

ABOUT THE DATING AND HISTORY OF THE URN-SARCOPHAGUS WITH RELICS OF ST. DASSIUS FROM DUROSTORUM (+ 20 NOVEMBER 303 AD)

Georgi ATANASOV*
Zdravko DIMITROV*

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Abstract: *The martyr history of St. Dassius of Durostorum respectively of his relics is in attention of leading European scientists for more than a century. In several articles and monographs in recent years prof. G. Atanasov updated the theme of St. Dassius of Durostorum. New reading of history discussed in this article is based on a remarkable monument. This is the sarcophagus of St. Dassius held today in the Italian city of Ancona and containing an inscription in ancient Greek on the lid: "Here lies the holy martyr Dassius transported by Dorostol".*

The best architectural parallels as decoration motives are in so-called "ornate sarcophagi" with columns and capitals at the corners. They are mainly from Asia Minor, but the closest analogies are outlined in Aphrodisian group - dating from the 2nd c. AD to the late antiquity, but certainly the 3rd-4th century is the peak of this fashion. Therefore, seeing this wonderful performance, we have to assume that it is made in Durostorum following an Asia Minor prototype, or imported from Asia Minor in a Durostorum stonemason atelier.

The other idea of this article is to restore this historic picture of the relics of St. Dassius and the fate of the sarcophagus, in which they were stored. After his execution on November 20th 303, the body of St. Dassius seems to have been placed in a sarcophagus and buried by Christians in Durostorum. After the triumph of Christianity, as in many

* Georgi ATANASOV: Silistra Regional Museum of History; e-mail: geoatal@abv.bg.

* Zdravko DIMITROV: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, National Archaeological Institute – Sofia; e-mail: zdravkodimitrov@abv.bg.

places, a martirium will be erected over the grave of St. Dassius. Given the new policy of the early Christian church at the end of the 4th – beginning of 5th c. AD bishops launch the initiative to put the relics of saints – in confessio under the altar table. Due to Avar invasions at the end of the 6th century AD, the urn-sarcophagus of St. Dassius may have been transferred to Constantinople. Most scientists, who are touching the subject, adopted that the reliquary of St. Dassius was transported from Dorostol directly to the Italian city of Ancona. Prof. Atanasov already rejected that possibility, at least, because at the end of the 6th century AD the Greek language was not well known in Central Italy (Ancona is not far from the capital Rome) where the Latin language completely dominated. Most likely the urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dassius were transported to Ancona at the beginning of the 13th c. AD, after mass looting of Constantinople by the fourth Crusade (April 13th, 1204).

Rezumat: Istoria martiriului Sf. Dassius din Durostorum, respectiv a moaştelor sale, se află în atenţia marilor cercetători europeni de mai bine de un secol. În ultimii ani, prof. G. Atanasov a actualizat, în mai multe articole şi monografii, problematica Sf. Dassius din Durostorum. Noua perspectivă istorică, abordată în acest articol, se bazează pe un monument remarcabil. Este vorba de sarcofagul Sf. Dassius, păstrat astăzi în oraşul italian Ancona şi care are pe capac o inscripţie în greaca veche : „Aici zace Sf. martir Dassius adus de la Dorostol”.

Analogia cea mai potrivită privind motivele decorative sunt așa-numitele „sarcofage bogat ornamentate” cu coloane şi capiteluri în colţuri. Ele provin, în mare parte, din Asia Mică, dar analogiile cele mai apropiate sunt evidenţiate de grupul aphrodisian - datând din secolul al II-lea p.Chr. până la sfârşitul Antichităţii; în mod cert perioada de apogeu a acestei mode sunt secolele III-IV p.Chr. Aşadar, privind această deosebită realizare artistică, presupunem că a fost realizată în Durostorum, după un prototip al monumentelor Asiei Mici, sau importată din Asia Mică de un atelier sculptural din Durostorum.

