

VESELINKA NINKOVIĆ, *Roman Epigraphic and Anepigraphic Monuments from the Lapidarium in the National Museum in Belgrade* (Antiquity X), Belgrade: National Museum, 2019, 262 p. XLVIII pl. illustrations, map p. 27, parallel text in Serbian and English.

This Xth volume of the Museum series/collection *Antiquity* is published on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the National Museum of Serbia, but there has been no book launch, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.⁸

The author presents the stone monuments of the collection of ancient and medieval epigraphic and anepigraphic monuments, including a brick with an inscription (no. 105), mostly displayed in the big gunpowder storage room (in the Belgrade fortress, in the lower town), some in the Sahat Gate (Clock Gate), in the open space of the Belgrade fort and a few in the permanent exhibition at the National Museum. The monuments were found on the territory of today's Serbia, Albania (4 from *Dyrrachium*–Durrës, Drač) and Macedonia (3 from *Stobi*–present-day Gradska, near Veles, and 1 from Prilep). Due to the previous relocations of the collection to various places (from 1970 until now most of them were located in the Belgrade Fort), it was considered that many monuments were lost. After a careful study of the documentation (old inventory books, archives) and literature (most of them were published a long time ago), the author managed to determine the precise data for 149 items processed in the catalogue, which originate from 34 sites. Of these, 128 are epigraphic and 21 are anepigraphic, belonging to the period from the 1st to the 7th century although most of the monuments belong to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Most of these are found by chance in the context of subsequent constructions.

The catalogue is preceded by a short introduction, followed by information on the history of the collection: the beginning of the collection, manners of acquisition (mainly through donations, less often by purchase), as well as the publications of epigraphic monuments. Only six monuments were discovered as a result of archeological excavations. One of them is a famous dedicatory inscription of Claudius Tiberius Polycharmos Achyrios (no. 100, Stobi) found 1931 in the north-east corner of the *atrium* colonnade in the Central basilica but belonging to the first construction phase of the synagogue (probably built thanks to a donation of Polycharmos in the 1st or 2nd century AD) whose remains were discovered in 1970, below the Christian basilica.

The monuments are of private or public character. Funerary: sarcophagi (nos. 1–7), tombstones (nos. 8–55); votive altars (nos. 56–91); honorary (no. 92–to imperator Philip 244–249 AD); military (no. 93 – list of veterans); then public: milestones (nos. 102–104), and inscriptions concerning various buildings (nos. 94–101). The “building group” encompasses inscriptions of a very different nature: mainly votive (to Hecate–no. 94 inscribed on the architrave beam of the temple, to Jupiter and Hercules – no. 95, to Mother Earth – no. 97), the *cippus* referring to the real building (no. 96 mentioning the *valetudinarium* of the *cohort II Aurelia nova*), no. 98 referring to the porticus, as well a column (no. 101, cut in the middle of the inscription which cannot be restored) reused as a pilaster in the Episcopal Basilica. The column from Stobi (no. 100) is about the donation of a part of the house (*triclinium* and *tetrascoenion*) of Claudius Tiberius Polycharmos Achyrios for the needs of the synagogue, in keeping with his wish. No. 95 mentions a templum, and no. 97 the reconstruction of a ruined temple. Two votive inscriptions were left out of this group: no. 86, which mentions the temple, and no. 72, mentioning the restoration of a temple or other objects

⁸ The book is announced with a few pages on: <http://beogradskonasledje.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/lapidarium.pdf&clen=874609&chunk=true>

relating to the *collegium fabrum*, probably because neither were found in buildings as was the case with the other inscriptions of this group. Instead, an inscription from *Dyrachium* (no. 99) is included, with no indication that it is a building inscription. More suitable and more important for the classification of inscriptions, however, is the content rather than the place of discovery.

Of the 128 inscriptions, 117 are in Latin, which is normal because Upper Moesia belonged to the Western cultural sphere, called Latin. Only 11 inscriptions are in Greek of which 5 were found outside Serbia (4 from Macedonia, one from Albania - Durres), as well 10 fragmentary inscriptions from unknown sites. One of them has a Greek inscription on the front, while on the right side was inscribed an inscription in Latin, of which only the upper parts of four letters remained. There are no bilingual monuments in the collection.

The most numerous are inscriptions made by soldiers due to the proximity of the Danube Limes (*legio IIII Flavia – Antoniniana, felix, Severiana, Alexandrina, Maximiana, Galliena* and *VII Claudia/pia fidelis*) as well as the mining area (Avala, Kosmaj) which were defended by auxiliary detachments: *II Aurelia nova militaria equitata civium Romanorum* (no. 96), *V Lucensium* (no. 73), *XIIX voluntariorum civium Romanorum* (no. 74) and *I Ulpia Pannoniorum milliaria equitata* (no. 74). The catalogue also includes fragmentary inscriptions (nos. 106 -128) with only a few letters remaining, so they cannot be completed, which does not show the benefit of publishing such inscriptions. Most of the monuments of the collection originate from *Singidunum* (Belgrade), the mining area of Kosmaj (*metalla Tricon(i)ensia*) and from *Viminacium* (Kostolac).

