

ROMAN FUNERARY STELAI FROM MOESIA INFERIOR AND THEIR REUSE AS BUILDING MATERIAL: THE SACIDAVA CASE

Cristina-Georgeta ALEXANDRESCU*

Cuvinte-cheie: *stele funerare, spolia, Sacidava, Moesia Inferior, centurio.*

Keywords: *funerary stelai, spolia, Sacidava, Moesia Inferior, centurio.*

Rezumat: *Multe dintre monumentele epigrafice și sculpturale de la Sacidava (Muzait/Dunăreni, com. Aliman, jud. Constanța), databile în perioada romană timpurie, au fost descoperite în utilizare secundară, ca materiale de construcție, în zidurile incintei romane târzii. Acesta a fost și cazul stelei pentru Antonia, fiica veteranului C. Antonius. Descoperirea a fost făcută acum mai bine de un deceniu și se regăsește în corpus-ul epigrafic al sitului (ISM IV 193). În această contribuție sunt prezentate observațiile făcute în 2016 asupra materialului litic folosit, asupra decorului monumentului și inscripției. Stela funerară se evidențiază între celelalte epitafuri cunoscute de la Sacidava și din partea de nord a Moesiei inferioare prin forma și încadrarea sa cronologică, fiind una dintre cele mai timpurii. Analiza stelei permite și unele observații privind rețelele militare și comerciale din perioada romană timpurie pe limes și în interiorul provinciei. În plus, este remarcată importanța cercetării holistice (inclusiv a contextului și modului reutilizării lor) a inscripțiilor, sculpturilor și elementelor de decor arhitectural, chiar dacă fragmentare și la prima impresie nespectaculoase, în special pentru situri antice precum cele din nordul Moesiei inferioare, unde dovezile arheologice din perioada romană timpurie sunt încă destul de puține.*

Abstract: *Many of the epigraphic and sculptural monuments from Sacidava (Muzait/Dunăreni, Aliman comm., Constanța County), datable to the early Roman period, were discovered in secondary use as building materials in the walls of the late Roman fortification. This was also the case with the stela for Antonia, daughter of veteran C. Antonius. The discovery was made over a decade ago and is included in epigraphic corpus of the site (ISM IV 193). This contribution presents observations made in 2016 on the lithic material used, the decoration of the monument and the inscription. The funerary stela stands out among other known epitaphs from Sacidava and the*

* Cristina-Georgeta ALEXANDRESCU: Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan", Bucharest; cgalexandrescu@gmail.com.

northern part of Moesia Inferior due to its shape and chronological setting, being one of the earliest of its kind. The analysis of this stele also allows some observations on aspects related to the military and commercial networks in the early Roman period along the limes and within the province. In addition, the importance of holistic research on inscriptions, sculptures and architectural decoration elements (including their context and mode of re-use), even if fragmentary and, at first impression, unspectacular, is noted, especially for ancient sites such as those in northern Moesia Inferior, where archaeological evidence from the early Roman period is still quite scarce.

The gravestones from Moesia Inferior have been the subject of investigation of dedicated monographic studies¹. Little concern was given to the details of making, ornaments and iconography, sometimes due to the insufficient illustration available or to the lack of access to the monuments themselves. One strong research focus point was (and still is) the epigraphic evidence. The finding context and especially the information on how and where the eventual reuse happened were seldom recorded and might thus be forever lost.

One relatively recent found and published gravestone, reused as building material in the Late Roman fortification from *Sacidava* (Muzait, Constanța County), allows some general observations on several early Roman stelai from the northern part of the province². Furthermore, *Sacidava* is one of centers on the Danube that extensively used spolia for the construction of the Late Roman fortification that is still visible. Even if this is seemingly a common practice, and the chronological timeline looks similar, each fortification is different in the way the building material was collected and, in cases where spolia were used, how the construction was made. They can be examined thoroughly only based on proper documentation of still existing spolia and the exhaustive publication of the monuments. Supply, availability of suitable building materials in the region, and demand, the road network together with the transport possibility on the Danube are all factors that need to be considered. In the near future, in *Sacidava*, a systematic documentation is mandatory with regard to the still standing towers and curtains, as well as to the pieces laying around the site.

A further point of interest is the lithic material (marble or limestone) and the fact that many of the large monuments seem to have been walled in with only minor cuttings. Thus it is possible to highlight the fact that not only the materials were easily available, but also the manpower for handling the heavy and large pieces. The way of building towers shows a careful ashlar masonry, partially layered, and the obvious selection of slabs and ashlar for this purpose. The curtains and other uncovered areas are no longer visible due to high vegetation. At present, it is not possible to differentiate between the use of stelai, altars, architecture etc. for specific areas (e.g. corner layout, foundations etc.) or materials (marble or limestone), or if votive or funerary monuments of early or Late Roman date are more present in one particular part of the building. These

¹ CONRAD 2004 (with literature); ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2007; ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2008-2009.

² The present research was carried out within the project PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-1031.

are matters to be investigated within the necessary architectural documentation and study of this fortification³.

The funerary stele of Antonia

Within a short time, the Antonia's stele was published by M. Bărbulescu, L. Buzoianu and T. Cliante in this journal⁴, and, a little later, by E. Popescu, in the fourth volume of the *ISM-Series*⁵. During a documentation trip to *Sacidava* in April 2016⁶, the stele, reported in the latest publication to have been brought to the museum in Constanța, was seen and documented *in situ*, enabling several supplementary observations on the epitaph and depictions.