Totodată articolul îşi propune să refacă istoria moaştelor Sf. Dassius şi soarta sarcofagului în care au fost păstrate. După martiriul său din 20 noiembrie 303, se pare că trupul Sf. Dassius a fost depus într-un sarcofag de către creştinii din Durostorum. După triumful creştinătăţii, așa cum s-a întâmplat în multe locuri, a fost ridicat un martirium deasupra mormântului Sf. Dassius. Având în vedere noua politică a bisericii creştine de la sfârşitul secolului IV – începutul secolului V p.Chr., episcopii au luat iniţiativa de a pune moaştele sfinţilor – în confessio sub masa altarului. În urma invaziilor avare de la sfârşitul secolului al VI-lea p.Chr., urna-sarcofag a Sf. Dassius se pare că a fost transferată la Constantinopol. Majoritatea cercetătorilor care tratează această temă adoptă ipoteza conform căreia racla Sf. Dassius a fost transportată de la Dorostol direct către oraşul italian Ancona. Prof. Atanasov a respins deja această posibilitate, măcar din cauza faptului că, la sfârşitul secolului al VI-lea, limba greacă nu era bine cunoscută în Italia Centrală (Ancona nu se află departe de capitala Roma), unde limba latină domina total. Cel mai probabil, urna-sarcofag cu moaştele Sf. Dassius a fost dusă la Ancona la începutul secolului al XIII-lea p.Chr., după jefuirea Constantinopolului în timpul celei de-a patra Cruciade (13 aprilie 1204).

The martyrdom history of St. Dassius from Durostorum, respectively, of his relics is to the attention of leading European scientists for more than a

century¹. The many dozens of articles in encyclopedic dictionaries of Christian history and archeology must be added to this². 25 years ago, Prof. R. Pillinger published a monograph summarizing the achievements of several generations of historians, theologians and archaeologists, which represented a new beginning³. I tried to update the theme for the life of St. Dassius in several articles and monographs in recent years to which there is something to add, and this article is just another attempt in this direction⁴.

Indeed there are many written sources for the legendary life-story and martyrdom of St. Dassius. Chronologically, the earliest and most extensive is about the saint's life, written in Greek language and stored in the National Library in Paris⁵. Very short versions of the biography are included in Constantinople Patriarchate *Synaxarion* from the 10th century and also at the beginning of the 11th century in Basil the Second's *Menologion*⁶. There are other authentic sources such as the Syrian martyrs' calendar from Edessa, edited in 370 (according to other sources – at the beginning of the 5th century) and the a little later conceived Martyr story of Jerome⁷.

In conclusion, we point out a remarkable monument, which undoubtedly is the inscription on St. Dassius' sarcophagus from the 6th century (?), preserved and stored today in the Italian city Ancona⁸. Naturally, most attention and most studies have been devoted to the saint's legendary life-story, entitled "*The Acts of St. Dassius*"⁹. There is a discussion whether the story is real, but the above discussed urn-sarcophagus of St. Dassius, with accompanying inscription held today at the museum Diotseziano, near Ancona cathedral, is indirect evidence of its truth.

The "urn-sarcophagus" was crushed in the Middle Ages, but was later rebuilt, measuring 1.02 m length, 0.50 m width and 0.44 m height (**Fig. 1**). This unique monument is made from pale yellow marble, with four Corinthian columns and capitals, placed at the corners and with the crosses on the two long sides. The cover is of another type (gray) marble. Its form is roof-like constructed, divided on two gables and four corner *acroteria*. On the front side of the roof, over the tiles, three Latin crosses are sculptured, and between them a very clear Greek text is engraved that researchers unanimously read:

¹ CUMONT 1897, p. 5-16; DELEHAYE 1912, p. 265-268; DELEHAYE 1933, p. 248-249; DELEHAYE 1927, p. 190; ZEILLER 1918, p. 52-53, 110-117; BRANIȘTE 1976, p. 85-95; POPESCU 1989, p. 72-75; MERCATI 1936; MARTINOV 1863, p. 284; TÂPCOVA-ZAIMOVA 1960, p. 705-708; TÂPCOVA-ZAIMOVA 1997, p. 109 – 114; TÂPCOVA-ZAIMOVA 2004, p. 427- 433; RĂMUREANU 1982, p. 241-255; BARNEA 1979, p. 9-10.

