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# A NEW ROMAN FUNERARY STELA FROM POROLISSUM

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**Abstract.** In the *lapidarium* of the History and Art Museum of Zalău County, we identified a new fragmented funerary stela, that remained unpublished. *Stela* was kept in pretty bad condition and both reliefs of the two registers are damaged. It was made of white limestone, with dimensions of 114 x 88 x 25 cm. The preserved fragment is from a shaped stela with an attic with triangular pediment and a niche with a central medallion. The entire field of the relief is divided into two registers. The attic has a triangular pediment like an equilateral triangle with the base of 60 cm and 40 cm for the sides. In the middle of the triangle a rosette was carved and one on one to the side of it. The register below is enclosed in a rectangular niche with a medallion in which stands the bust of a character. The closest analogy from Dacia comes from Orăștioara de Jos. Stelae showing a central medallion with a single character were discovered at Sarmizegetusa, Micia and Mintiul Gherlii. The ornament of the higher registry has an analogy that appears on a monument discovered in the province *Germania Superior* at *Tres Tabernae* (Saverne). Chronologically, the stela from Porolissum, based on stylistic analogies with similar monuments from Dacia, fit's in sometime in the first half of the II<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. The ingress of this type of decoration of the higher register, should be hypothetically linked to the emergence in the area of a craftsman familiar with such a setting, wick probably came with Cohors V Lingonum unit from the Lower Rhine. Our monument could be the first funerary monument that marks the presence of the troop in the area.

**Keywords:** *Porolissum*, roman funerary art, funerary stela, *Tres Tabernae*, *Dacia Porolissensis*.

In the *lapidarium* of the History and Art Museum of Zalău County we identified a new fragmented funerary stela. It has been brought to the Museum in the early 1980's<sup>1</sup>, and since it was not a spectacular monument, it remained unpublished. The stela was found in the Ursoieș<sup>2</sup> area (Pl. I, fig. A), the place of the well-known Roman necropolis of Porolissum. The monument was recovered from an area where any archaeological research was conducted. The first professional archaeological excavations were done here back in 1958 when several graves, most of them cremation graves were found<sup>3</sup>. Through geomagnetic measurements, in 2007 a series of funerary enclosures have been identified and systematically researched, leading to the discovery of 19 incineration graves, belonging to different chronological timeframes, around a funerary altar with an inscription<sup>4</sup>.

The stela is poorly preserved (Pl. I, fig. B), the upper right part is deteriorated, and both reliefs of the two registers are very blurred, they are barely visible. It is made from white limestone, which seems to have been later deteriorated through exposure in a moist environment. The dimensions of the preserved monument are: height - 114 cm, width - 88 cm, thickness - 25 cm. The remaining fragment is part of a type II C stela<sup>5</sup>, profiled with an attic with a triangular pediment and a niche with a central medallion. The field of the relief is divided in two registers. The attic presents above the moulding separating the two registers, a triangular pediment with a 60 cm base and 40 cm sides. In the middle of the triangle is a rosette, very poorly preserved. On both sides of the triangular pediment is also a rosette, the one on the left is better preserved, the four petals and the pestle are still visible. The front is surrounded by a deepened moulding, 2.5 cm wide. A second moulding, 7 cm wide, is sculpted on both sides of the register. The left side of this moulding and the right corner have been damaged during discovery. The next register has a rectangular niche with a poorly preserved medallion.

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<sup>1</sup> According to N. Gudea the monument was brought in the early 80's at Zalău museum by a citizen from Jac village.

<sup>2</sup> Găzdac et al. 2007, p. 10; Petruț et al. 2010, p. 82-89.

<sup>3</sup> Macrea et al. 1961, p. 380.

<sup>4</sup> Petruț et al. 2010, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> According to the typology established by Petruț, Zăgreanu 2011, p. 192.

The medallion has approximately 60 cm in diameter, and it contains the bust of a human figure. Unfortunately, it is very damaged, no details of the hair can be distinguished, it seems to be short, the neck long, fairly well rendered, the shoulders straight, probably covered by a tunic. The face of the character is severely damaged, so that nothing can be seen from the face, the right ear is vaguely distinguishable. From the areas next to the head, parts of the medallion have been destroyed, so that it is impossible to guess its type. Concerning the character, the long, thin neck and the short hair suggests a beardless youngster, but we cannot exclude the possibility to be a woman. No folds of the clothes can be distinguished, only the contour of the shoulders is clear and in the chest area, two indents can be seen, that suggest the hands holding a round object. There was an attempt to create an alto relief impression, but the craftsman has not deepened too much the contour of the character, and the latter damages further erased this detail. The moulding of the right side was damaged during discovery, same as with the previous register. The moulding of the left side has 3 cm. Completing the monument, on the lower part was the epigraphic field, which has not been recovered (Pl. I, fig. C). The interesting fact is that above the attic must have been placed a canopy, as suggested by an orifice in the centre of the upper part, 6 cm deep and 7.5 cm in diameter. Most likely there was a canopy with funerary lions back to back.