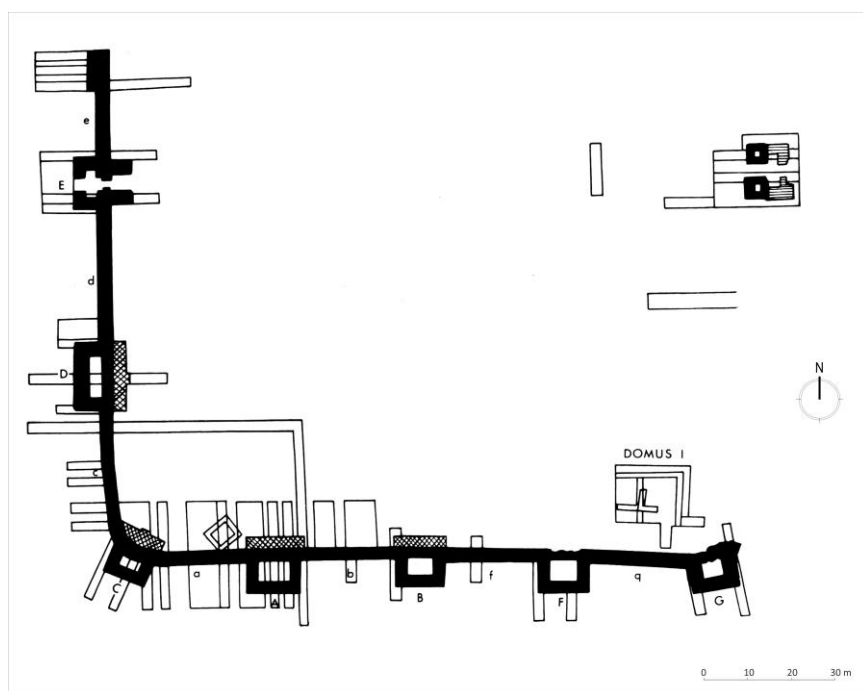


Fig. 1 General plan of the excavated areas (stage 1978) of the fortification in Muzait/Dunăreni (the author, after SCORPAN 1977b, fig. 1 and SCORPAN 1980, fig. 52).

³ The observations made by M. Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu (MĂRGINEANU-CÂRSTOIU & APOSTOL 2015) and her team and by M. Zahariade (ZAHARIADE & ALEXANDRESCU 2011) in the fortification from *Halmyris* (Murighiol, Tulcea county) remain – for the region of interest here – an eloquent example for the benefit of thorough documentation of finding conditions of spolia.

⁴ BĂRBULESCU, BUZOIANU & CLIANTE 2011, p. 142-145.

⁵ ISM IV 193.

⁶ The visit was made within the project PNII-RU-TE-2014-4-2063.

The excavations made by C. Scorpan have investigated partially the southern and western fronts of the fortification, as well as the assumed gate on the E side (Fig. 1)⁷. For those areas, he published several plans and drawings (some without scale unfortunately), but also photographs. The latter enable observations on the great damage suffered by the uncovered fortification walls since the 1970s⁸. The stele of interest was used as building material in the SW corner of the Tower B (in C. Scorpan's conventional designation), being still walled in and thus with its lower part (about 42 cm) covered by the blocks of the upper layer of blocks (Fig. 2/a-b).

The slab measures 213 cm in height, is 94 cm wide and 33.5-34 cm thick. Its width is slightly irregular and it was measured only in the accessible upper parts. It is carved in a very hard and compact white limestone, most probably the local material (Sarmatian limestone from southern Dobruja) used for several of the epigraphic monuments known from *Sacidava*⁹. There are some pores and moulds in the stone structure visible on the surface and on the slab's top.



Fig. 2/a-b Tower B, view from the South (a) and from the West (b) - April 2016 (photos by the author).

The tall stele (Fig. 3) is carved superficially, especially in the case of decoration and frames of different fields. Two rectangular fields are visible, one of about 89 x 60/57 cm (the upper field, bearing the deep carved pseudo-pediment and different ornaments) and one of 83 x 67/68.5 m (the field bearing inscription). The field with inscription has a double frame. The inscription is carved deeper than the decoration, but is slightly irregular in terms of letter shape and dimensions. Below the inscription's field seems to follow a further framed area, which it is not clear if it took the remaining height of the stele. The inscription

⁷ On the archaeological research in *Sacidava*, see the literature mentioned in BĂRBULESCU, BUZOIANU & CLIANTE 2011, p. 142 and 145; ISM IV, p. 298; ȚENȚEA *et alii* 2019, p. 17-20; see also DIACONU 1980. Since 2014, the site has been subject to a systematic archaeological project: COLESNIUC *et alii* 2020.

⁸ Particularly significant are the photographs published in SCORPAN 1977b, to be compared to Fig. 2/a-b.

⁹ The stele was not sampled for petrographic analysis during our visit. Dr. A. Baltres (Institutul Geologic al României) kindly offered the information on the other monuments from *Sacidava*, evaluated in the museum in Constanța in the 90s.

continued with at least one row in this third field. The upper border is 5 cm wide, those between the fields are of about 6 cm. The frames and borders are very narrow and undecorated.

On the upper border, above the pseudo-pediment, a halfround item is incised. This could be a schematic central acroterion. Within the pseudo-pediment, there is depicted a 26 cm high mirror with simple handle, with rounded end and a disc of 16 cm in diameter. Right and left of the pseudo-pediment, there are groups containing one rosette, each incised in a circle of 12 cm in diameter, schematically rendered (although not identical), and one bracelet/torque (about 12 cm in diameter), with triangular endings. Those are placed on the laterals of 4-5 cm wide lines, which can be depictions of either ribbons or staffs. Thus the bracelets/neck rings are placed in the upper corners of the stele.



