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To the memory of my mother Nevis Marin (Orlandini), d. April 20, 2001

The temple of the imperial cult (Augusteum) at Naronā and its statues: interim report

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A brief history of Naronā and previous archaeological work

Ancient Naronā (the modern village of Vid, near Metković in Croatia; figs. 1a-b) was an important Roman colony in the valley of the river Neretva/Naron (Greek)/Naro (Latin) near the E coast of the Adriatic. The first mention of the place comes from Pseudo-Scylax and Theopompus in the 4th c. B.C. By the mid 2nd c. B.C. there was an emporium located at the top of the river delta,¹ on the same spot where the forum of the *colonia* would be built in the last decades of the 1st c. B.C. That location was of strategic importance for communication between the Adriatic and the interior as far inland as the Sava and Danube rivers,² and from the Late Republican period Naronā connected the coast with the interior (the areas of modern Bosnia and Herzegovina) (fig. 2).

Naronā probably received the status of *colonia* from Augustus.³ There is no evidence that it was a Julian colony by dating it before 27 B.C. Naronā was the seat of one of three *conventus* in the province of Dalmatia.⁴ The 'upper town', the older settlement, occupied the terraces of the small hill, and at its foot was the newer 'lower town'. The 'lower town' gained in importance particularly in late antiquity (figs. 3-5). Monuments known include the town walls and towers, first built in the 2nd c. B.C. (the structure of the interior of the walls has not been studied) but exhibiting also a late-antique phase. Close by the walls are some partially excavated villas which preserve some important interior decoration. The cemeteries of the earlier Roman period have not been excavated but many tombstone inscriptions in Latin are preserved.⁵ The fact that not a single inscription in Greek has been found testifies to Italic settlers and a strongly Romanized area.⁶

The first archaeological research was conducted by C. Patsch in the early 20th c.⁷ Modern work began in the 1950s when rescue excavations were conducted by I. Marović and the Split Archaeological Museum in the low-lying area beside the river, an area believed to be the forum. They found fragments of an inscription indicating the possible existence of an Augusteum and part of an arm from an over-lifesize statue.⁸ In the late 1960s and 1970s further excavations by N. Cambi discovered in the forum (in front of where the Augusteum would later be located) a portrait head of Vespasian; he also began work on the Early Christian Basilica of St. Vid and on the city walls (figs. 6a-b, fig. 7).⁹ In 1985 excavations directed by the late F. Buškariol,

- 1 E. Marin, "Les fouilles récentes du Forum et de l'Augusteum de Naronā: découverte de l'emporion hellénistique," *RA* 1999, 179-84.
- 2 G. Alföldy, "Naronā und Umgebung," in E. Marin *et al.*, *Naronā* (Zagreb–Opuzen 1999) 21-26.
- 3 J. J. Wilkes, "Les provinces danubiennes," in C. Lepelley (ed.), *Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire*, 44 av. J.-C. – 260 apr. J.-C., vol. 2: *Approches régionales du Haut-Empire romain* (Paris 1998) 249, 260.
- 4 J. J. Wilkes, *Dalmatia* (London 1969) 165, 172, 174, 176.
- 5 E. Marin, M. Mayer, G. Paci and I. Rodà, *Corpus inscriptionum Naronitanarum I – Erešova kula – Vid* (Macerata–Split 1999).
- 6 Cf. G. Alföldy, *The social history of Rome* (2nd edn., London 1988) 105: "Economic, urban and social conditions like those in Italy ...actually existed only in North Africa, Spain, southern Gaul, the Dalmatian coast ...".
- 7 *Zur Geschichte und Topographie von Naronā* (Vienna 1907).
- 8 I. Marović, "Novi i neobjavljeni nalazi iz Narone," *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* (henceforth *VAHD*) 54 (1952) 153-73 (repr. in Marin *et al.* [supra n.2] 39-62).
- 9 N. Cambi, "Antička Naronā – postanak i razvitak grada prema novijim arheološkim istraživanjima," *Materijali* 15 (Prilep 1976) 57-66; id., "Arhitektura Narone i njezina teritorija u kasnoj antici," *Radovi*