² LECLERCQ 1920 (=DACL, 4,1), p. 272-283; AMORE 1950, col. 1228-1229; KASTER 1974 : (=LCL, 6), 34; *Dix mille saints* 1991, p. 140.

³ PILLINGER 1988, p. 51-52, not. 149.

⁴ ATANASOV 2000, p. 8-16; ATANASOV 2007; ATANASOV 2008, p. 415-438; ATANASOV 2008, p. 50-52; ATANASOV 2011, p. 11-13.

⁵ CUMONT 1897, p. 5-16; PILLINGER 1988, p. 8-11.

⁶ DELEHAYE 1902, p. 241. *Menologium Graecorum Basilii Porphyrogeniti* 1894, p. 169.

⁷ DELEHAYE & QUINTIN 1931, p. 418, 540, 561;

⁸ CUMONT 1908, p. 369-381.

⁹ CUMONT 1897, p. 15-16; PILLINGER 1988, p. 8-11.

+ENTA(v)ΘAKATAKEI TAIΟΑΓΙΟCMARTYC ΔACIOCENEXΘEIC
 ΑΠΟΔωΡΟCΤΟΛΟυ (=ένταῦθα κατάκειται ὁ ἅγιος Δάσιος ἐνεχθεὶς ἀπὸ
 Δωροστόλου) - On this place lies the holy martyr Dassius, brought from Dorostol
 (Fig. 5)¹⁰.

The attempts to see this original monument from Late Antiquity (4th-6th century) as a later forgery of the fifteenth century have been refuted a long time ago. Generally, the *Ravenna sarcophagi* from the 5th-6th century have been seen as analogies, which in combination with epigraphic features of the inscription (Greek language form "*Dorostol*" actually is characteristic for the 6th century) lead to the conclusion that this "Urn-sarcophagus" was made in the 6th c. AD or earlier.

Certainly, however, the bed of pale yellow marble "urn-sarcophagus" differs from the marble and workmanship of the cover, implying different chronology for both parts. We have to pay special attention to the decoration of the bed of the sarcophagus and in particular to the only decorative element – spiral fluted columns (*tordierte Saeule* – *ger.*). For our lands – Thrace, Moesia and Dacia in Late Antiquity, so-called "*tordierte Saeule*" (spiral fluted columns) are not at all typical. From Roman times only two examples are known to us – from Ulpia Oescus and Marcianopolis. They are result of working with import stone materials – for example; in Marcianopolis it is sure the kind of Proconnesian marble.

Therefore, research on the production of the fluted columns in Roman Thrace is a complicated problem. There are, however, two early Byzantine details, which at first glance can be given as analogies for St. Dassius' "Urn-Sarcophagus" columns.

There are two columns of altar tables, one probably from Ulpia Ratiaria, stored in Vidin Museum and another, from Vratsa Museum, probably from Lyutibrod region. Dating from the 5th - beginning of the 6th century, their construction is fundamentally different from the wonderful spiral fluted columns on the "urn-sarcophagus" from Durostorum.

But, if we look at the ornate sarcophagi with columns on the corners - the so-called "architectonically formed sarcophagi" - there are few series that are ornate like the monument from Durostorum.

They are mainly from Asia Minor, but the closest analogies are outlined in the so-called "Aphrodisian group", dating from the end of the 1st / beginning of the 2nd century to the Late antiquity, but definitely with the peak of this fashion in the 3rd-4th century. A number of them are stored in a variety of collections from around the world¹¹. Therefore, seeing this wonderful performance, we must assume that it is made in Durostorum, following the Asia Minor prototype, or it is imported from Asia Minor to Durostorum from an Asia Minor stone-workshop.