Fig. 3 Stele of Antonia, *in situ* April 2016 (photo by the author).



Fig. 4 Stele of Antonia, detail of the upper part (photo by the author).

The inscription (Fig. 5)

In our reading, the visible lines of the inscription are as follows:

DIS MANIBVS
 ANTONIAE F
 C ANTONIVS (centurio) VET
 PATER PIENISSIME
 5 COELIA FIRMINA
 MATER
 VIX AN[

Dis Manibus / Antoniae filiae) / C(aius) Antonius (centurio) vet(eranus) / pater pientissim(us) e(t) / Coelia Firmina / mater/ vix(it) an(nos) [

The dimensions of letters: in the first two lines they are 8.5 cm high, in the third line, with the name of the father, the first letter has the same height, the following are only 7.5 cm, while the last one, the T, measures 9 cm. In the next four lines the height varies between 6.5 and 7 cm. The ,E' at the end of line 4 is only 3 cm high.

Hederae distinguentes are used to separate the words in lines 2-5. Due to the not very deep carving, the prior editors missed in line 3 the siglum following after the hedera placed after the father's name, pointing out the veteran as *centurio*.

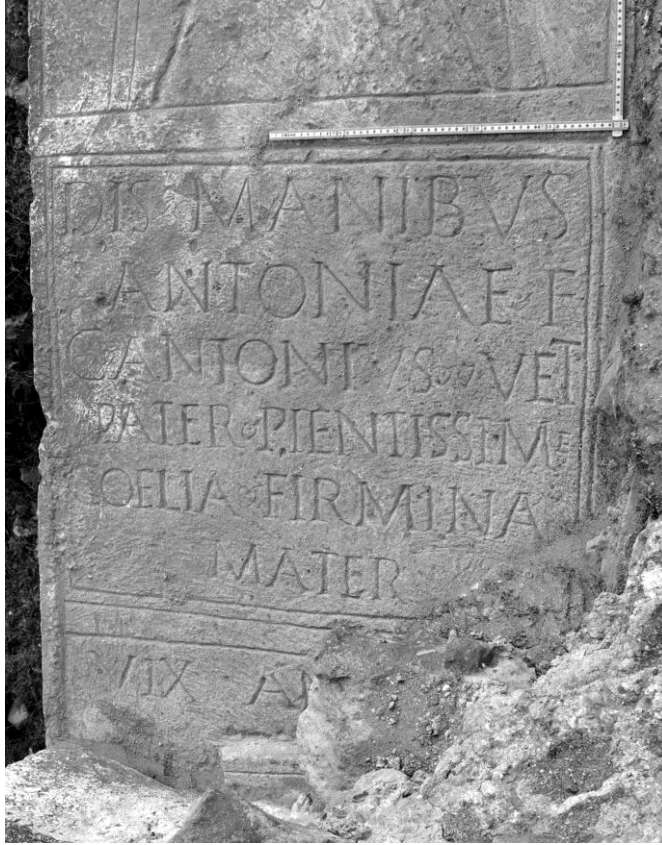


Fig. 5 Stele of Antonia, detail with the inscription (photo by the author).

Most probably, the stele is entirely preserved and the not visible part of the last line would only mention the age of the deceased.

Compared to the upper field of the monument and the irregular and oddly drawn up frame lines, the inscription is skilfully carved, even if not very deep, and the layout of the rows and placement of words are quite precise. Thus, in line 6, there is no reason to assume further words¹⁰. If the stele is broken in its lower part, it cannot be appreciated in its present location.

The height of the letters and the fact that additional information and adjectives are given only for the father - which is certainly no exceptional habit - point out his intention to underline his person within this tragic family event.

For comments on the names and further epigraphic details, the first editors made a detailed analysis¹¹. The addition in our reading, pointing out C. Antonius as *centurio* and veteran, provides new insights on the population in the area

¹⁰ See, for a different opinion, BĂRBULESCU, BUZOIANU & CLIANTE 2011, p. 144 and *ISM* IV 193.

¹¹ BĂRBULESCU, BUZOIANU & CLIANTE 2011, p. 142-145.

surrounding the center in *Sacidava* in its early phases¹². The siglum and long T find direct analogy on the epitaph of veteran M. Cocceius Vitlus from *Capidava*¹³, dated to the end of the 1st-early 2nd century AD.

The stele's shape and layout

Although with a very schematic layout, the stele bears some typical features. The tall slab is cut of and its surfaces and sides are smoothed with a multi-toothed chisel in order to fulfil its function as standing funerary stele. The framed fields, with special attention paid to the middle one, which usually bears depiction (or one of the depictions) relevant for the deceased, are carved even though not as deep as the incisions of the frame lines.