It should be noted that the museum had 11 stone monuments originating in Albania, of which three were lost in the whirlwinds of the wars of the second half of the XX.⁹ Only four out of eight monuments of this small Albanian collection-some of which come from archaeological excavations on the walls of *Dyrrachium*, led by the Committee for Antiquities in Drač (Durrës), during the First Balkan War when the Royal Serbian Drač District was formed, which lasted only six months (November 1912 - April 30, 1913) - have been published. It is not known why the two marble reliefs depicting gladiators and a damaged relief with a scene of Pan and two nymphs are omitted from this publication.¹⁰

Only two inscriptions belong to the early Christian period: one is a brick (no. 105) and the other (121) is a fragmentary tombstone from an unknown site with the typical Christian formula *Hic requiescunt*. A sarcophagus (no. 129, dated on the iconographic feature to the second half of the 4th century) depicting Jonah and the Good Shepherd, found at Singidunum, must be added. The only Jewish inscription (no. 100) come from archaeological excavations carried out by the Belgrade Museum before World War II in Stobi-Macedonia.

Although the descriptions are neat and detailed, an attempt to identify iconographic elements and to interpret the scenes is generally lacking, and some identifications are questionable, if not erroneous. At least there should be a question mark over some of them.

I will mention only a few. There are no apparent elements for the identification of figures, on funerary stele no 27, like Heracles and Hermione. The relief is deteriorated, and the attributes are indiscernible. The one on the left leg of the archer, not mentioned by the author, can be an arrow box (quiver), or a club according to Dušanić. The sword (if so,-not seen by prior publishers!) in the left hand of the male figure is not at all an attribute of Heracles, and a sea monster had nothing to do with the

⁹ See J. Mitrović, *Zbornik Narodnog Muzeja*, XXIII-1, 2017, 443, figs. 9-11.

¹⁰ J. Mitrović, figs. 1-3.

cult of Heracles. The female figure could be the deceased for whom the monument was erected. It looks as though she is naked: do the two oblique lines at the level of the thighs indicate the sex?

On the funerary stele no. 33 a spear with a *signa* is in fact a *signum*—a pole mounted by *phalerae* and other signs, topped with a leaf-shaped spear point or an open human hand—*manus* (denoting the oath of loyalty of soldiers), or an animal head as it is on this stele erected for a *signifier* (standard bearer of the *signum* of the Roman legion) *L. Aurelius Andronicus veteranus ex signifero legionis VII Claudiae*.

The basket on the funerary (?) monument is in fact a *situla* (bucket-shaped vessel). The “cylindrical end with a depiction perhaps resembling horns” on the man's head displayed on the left part of fragmented monument no 145 is in fact a basket-like crown called *calathus* or *modius* of Serapis (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I. 20. 13), symbolizing fertility. A very similar object is displayed between two lions on no 137.

The typological classification of monuments is not always precise either. The funerary monument no. 141 had to be defined as a *cippus*. Similarly, monument no. 148, should be defined as an altar rather than a pedestal. Funerary monument no. 54 is actually a typical Roman funeral altar with volute pillows on both sides (the one on the right side is missing), and the rosettes are indeed a decorative, ending part of the pillows between which palm leaves are displayed. The two horizontal rows below are part of the frieze in the upper part of the altar body.

The catalogue ends with a list of abbreviations (pp. 167-168), a bibliography (171-186) and two indexes. The index locorum (p. 187) and general epigraphic index (188-202) follow the N. Vulic's epigraphic tradition covering the names of people, deities, including realia (*Sacerdotes, tribus*), ancient geographical names as well the names of emperors and members of their families, consular dates, military units and ranks (legions, cohorts, fleets), public functions and honors (provincial and city) finishing with building terms, *collegia* and *Varia*. The concordance tables precede the forty-eight illustration plates—the photos of the monuments being of excellent quality.

What is missing is a commentary on the names in the inscriptions as well as an iconographic analysis on the representations in particular on the non-figural elements on the monuments. The author probably considered this unnecessary given that the major part of the collection has been published (with the exception of some epigraphic fragments, nos. 106, 107, 119, 126-128, and some reliefs and altars nos. 133, 140, 143, 147-149). Nevertheless, a summary of, or references to previous opinions on the names and on prior iconographic analysis as well would be very useful. A thematic index was also highly desirable.

The author's greatest contribution is the identification of monuments and the establishment of a detailed museum documentation. Thus, the catalogue remains on the level of a museum guide intended for a fairly professional audience.

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