Probably, our example imitates precisely the Aphrodisian group sarcophagi or those monuments of Pamphylia – from Perge, for example (Fig. 2)¹².

¹⁰ CUMONT 1908, p. 369-381; LECLERCQ 1920 (=DACL, IV, 1), p. 281; PILLINGER 1988, p. 51-52, not.149.

¹¹ KOCH & SICHTERMANN 1982, p. 503-504, 527-531.

¹² KOCH & SICHTERMANN 1982, Nr. 487; preserved in Antalya and originated from Perge.

The problem with analogies and with establishing some stylistic features that help dating the Dorostolean "Urn-sarcophagus" is tricky but not impossible to solve. Sarcophagi with architectonical vision were made in Roman Imperial Era mostly in four major areas of the Empire – Asia Minor, Hellas (but not limited to Attic production), Rome and Northern Italian area and Dalmatia.

Many architectonically made sarcophagi were found in the Imperial capital Rome and in Italy, but most of them are probably works of Anatolian masters.

An important fact is that, as a complete product, combined with the analysis of architectural and decorative reliefs, we have found three very precise parallels for the "Urn-Sarcophagus".

These are urns-sarcophagi and sarcophagi with beds designed architectonically with spiral fluted Corinthian columns and covers, made with acroteria on the corners, adorned with palmettos without bandage on the lower ends of leaves or additional floral motifs. The earliest, but the most accurate analogy is the monument at Vatican, dated to Late Flavian time: the end of the first / beginning of the second century.

The other two examples are from Copenhagen (**Fig. 3**) (but the monument found in Rome probably came from Salona in Dalmatia)¹³ and Antalya (originating from Perge – see fig. 2). They are already versions of early Roman originals and were produced in Antonine, Severan and Late Roman Imperial era: 3rd / 4th century.

Regarding the stylistic features and the carving of the bed, we have good reason to date it within the late Roman era: 3rd – 4th c. AD. Moreover, the crosses on the sides of the bed look like they are inscribed later and this could be the result of reuse of the marble bed in the Early Christian era.

And about the analysis of the cover of the urn-sarcophagus it is obvious that it is a later construction, after the original coverage has been damaged or broken apart. We have noted above that it was carved from a different type of marble, because the sculptor did not have Proconnesian or other high quality marble. According to the inscription and crosses, it can be dated within the 4th c. AD. The crosses over the cover are in relief and they are undoubtedly carved with the whole construction of the eaves. But it is important to mention that an architectural decorative pattern copied from a very early Roman era, which, unlike the bed, this time is unmistakable as chronology and production area.

The acroteria, decorated with palmettos without bandage on the lower parts, are characteristic for Asia Minor sarcophagi from the Hadrianic era. The most representative examples are in Smyrna (Izmir) and especially in the large group of Anatolian sarcophagi from Thessaloniki, dated back to the 30's of the second century AD (**Fig. 4**)¹⁴.

Once the sarcophagus was published by F. Cumont in 1908, a discussion began, about its origin and the authenticity of the Saint's relics, which did not abate to this day. Most doubts are based on the confused description of Giuliano Saracini, issued around the year 1671, "Historical news from the city of Ancona",

¹³ KOCH & SICHTERMANN 1982, Nr. 350.

¹⁴ KOCH & SICHTERMANN 1982, Nr. 377-379.

which is full of mistakes and contradictions¹⁵.