Another large stele from *Sacidava* (found reused in Tower A) features also a simple layout, without the common vine or ivy ornaments on the borders (Fig. 6)¹⁴. The inscription was dated in the first decades of the second century AD. However, the pediment is rendered as usual, probably having acroterai, and the intended destination of the middle field as depiction's field and of the lower field as inscription's field are understood. There is, on the other hand, the inscription which shows some clumsiness. The stele is entirely illustrated only in Scorpan's publication¹⁵. It can be recognized that the pediment had at least corner acroterai, and that the lower part of the stele, from about 15 cm below the deeper carved inscription's field, was unfinished, the surface being only partially roughened. Interesting is that this epitaph of a 50 years old *burgarius* finds similarities in an old find from *Sacidava* (Fig. 7), dated to the 2nd-3rd century AD, published for the first time together with Antonia's stele¹⁶. That stele, found also in the fortification walls from Muzait/Dunăreni¹⁷, was put by a further *burgarius*, Diozenus, son of Rigozus, for himself and his 27 year-old son. In that case, the upper part of the stele preserves the background (proof of the initial rectangular shape of the slab), in which the pediment and the corner acroterai are carved, and is decorated. Significant is that there seems to be no real delimitation within the ornaments, the vine from the borders ending in the acroterai. Thus, the pediment is only inscribed as pseudo-pediment, the exact function/meaning of the depicted architectural features being not entirely clear to the sculptor, as it will be for the ones of the other, younger, stelai uncovered in *Sacidava*. Furthermore there was also a central acroterion (?) depicted, now broken. In the middle field, there are

¹² See MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018, p. 223-229. On the evidence on the Roman auxiliary units for this center see MATEI-POPESCU 2010, p. 201-205, 212-213.

¹³ ISM V 24; CONRAD 2004, cat. no 241.

¹⁴ ISM IV 179; CONRAD 2004, cat. no 280. Dimensions: preserved height 237 cm, width 69 cm; depth 25 cm.

¹⁵ SCORPAN 1977a, cat. no 5, fig. 8.

¹⁶ BĂRBULESCU, BUZOIANU & CLIANTE 2011, cat. no 2 and ISM IV 180. Dimensions: preserved height 284 cm, width 86 cm; depth 29 cm.

¹⁷ In this case, the finding place „in the area of the fortification at the beginning of the 80s of the last century” was not recorded, and the fact that it was brought to the museum in Constanța but published three decades later was also not favorable. However, it is an advantage that it was saved from possible contemporary stone looting, restored and finally published.

depicted, as in case of the other *burgarius'* epitaph (Fig. 6), a crown and four flowers, in the corners, while the borders are decorated with vine ranks starting from a crater depicted below the inscription's field.



Fig. 6 ISM IV 179
(after SCORPAN 1977a, fig. 8)



Fig. 7 ISM IV 180
(photo by the author)

Although the evidence is scarce, the observation of the transition steps in the making of the tall funerary stelai in a workshop in *Sacidava* is valid. It is also the one on the existence of several and differently skilled crafts dealing with carving of ornaments and inscription. The question on how and exactly where the slabs were quarried from and delivered to needs further investigation. It is obvious that, from an early period in the second century AD, the limestone slabs suitable for such tall stelai were available¹⁸.

M. Alexandrescu Vianu¹⁹ reached the conclusion that there were typical features preferred by certain workshops along the Danube frontier, especially in *Troesmis* and eventually *Axiopolis*. Among them, there is the pine cone above pediments for *Troesmis*. Further, she remarked that the funerary crown is featured

¹⁸ Besides the investigation and systematic documentation of individual monuments, the analyses on material identification and its provenance are mandatory for the study of the stone economy of the region. For this, the centers with rich evidence like *Sacidava*, *Capidava*, *Troesmis* and *Halmiris* are certainly the most relevant. See also ALEXANDRESCU 2021.

¹⁹ ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2007.

by monuments of *legio I Italica*, manufactured in workshops and spreading from its headquarters in *Novae*. In fact, concerning this military center, mention should also be made of the stelai from *Sacidava* and *Axiopolis*. In all three places, there have been uncovered tall stelai with schematically rendered or without free standing pediment, a layout comprising a rectangular depiction's field and inscription's field, while the depiction shows of a funerary crown with four flowers in the corners of the field. The precise dating as well as analyses of shape and dimensions are difficult due to the fragmentary state of preservation of many monuments. Therefore, the finds from *Sacidava* and *Novae* provide relevant arguments. And they seem to belong to the early phases of the organisation along the Danube with regard to the production of stelai in local limestone, as the carving experiments and reformulation of layout and iconographic schemata were no exception.

The highlighted details of the three stelai from *Sacidava* (Fig. 3, 6 and 7), which can be considered as the experimental phase, although over a few decades, of the local production of tall stelai, find a parallel in the center of *Capidava*. There, one of the early monuments is the stele of Bassus²⁰, presenting many similarities (stele's layout, not skilfully rendering the delimitation of fields, lack of ornaments on the borders, pseudo-pediment), but also the introduction of what will become one of the most common iconographic subjects on the stelai in this province, the funerary banquet, depicted on this stele instead of the funerary crown and the four flowers. The *Capidava* case is the most eloquent when considering the transfer and development of shapes and iconographical schemata, for there it was also found one of the earliest epitaphs in the region (already mentioned above, when discussing Antonia's epitaph), on a Greek style stele of one of the Cocceii, former *signifer* in *cohors I Ubiorum*, initially bearing the funerary banquet²¹. This marble stele, most probably found in the funerary precinct of the family, was further used in the early 2nd century by adding lines to the inscription. Between this stele and the one for Bassus, the funerary banquet was represented in *Capidava* on other shapes of funerary monuments as well, until the tall stelai become 'standardized' or popular in the area of *Capidava* as well.

