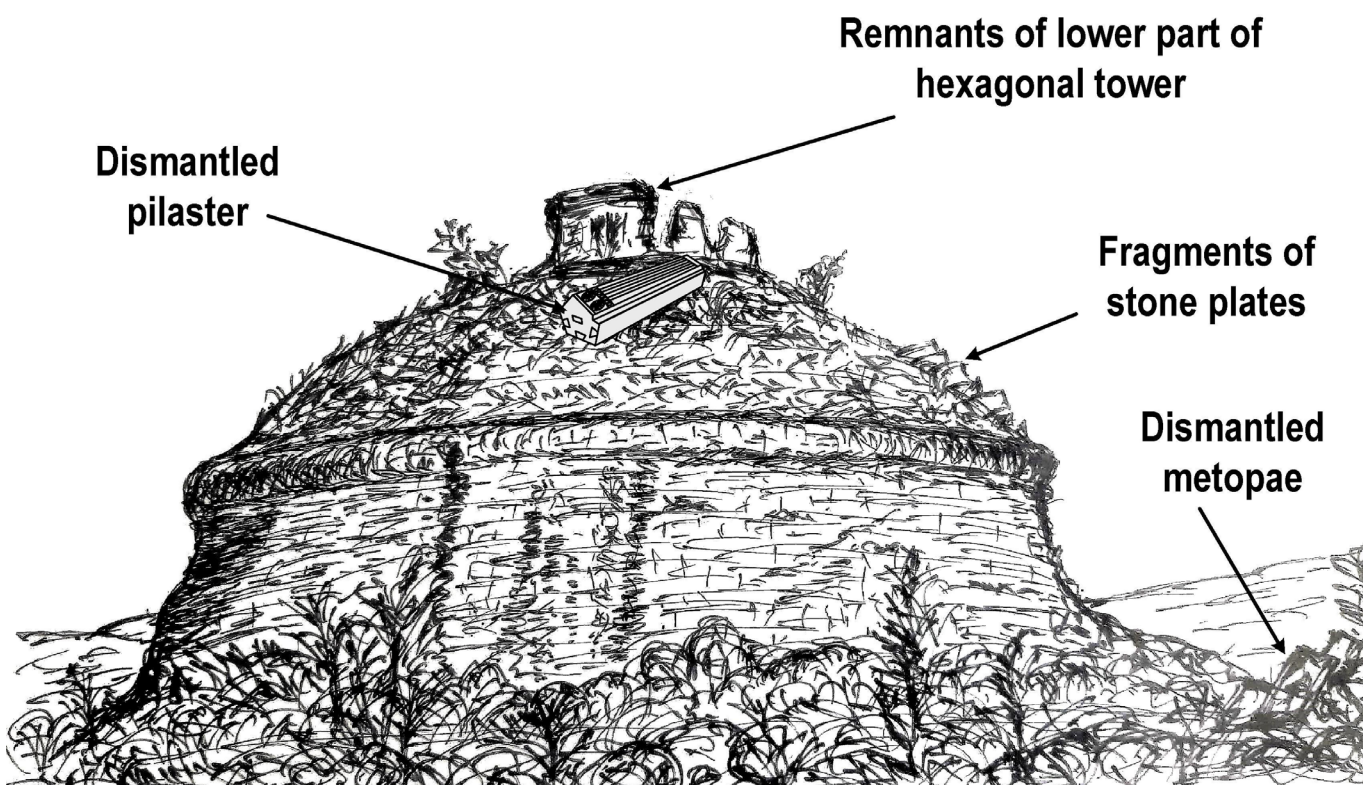


Fig. 9. A possible image of the ruin of the Tropaeum Traiani Monument, as it could have been seen by the generations that preceded the childhood of Georgi Dima (author’s drawing).

with a seasonal „spring” and a „marble-shapped coffin”, as well as some stone slabs described in Wutzer’s book existed. Although they had other origins, functions and destinations, they correspond to components of the hexagonal tower of the Trophy, some existing, exhibited in the museum, others disappeared in time. After the excavations began in 1882, the stones of the circular tower, on which the hexagonal tower was built, were visible. The final reconstruction proposed by Furtwängler in 1903 integrated all three analyzed elements and provided an image from which answers to all questions could have been found.

Paradoxically, both the pilaster and the inscriptions on the ruin were discovered by Tocilescu himself in 1885, but neither he, nor the collaborators Benndorf and Niemann, nor the meticulous Furtwängler or others did not imagine new connections with the information published since decades by Wutzer (in German!).

For all those involved in the reconstruction of the monument, the base of the hexagonal tower was a work of architecture and the piece found - a pilaster - was a vertical element of the monument, while a coffin was a horizontal element with another destination. The doubtful elder Dima was, at that time, the witness with the least competence for science. A spring or a fountain on a Roman monument crest dedicated to Mars and with a shape of coffin was too fancy to be considered.

With today’s reasoning, we can appreciate that the information obtained by Wutzer came from a society dominated by the Ottoman power, on a chain of cultural anthropology, referring to the public memory and language of the populations of Turkish, Tatar, Bulgarian and Romanian populations in Dobrogea. The vision and intercultural memory of generations living for centuries on the lower Danube near the ruin of the triumphal monument was different from the academic one, the perception of the locals being based only on what they had seen on a strange stone ruin.

Perhaps the association of an object related to death, such as a “türbe” mausoleum sarcophagus, with a fountain that was something related to life, allowed the pilaster to be left on the ridge of the ruin, until it was completely covered by deposits.

The new correlations will be able to provide the basis for studies for alternative dating of the hypotheses and steps regarding the mechanism of collapse and / or dismantling of the Tropaeum Traiani monument.

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