Regarding the ancient times of the city of Ancona, it presents a Latin epitaph on a small sarcophagus, which in 1223/4 was placed in the church "St. Pellegrin" and, in particular, in the sarcophagus with the relics of St. Pellegrino and St. Flavian and some others. According to the author: "with Epitaph laid the body of St. Darius martyr, who was a soldier. In Ancona, it is known, but not known where and when". The author rightly understands that on the cover of the sarcophagus is a Greek inscription, but the translation of the Latin "Hic jacet Sanctus Martyr Darius [cosi] allatus a Dorostolo" is too far from the truth. Indeed, this inscription is copied and translated at the end of the fifteenth century by the famous humanist Antonio Constanzo¹⁶. He said that he saw the inscription on the sarcophagus in the church "San Salvatore" but, unlike Giuliano Saracini he translates it from Greek into Latin more accurately. Except the illusion that Dorostol is a person's name, not the city, this prevents them to make necessary historical connections and conclusions.

New evidence that after 1224 the urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dassius was stored in a large sarcophagus is a passage from the story of martyr St. Pellegrino. It states that the memory of the saint was forgotten, but during an outbreak of plague in Ancona in 1456, the sarcophagus in the church "San Salvatore" was opened. The relics of St. Pellegrino were found inside, together with the relics of St. Dassius, St. Herculaneum, St. Martin and St. Fabio from Ancona. Thanks to them, many people received salvation, which among other things led to the resurrection of the memory of St. Pellegrino. We do not exclude the possibility that this particular case is the reason for renaming the church "San Salvatore" in "St. Pellegrino". Based on these sources, we can define the following picture.

After his execution on November 20th 303, the body of St. Dassius seems to have been placed in a coffin and buried by Christians in Durostorum. It is known that Roman law regulates the right of sepulcher in regulated cemeteries outside the city walls for everyone, even for criminals¹⁷. After the triumph of Christianity (Edict of Milan in 313), as in many places, over the grave of St. Dassius a martirium will be erected. It is probably similar to the *martirium* found a decade ago (under the building of what is today the Language School in Silistra) of other three Dorostolean martyrs – St. Maximus, St. Dada and St. Quintilian¹⁸.

After major destruction in Durostorum during the Gothic invasions in the late 4th century life was fading and it looks that the martiriums were desecrated and destroyed. In the 5th century Durostorum recovered, but planning is already closely associated with the Christian theory and practice¹⁹. The city established itself as the episcopal chair and a cathedral was built and some new churches²⁰. However at the end of 4th - beginning of the 5th century the official position of the

¹⁵ MERCATI 1936, p. 318-319.

¹⁶ MERCATI 1936, p. 318-319.

¹⁷ DELEHAYE 1936, p. 48.

¹⁸ ATANASOV 2002, p. 55-65; ATANASOV 2007, p. 49-55.

¹⁹ DRAGON 1977, p. 5.

²⁰ ATANASOV 2007, p. 96 – 107.

church to the relics in martiriums around the cemeteries outside the city walls was changed. It was registered in rule Nr. 94 from the Local Council at Carthage in AD 419, where it is recommended that the bishops needs to focus the worship and veneration of relics in urban churches²¹. Even calling that the martiriums not containing relics of the martyrs proved to be destroyed. Bishops themselves have an interest in martiriums with scattered relics of martyrs to be concentrated in the temples. Furthermore, by the consecration of the church it is required in them to place relics of saints – in *confessio* under the altar table or in reliquaries in front of the *kanzel*²². Precisely as an echo of this new church policy the constructed or reused, urn-reliquary (probably “sarcophagus”) can be explained, where the remains of St. Dassius were reburied, removed from the sarcophagus in the primary grave-martirium. Definitely, according to the shape, the urn repeats the forms of a sarcophagus, but it is not a sarcophagus in the full sense of the primary burial, because the dimension in length is only 1.02 meters.

The construction style of the earlier lower half of the urn-sarcophagus, with the characteristic spiral-fluted columns, suggests that the removal of relics from the suburban martirium to the urban church and their placing in the urn-reliquary happened at the end of the 4th or early 5th century AD. It is remarkable that at the end of the 4th century when, considering the style, we can date the reliquary, the first bishop of Durostorum – Mercurianus²³ was enthroned. But, we do not exclude the possibility, however, that the small urn-sarcophagus has been made as a small version of the original sarcophagus in which, in the early 4th century, the body of St. Dassius was buried.