While the earliest funerary inscriptions in the region are carved on (imported) marble plates and blocks²², possibly walled in on façades of funerary monuments, the marble stelai are only a few and adopt or reinvent shapes, dimensions and motives of Greek stelai²³, thus following the way the marble came into the province, by sea, through the *Tomi* harbour. The epigraphic evidence and the analyses of individual monuments provide hints on the origin of the officials, soldiers and civilians²⁴, but also on the provenance of the ordered layout, shape and ornaments.

²⁰ ISM V 27; CONRAD 2004, cat. no 247. – Dimensions: preserved height 170 cm, width 67 cm; depth 17 cm.

²¹ MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018 (with literature).

²² CONRAD 2004, cat. no 221, 222, 514.

²³ CONRAD 2004, cat. no 233, 241.

²⁴ ISM V 24; CONRAD 2004, cat. no 241.

The dating

There are several elements useful for dating the Antonia's stele. Firstly the epigraphic ones: the unabbreviated form of the *Dis Manibus* is attested for the second century and getting rather rare to its end and in the beginning of the next century²⁵. The long shape of the letter T in row 3 finds analogy in one very early epitaph from Restelec, near *Oescus*²⁶, dated to the first century AD, but also on the already mentioned stele of M. Cocceius Vitlus from *Capidava*. Secondly the layout of the stele and the chosen ornaments²⁷ offer additional hints. The undecorated borders of the stele and the different rectangular fields for depiction and inscription find their parallels among the stelai dated to the first half of the second century AD. While the stelai from *Oescus* keep using the simpler structure of pediment and inscription's field, the ones from *Novae* feature the additional depiction's field²⁸, a layout used by the examples in *Sacidava* as well.

To conclude, the most probable date for Antonia's stele is the beginning of the second century AD and not the second half as suggested by its first editors.

The attributes

Despite the schematic and superficially carved attributes in the upper part of Antonia's stele, the assumption is that they refer to the deceased.

The mirror²⁹ has been among the typical attributes of women on funerary reliefs since the second century BC, being one of the characteristic signs of the deceased woman and symbolizing her beauty³⁰. Further possible symbolic values of the mirror are the youth of the deceased or that she was unmarried. However, if the inscription does not support such assumption, there seems to be no iconographical argument either for the Classical or Hellenistic reliefs. For the Roman funerary iconography, the matter seems to be clearer, as the mirror is simply one of the attributes of the women, being depicted in use by the deceased, on the background of a funerary relief, among other selected objects, or carried by her maid.

Within Moesia Inferior there is a scarce evidence on the funerary monuments, on stelai from *Durostorum*³¹, *Novae*³² and *Halmyris*³³ and on sarcophagi and stelai from *Tomi*³⁴. The mirror is, however, one of the common attributes of women on the stelai from Bithynia and, given the epigraphic evidence (at least for *Tomi*) it can be regarded as a direct influence of that region³⁵. Antonia's mirror

²⁵ ALEXANDRESCU 2021, p. 197.

²⁶ CONRAD 2004, cat. no 514.

²⁷ ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2007, p. 56.

²⁸ The stelai evidence from *Durostorum* is very scarce and offers for the time being no analogies; see CONRAD 2004, cat. no 300-306.

²⁹ PETROVA 2015, p. 102.

³⁰ SCHMALTZ 1983, p. 238-239; ZANKER 1993, p. 222.

³¹ CONRAD 2004, cat. no 303.

³² WUJEWSKI 2013; AE 2013, 1338; CONRAD 2004, cat. no 379.

³³ ZAHARIADE & ALEXANDRESCU 2011, cat. no 151.

³⁴ ISM VI.2, 506; CONRAD 2004, cat. no 136.

³⁵ See also ALEXANDRESCU 2021; ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2008-2009.

seems to be depicted to scale and, in the absence of further details, to have been a common handle mirror³⁶.

The flowers are among the most common ornaments on the funerary monuments of different kinds, being placed in or outside the pediment of stelai, if such architectural structure is available, or within the field, on the background, as a single flower, as a pair or spread out all over the field of depiction. In this case, two flowers are represented. However, it is probable that they are not meant as a pair, but as an ensemble with the items depicted to their right and left sides, in which case they could be also *phalerae* with ornament.

Thus, following what seems to be a Hellenistic tradition, better documented within the study on the stelai from Chersonesos³⁷, the composition of the upper part of Antonia's stele features one further element, which can be a ribbon, but also a staff. They are quite schematically rendered, as a broad line, separating, on each side of the stylized pediment, the flower and the bracelet. Within the detailed studied group of Hellenistic funerary stelai from Chersonesos, R. Posamentir observed the particularity of stelai of women, featuring a pediment and the rosettes separated by *taenia*³⁸, while the stelai of men featured the rosettes, stab and sword, hanging on a wide sword belt, between and/or below them.

The items depicted in the upper corners of Antonia's stele are bracelets or neck rings. It is not possible to decide if it is to name them *torques*, rather than *armillae*. It is obvious that they were rather thin and open, being sufficiently stable on their own. Although such pieces are common among the jewellery worn by women, this particular case leaves a further option open. Usually, the funerary reliefs depict women toiletries, such as mirror, casket, comb, etc., but not individual pieces of jewellery.

This should be correlated with the fact that the epitaph mentions not only the parents of the deceased, but also points out the virtuous (*pientissimus*³⁹) father and his status as *centurio* and veteran. It is unknown if the inscription on Antonia's stele continued and was eventually mentioned as being put for the parents as well, while still alive, which would directly explain the depictions related to the father on the stele. The fact that the father was a *centurio*, makes him a good candidate for special distinctions like *dona* in form of *armillae* and/or *torques*⁴⁰. Further, he was the one carrying the *centurio's* staff (*vitis*), not always

³⁶ See, for an overview, SWIFT 2012 (with literature); Among the mirrors in LLOYD MORGAN 1981, there are usually smaller discs, but at least one example of 17 cm.

³⁷ POSAMENTIR 2011.

³⁸ POSAMENTIR 2005, p. 107; POSAMENTIR 2011, cat. no C11.

³⁹ See recently on *pientissimus*: TANTIMONACO 2020.

⁴⁰ BOURAS 2014, p. 670; EVANGELIDIS 2019, p. 285; The soldier distinctions in form of a neck ring or a bracelet are known since the Republican period, as a symbol of rank of the enemies of Rome, Gauls and Persians (MAXFIELD 1981, p. 86-91; SPRINGER 1993, p. 265-267). The condition for such decoration was to be a Roman citizen, which was the case with all the soldiers in the legions. This meant that the *peregrini* from the auxiliary troops did not receive them. The granting of such distinctions seems to have ceased since the Roman citizenship was granted to all the inhabitants of the Empire by Caracalla. This made all the soldiers in the *auxilia* also potential receivers of such distinctions.

depicted as expected⁴¹. Therefore it is possible to see the represented items as a special choice, included in an ad hoc developed iconographic formula as a sign of customization, but not skilfully rendered. In the early Roman period, the soldiers up to the rang of *centurio* received *torques*, *armillae* and *phalerae*⁴². On funerary monuments, the distinctions are also depicted as a set, sometimes exactly as they were worn on special occasions⁴³. The distinctions were kept in the family of the veteran and were found in several cases within the residence of such families, in their country estate⁴⁴.

The hypothesis in the case of the stele from *Sacidava* cannot be further investigated, as the very schematic character of the depictions and of the entire representation of the monument leaves the question simply open. On the funerary monuments of this province customized iconography is exceptional and therefore not always the demand meets crafts able to fully satisfy it. Such stelai were expensive and certainly used as a statement not only for the deceased, but also for his/her family and heirs. Even if the monument was for one person, the inscription and, if available, iconography could feature several members of the family of the deceased⁴⁵. In this case, only the hypothesis is possible: C. Antonius was familiar with the simple, but eloquent layout and composition of the Hellenistic stelai and ordered a customized stele; the local sculptor designed a composition featuring attributes relevant for both the deceased Antonia and his wealthy and deserving father. The final result can be regarded as a correct Roman composition, tributary to the chase of symmetry, and adapted to the available means and skills of the sculptor.

Conclusions

Besides the need to document the spolia walled in different parts of the fortifications within the province, the way they are reused and their material can provide significant information on the early history and settlements development in a certain region. For *Sacidava*, the case seems very complex and its micro-region, with numerous settlement nuclei from different periods will most certainly be better understood through such an approach of one of the richest categories of archaeological materials uncovered there, the stone monuments, with or without inscription. Furthermore, it is interesting to find out if the question on when, why and how such reuses happened can be answered. Recent research dedicated to the use of spolia in fortification walls highlighted that not always the imminent danger is the reason, and provided also different scenarios of what kind of monuments were reused⁴⁶. Although not as good preserved and

⁴¹ See, for example, *ISM IV 55 (Tropeum Traiani)*.

⁴² The higher officers had other distinctions. The epigraphic evidence mentions the distinctions as pairs. Sometimes their noble material is also mentioned, silver or even gold, although most probably it was gilded bronze (HÜSSEN 1997, p. 260).

⁴³ HÜSSEN 1997, p. 262-264.

⁴⁴ HÜSSEN 1997, p. 265.

⁴⁵ BORDENACHE 1965, p. 260.

⁴⁶ See, for a recent overview, BARKER 2020 (with literature).

not so prestigious, the fortifications from Moesia Inferior can potentially offer such insights.

The establishment of sculpture workshops in the different centers of the province, on the shores of the Black Sea but especially in the ones on the Danube and in the centers in the interior of the province, especially for the Roman times, was preceded by the organisation of stone supply and the exploratory missions preceding the camp building activities. This certainly made use of the knowledge and experience of the Greek cities on the Black Sea coast⁴⁷. The organization and functioning of such workshops, as well as the offered works / products or possible specializations are not so easy to approach. The evidence of the stelai made, however, clear that there were different crafts for the different production stages, ending up with the carving of the inscription⁴⁸. The skills of those crafts may have varied greatly, which is obvious in the case of Antonia's stele, for which the slab was very well prepared, the epitaph was skilfully carved, however the layout and ornaments were executed only schematically.

The epigraphic evidence on the *burgus* in *Sacidava* and the *burgarii* unit⁴⁹, preceding the auxiliary units and legionary detachments, build up also the case of the early stelai from this site. Located near the military center of *Durostorum*, fortress of *legio XI Claudia*, and central point of several settlements, of locals and Romans, respectively their colonists, and not far from *Tropaeum Traiani*, *Sacidava* had a strategic position and its population was involved in this defensive task. The *burgarii* were recruited among the local Thracian population, as proven by their onomastic. The soldiers (from the legions and the auxiliary units), veterans and members of their families settled in the region in rural settlements or even on estates. Thus, veteran C. Antonius might have lived with his family in one of the settlements near the camp at *Sacidava* or might have had a farm there. Despite the rich epigraphical evidence on the population in the area in the 2nd-3rd centuries, found mainly in secondary use as building material, the archaeological survey of this micro-region is incomplete, although different settlement nuclei have been recorded over time.