On the question about the martirium of Saints Maximus, Dada and Quintilianus we share the idea that, by the huge Avar invasions at the end of the 6th century, many Christians left Durostorum and concerned themselves with the most valuable – the relics of saints. Then, the bishop of the city, Dulcisimus, emigrated to Odessos. For this we have as evidence his gravestone monument with epitaph, found in Varna²⁴. We have already indicated that it was probably during these dramatic events when the relics of St. Maximus, Dada, and Quintilian were transferred to Constantinople. It seems that just then the urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dassius left Durostorum-Dorostol. It is possible that, during these events and transportation operations of the fragile sarcophagus, the lid of the urn was crushed and has been replaced with a new one, on which the text is engraved and dated precisely to the 6th c. AD. Otherwise, it would not be logical for the text: *ἐνταῦθα κατέκειται ὁ ἅγιος μάρτυς Δάσιος ἐνεχθεὶς ἀπὸ Δωροστόλου* - “Here lies the holy martyr Dassius, brought from Dorostol” to be written at a time when the relics were in Durostorum.

Indeed, in the temple of which city was the urn with the relics, covered with a new lid exposed, and where was this text indented, after leaving Dorostol

²¹ ALIVIZATOU 1997, p. 353-354; STEFANOV 1998, p. 307-308. About the relics of the saints in the early Christian churches see: DRAGON 1977, p. 23 – 24; ENCHEV 2009, p. 389-393

²² DACL 1925 col., 2503-2508; DACL 1948, col. 2294-2328, 3162-3165.

²³ ATANASOV 2007, p. 82-85.

²⁴ ATANASOV 2007, p. 88.

around the end of the 6th or in the 7th century?

Most researchers, interested in this topic, assume that from Dorostol the relics were transported directly to the Italian city Ancona. I have already rejected that option at least because, at the end of the 6th century, Greek language was not well known in Central Italy (Ancona is not far from the capital, Rome) where the Latin language completely dominated. This implies that they were stuck in a city where in the 6th-7th centuries the Greek language dominated. So, just at the end of the sixth century in the Eastern Roman Empire, respectively, in Constantinople, Greek language started prevailing over Latin. This process covers even the official documentation to be finalized after 629, with the edict of Emperor Heraclius (610-641)²⁵. So, we assumed that, like the relics of St. St. Maximus, Dada, and Quintilianus, which in 6th c. AD were carried over from Dorostol to a Constantinople church in the quarter "Viglention", a similar fate also had the urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dassius.

Evidence of this could be the style of drafting over the new cover of the urn-sarcophagus, which is entirely up to Asia Minor variations from the Roman era, so well known and intentionally copied, especially in the new capital of the Empire, Constantinople. Accordingly the inscription has been written: *ἐνταῦθα κατὰκειται ὁ ἅγιος μάρτυς Δάσιος ἐνεχθεὶς ἀπὸ Δωροστόλου* – "on this place lies the holy martyr Dassius, brought from Dorostol". Another proof of this is the story of the relics of St. Dassius in the Middle Ages. They are registered for the first time since the beginning, in Ancona in the 13th century²⁶. Just at the beginning of the 13th century the Crusaders conquered Constantinople (April 13th 1204), the entire European and part of the Asia Minor city of Byzantium, subjecting it to mass looting. With the greatest fury knights took away Christian relics from the temples and mainly the relics of saints. Most of the them they sent to Western Europe, whose spiritual life was under the direct jurisdiction of the Pope in Rome. Knowing the close relationship between Ancona and Rome (Ancona lies in the territory directly administrated by the Pope), it is not excluded that as a result of the Fourth Crusade relics of St. Dassius went from looted Constantinople to Ancona.