The conclusion is that the region of the northern Moesia Inferior was a real melting pot of traditions from the West and the East of the Empire, of the North Italic, on the one hand, and Greek and Hellenistic models, on the other hand⁵⁰. This resulted also from the epigraphic analysis, but can clearly be further detailed, based on in-depth investigation of the monuments bearing inscriptions and further related ones⁵¹. It seems that the North Pontic area played also a significant role within, either directly or through the military units deployed from one region to the other. For one of the auxiliary units known to have been

⁴⁷ The case of Histria is relevant: BÎRZESCU & BALTRES 2013.

⁴⁸ Already highlighted by BORDENACHE 1964, p. 13-18.

⁴⁹ See, on this, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018, p. 223-227. On early Roman *burgii* see VISY 2009.

⁵⁰ BORDENACHE 1965; CONRAD 2004; ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2007; ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2008-2009; PFLUG 1989; CIGAINA 2016.

⁵¹ One recently analysed example in *Troesmis* provided unexpected insights into the relations and influences of Hellenistic traditions on early Roman stelai, but also on the supply of stone material: ALEXANDRESCU 2021.

stationed for a long time at *Sacidava, cohors I Cilicum*⁵², as well as for legionary detachments (like *legio XI Claudia* from the nearby *Durostorum*), stays in the North Pontic area are well attested. Furthermore, the traditional trade network between the Pontic areas and Asia Minor enabled various exchanges over centuries and built up a strong and complex background from which also new models, shapes and iconographies, among others, emerged. The study on the existing evidence is far from being concluded and the uneven and unsystematic state of research makes the future quite challenging.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

ISM IV - E. Popescu, *Inscriptions de Scythie Mineure, volume IV Tropaeum -Durostorum - Axiopolis*, Bucharest-Paris, 2015.

ISM V - E. Doruțiu-Boilă, *Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor, V. Capidava. Troesmis. Noviodunum*, Bucharest, 1985.

ISM VI.2 – A. Avram, M. Bărbulescu, L. Buzoianu, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de Scythie Mineure. Vol. VI, Suppl. fasc. 2, Tomis et son territoire*, Bucharest-Paris, 2018.

Authors

ALEXANDRESCU 2021 - C.-G. Alexandrescu, *The Extraordinary Funerary Stele of the verna of an eques Romanus from Troesmis*, in: S. C. Ailincăi, C. Micu, M. Mocanu, A. Stănică (eds.), *Essays in Archaeology and Ancient History in Honor of Victor Henrich Baumann at his 80th anniversary*, Cluj-Napoca, 2021, p. 191-220.

ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2007 – M. Alexandrescu Vianu, *Ateliere sculpturale în Dobrogea romană (I)*, SCIVA 58/1-2 (2007), p. 55-60.

ALEXANDRESCU VIANU 2008-2009 – M. Alexandrescu Vianu, *Atelierele de sculptură din Moesia Inferior. 2. Relațiile cu Bithynia*, SCIVA 59-60 (2008-2009), p. 53-80.

BARKER 2020 – S.J. Barker, *Reuse of Statuary and Recycling Habit of Late Antiquity: An Economic Perspective*, in: C. N. Duckworth, A. Wilson (eds.), *Recycling and Reuse in the Roman Economy*, Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy, Oxford, 2020, p. 105-190.

BĂRBULESCU et alii 2011 – M. Bărbulescu, L. Buzoianu, T. Cliante, *Inscriptions inédites de la Dobroudja romaine*, Pontica 44 (2011), p. 141-156.

BÎRZESCU & BALTRES 2013 - I. Bîrzescu, A. Baltres, *Noi date cu privire la originea și folosirea pietrei în „Zona sacră” de la Histria în perioada arhaică*, SCIVA 64 (2013) 1-2, p. 5-19.

BORDENACHE 1965 – G. Bordenache, *Temi e motivi della plastica funeraria di età romana nella Moesia Inferior (II)*, Dacia N.S. 9 (1965), p. 253-281.

CIGAINA 2016 – L. Cigaina, *Von stehenden Steinplatten zu „stehenden Soldaten“. Die Typologie der Grabstelen aus Aquileia vom 2. bis zum 4. Jh. n. Chr.*, in: R. Lafer (Hrsg.), *Römische Steindenkmäler im Alpen-Adria-Raum. Neufunde, Neulesungen und Interpretationen epigraphischer und ikonographischer Monumente, Akten der Tagung (Klagenfurt, 2.-4. Oktober 2013)*, Studia Alpium et Adriae II, Klagenfurt, 2016, p. 73-97.

COLESNIUC et alii 2020 - S. Colesniuc, T. Potârniche, A. Mototolea, T. Cliante, S. Stanc, *Intramuros archaeological research at Sacidava. Preliminary information*, in: S. Forțiu, D. Micle (eds.), *ArheoVest VIII. Interdisciplinaritate în Arheologie. In honorem arhg. Alexandru Rădulescu*, Szeged, 2020, p. 375-384.

⁵² For *cohors I Cilicum* it is observed that it was the most mobile unit of Moesia inferior: Matei-Popescu 2010, p. 203.

CONRAD 2004 – S. Conrad, *Die Grabstelen aus Moesia inferior. Untersuchungen zu Chronologie, Typologie und Ikonografie*, Leipzig, 2004.

DIACONU 1980 – P. Diaconu, *Despre Sacidava și stratigrafia ei*, SCIVA 31 (1980) 1, p. 123-130.