Initially, it seems they were in the church "San Salvatore". This will be done around 1213-1214, when it was reconstructed with a new sculptural decoration²⁷. According to documents, later, in 1223/4, the late antique urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dassius will be placed in the large marble sarcophagus with the relics of local saints St. Pellegrino the Anconian, St. Martin, St. Flavian and others.

The memory of these relics and St. Dassius was almost wiped out in 1456 when, seeking rescue remedy for the plague, the citizens of Ancona opened the casket with the relics, which appear as miraculous and healing. Soon after, the urn of St. Dassius was seen by erudite Antonio Constanzo, who managed to read the Greek inscription on the lid.

It is not clear what happened to the urn and the relics of St. Dassius, since in 1456 the great sarcophagus was opened – whether they returned together in the

²⁵ OSTROGORSKI 1988, p. 164-165.

²⁶ MERCATI 1936, p. 323.

²⁷ MERCATI 1936, p. 323-325.

sarcophagus with the relics of St. Martin and St. Pellegrino or the urn is popped out in the church. According to Giuliano Saracens, in 1675 the urn with the relics was still placed in the great sarcophagus, but then how sees and reads Antonio Costanzo in about 1470 the Greek text?! The general question of when St. Dassius' relics were removed from the original urn-sarcophagus still persists.

According to a text in 1804 the relics of the Dorostolean martyr were still kept in "San Pellegrino" church. In 1848 the urn-sarcophagus of St. Dassius was brought from the church "St. Pellegrino" to Ancona Cathedral "St. Chiriach", and later exhibited in the church museum Diotseziano which holds it to the present day²⁸.

Some scientists are willing to admit that the marble urn-sarcophagus with the Greek text epitaph: *ἐνταῦθα κατάκειται ὁ ἅγιος μάρτυς Δάσιος ἐνεχθεὶς ἀπὸ Δωροστόλου* – "on this place lies the holy martyr Dassius, brought from Dorostol" is an original monument, made in Durostorum, but they put the question whether St. Dassius' relics actually came to Ancona with this reliquary. But if in the urn-sarcophagus there were no relics, it would hardly be placed in the large sarcophagus with the relics of the Ancona martyrs. However Giuliano Saracens in 1675 definitely says unambiguously that: "... in the sarcophagus, according to an old tradition laid the body of St. Darius (Dassius – note by the authors), martyr who was a soldier – killed in Dorostol"²⁹.

In conclusion, we will mention a few words about the relics of St. Dassius in nowadays Silistran cathedral "St. St. Peter and Paul". In front of an Altar screen, today the right humerus is exposed in a new marble reliquary. In 2003, it was taken from the original urn-sarcophagus in Ancona. It was brought as a godsend to Silistra by Pope John-Paul the Second, during his visit to Bulgaria in May 2003.

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²⁸ CUMONT 1908, p. 369-371; MERCATI 1936, p. 318-320, fig. 1.

²⁹ MERCATI 1936, p. 318, not. 3.

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Fig. 1 - Urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dassius.



Fig. 2 - Asia Minor sarcophagus – Antalya Museum, example from Perge (photo: Koch & Sichtermann 1982).



Fig. 3 - Sarcophagus from Copenhagen collection
(photo: Koch & Sichtermann 1982).



Fig. 4 - Sarcophagus from the group of Thessaloniki, Hadrianic era
(photo: Koch & Sichtermann 1982).

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ΤΑΘΑΚΑΤΑΚΕΙ ΤΑΙΟΑΓΙΟΣΜΑΡΤΥΣ ΔΑΣΙΟCΕΝΕΧΘΕΙC
 ΑΠΟΔΩΡΟΣΤΟΛΩ + (=ένταῦθα κατάκειται ὁ ἅγιος Δάσιος ἐνεχθεὶς ἀπὸ
 Δωροστόλου)

Fig. 5 - Greek inscription on the sarcophagus of St. Dassius
(According to Fr. Cumont and R. Pillinger).