HÜSSEN 1997 – C.-M. Hüssen, *Eine versilberte armilla als donum militare aus einer Villa rustica in Thalmassing, Lkr. Regensburg*, Beiträge zur Archäologie in der Oberpfalz, 1 (1997), p. 257-265.

LLOYD-MORGAN 1981 – G. Lloyd-Morgan, *The mirrors: including a description of the Roman mirrors found in the Netherlands, in other Dutch museums*, Description of the collections in the Rijksmuseum G.M. Kam (Nijmegen) 9, Amsterdam, 1981.

MATEI-POPESCU 2010 – F. Matei-Popescu, *The Roman Army in Moesia Inferior*, Bucharest, 2010.

MĂRGINEANU-CÂRSTOIU & APOSTOL 2015 – M. Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu, V. Apostol, *La fortification d'Halmyris. Étude architecturale des portes ouest et nord*, Caiete ARA 6 (2015), p. 37-78.

MAXFIELD 1981 – V. Maxfield, *The military decorations of the Roman army*, London, 1981.

MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018 – L. Mihailescu-Bîrliba, *Rure vivere in Moesia Inferiore. La population dans le milieu rural d'une province périphérique de l'Empire romain*, Philippika 123, Wiesbaden, 2018.

PETROVA 2015 – A. Petrova, *Funerary reliefs from the West Pontic area (6th-1st centuries BC)*, Colloquia antiqua 14, Leuven-Paris-Bristol, 2015.

PFLUG 1989 – H. Pflug, *Römische Porträtstelen in Oberitalien. Untersuchungen zur Chronologie, Typologie und Ikonographie*, Mainz, 1989.

POPESCU 2016 – E. Popescu, *Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România*, Bucharest, 1976.

POSAMENTIR 2005 – R. Posamentir, *Spätclassische Grabstelen und die griechische Besiedlung von Chersonesos*, in: F. Fless, M. Treister (Hrsg.), *Bilder und Objekte als Träger kultureller Identität und interkultureller Kommunikation im Schwarzmeergebiet. Kolloquium vom 13.2. – 15. 2. 2003 in Leipzig*, Rahden/West., 2005, p. 105-110, p. 47-51.

POSAMENTIR 2011 – R. Posamentir, *The Polychrome Grave Stelai from the Early Hellenistic Necropolis*, Chersonesan Studies, Vol. I, Austin, 2011.

SCHMALTZ 1983 – B. Schmaltz, *Griechische Grabreliefs*, Darmstadt, 1983.

SCORPAN 1977a – C. Scorpan, *Stele funerare inedite de la Sacidava*, Pontica 10 (1977), p. 159-178.

SCORPAN 1977b – C. Scorpan, *Rezultate ale săpăturilor arheologice de la Sacidava (1974-1976)*, Pontica 10 (1977), p. 229-251.

SCORPAN 1979 – C. Scorpan, *Sacidava – 1978. Raport preliminar*, MCA, A XIII-a sesiune națională de rapoarte, Oradea, 1979, p. 189-196.

SCORPAN 1980 – C. Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae. Topographical and stratigraphical research on the Late Roman fortifications on the Lower Danube*, BAR International Series 88, Oxford, 1980.

SPRINGER 1993 – T. Springer, *Ein Hort von Dona Militaria und anderen persönlichen Wertgegenständen eines römischen Soldaten? Überlegungen zum Schatzfund aus Petescia in den Sabinerbergen*, Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica 25 (1993), p. 265-271.

SWIFT 2012 – E. Swift, *The archaeology of adornment and the toilet in Roman Britain and Gaul*, in: M. Harlow (ed.), *Dress and Identity*, BAR International Series 2356, Oxford, 2012, p. 47-57.

TANTIMONACO 2020 – S. Tantimonaco, *Piissimus and pientissimus: two nonexistent superlatives of pius?*, Journal of Latin Linguistics 19 (2020) 2, p. 281-307.

ȚENTEȚA et alii 2019 – O. Țentețea, I. C. Oprea, F. Matei-Popescu, A. Rațiu, C. Băjenaru, V. Călina, *Frontiera romană din Dobrogea. O trecere în revistă și o actualizare*, CA 26 (2019), p. 9-82.

VISY 2009 – Z. Visy, *Presidia et burgi in the Early Roman Empire*, in: A. Morillo, N. Hanel, E. Martin (éds.), *Limes XX. Estudios sobre la Frontera Romana*, Roman Frontier Studies, León, Spain, September 2006, volume II, Madrid, 2009, p. 989-996.

ZAHARIADE & ALEXANDRESCU 2011 – M. Zahariade, C.-G. Alexandrescu, *Halmyris II. Greek and Latin Inscriptions, Signa and Instrumenta from Halmyris found between 1981 and 2010*, BAR International Series 2261, Oxford, 2011.

ZANKER 1993 – P. Zanker, *The Hellenistic Grave Stelai from Smyrna: Identity and Self-image in the Polis*, in: A. W. Bulloch, E. S. Gruen, A. A. Long, A. Stewart (eds.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley, 1993, p. 212-231.

WUJEWSKI 2013 - T. Wujewski, *Stela Tettii y Novae*, in: A. B. Biernacki, R. Czerner (eds.), *Biskupstwo w Novae (Moesia secunda) IV-VI w. Historia, architektura. (The Bishopric of Novae (Moesia secunda), 4th-6th cent. History, architecture, daily life 1. History, architecture)*, Poznań, 2013, p. 189-192.