A modest work of the workshop in Porolissum, this stela presents a series of particularities, unique to this Roman sculptural centre. The closest analogy from Dacia was found at Orăștioara de Jos<sup>6</sup> (Pl. II, fig. A). Stelae with a central medallion with one character have been found at Micia<sup>7</sup>, the stela of *Cornelius Businnius* (Pl. II, fig. B), and Sarmizegetusa<sup>8</sup>, dedicated apparently by the college of *fabri* to a certain deceased *Do[mitio ?]* (Pl. II, fig. C), member of the organization. The second monument was dated to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. based upon style. An analogy to the manner of sculpting the medallion is on a fragment of a funerary stela from Sarmizegetusa<sup>9</sup>, where the slightly smaller medallion is included in

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<sup>6</sup> Bianchi 1985, p. 265, no. 67, fig. 59; IDR III/3 264.

<sup>7</sup> Ciongradi 2007, p. 190-191, S/M5, pl. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ciongradi 2007, p. 149, no. S/S28, pl. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ciongradi 2007, p. 155, no. S/S44, pl. 52.

a triangular pediment, similar to the one on our *stela*. Based upon stylistically criteria this fragment too could be dated to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. D. From Dacia Porolissensis there is a single stela with a medallion with one character, probably from the necropolis of the castrum from Gherla<sup>10</sup> (Pl. II, fig. D). In the neighbouring provinces one of the earliest mentions of a stela with one character in a central medallion was discovered at Vindobona on the monument of *T(itus) F(lavius) Draccus*<sup>11</sup>, dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century A. D., during the reign of Domitianus. The manner of sculpting the medallion on the stela of Porolissum, as much as can be seen, reminds the *imagines clipeatae* appearing in great number in the area of the sculptural centre of *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* (Köln) in Germania Inferior. These have been included by P. Noelke in the group of stelae with portrait in medallion<sup>12</sup>, dated by him exclusively during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A. D. Similar to the representation of the niche on our stela are two monuments, one from Köln<sup>13</sup> (Pl. II, fig. E) and the other from Bonn<sup>14</sup> (Pl. II, fig. F), but with three medallions.

For the decorations of the upper register there is an approximately identical analogy appearing on a monument discovered in Germania Superior at *Tres Tabernae* (Saverne)<sup>15</sup> (Pl. II, fig. G). This type of decoration appears on a few more stelae from this centre<sup>16</sup>, and it seems to be particular to this centre as a decoration of the funerary stelae (Pl. II, fig. G). The triangular front with rosette in the middle is pretty frequent in the Germanic provinces and Noricum. In Pannonia it was preferred on the architectonic stelae of the soldiers, as we see in some examples from Althofen<sup>17</sup> or Budapest<sup>18</sup>, at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. D.

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<sup>10</sup> Zăgreanu, Meșter 2005, p. 64, no.1, fig.1.

<sup>11</sup> Mosser 2004, p. 371, fig. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Noelke 1996, p. 297-298.

<sup>13</sup> Noelke 1996, p. 324, no. 2, fig. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Noelke 1996, p. 326, fig. 15.

<sup>15</sup> CIL XIII 11657; Espérandieu 1908, p. 243, no. 5695.

<sup>16</sup> Espérandieu 1908, p. 252-253, no. 5709; p. 254, no. 5711; p. 255, nos. 5172, 5173; p. 256, no. 5715; p. 257, nos. 5716, 5717.

<sup>17</sup> Hofmann 1905, p. 65, fig. 44.

<sup>18</sup> Hofmann 1905, p. 63, fig. 42; Kovács, Szabó 2010, p. 12-13, no. 504; p. 16-17, no. 509; p. 64-65, no. 571; p. 84-85, no. 597.

Based upon stylistical analogies with similar pieces from Dacia, the stela from Porolissum belongs chronologically to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. D. The appearance of this type of decoration of the upper register must be hypothetically connected to the appearance in the area of a craftsman acquainted to this type of decoration. A working hypothesis could be that the stela was created by a craftsman working in the area of the Rhine and came with the troops stationed at the castrum of Porolissum. The most likely of these is *Cohors V Lingonum*, recruited from the tribe of the Lingons, who lived in the Lower Rhine area towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A. D. Their place of origin during the recruitment was not far from Saverne. The unit took part in the wars against the Dacians and remained with the occupying army, as mentioned in the diploma from July 2<sup>nd</sup> 110 A. D., later mentioned in diplomas from December 10<sup>th</sup> 130 – December 9<sup>th</sup> 131, September 27<sup>th</sup> 154, October 26<sup>th</sup> 161/162 and July 21<sup>st</sup> 164 A. D.<sup>19</sup>. It's presence is certified by tegular stamps too<sup>20</sup>. There are four inscriptions mentioning this auxiliary unit discovered at Porolissum: the first probably a plaque from a *quadriga* statue for Caracalla<sup>21</sup>, a base for the statue of the empress Iulia Domna<sup>22</sup> and a base for a pedestrian statue of *Philipus Arabs*<sup>23</sup>. The fourth one is a pedestrian statue raised by the prefect *L. Antoninus Marianinus*<sup>24</sup>, who dedicated to the governor of Dacia Porolissensis, *C. Iulius Castinus* between the years 214-217 A. D. Also, the names of another prefects is known, *P. Cominius Clemens*<sup>25</sup> with an inscription raised in *Concordia*, in the Italic Peninsula, We can assume that our monument is the first funerary piece marking the presence of this auxiliary unit in the area.

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<sup>19</sup> Petolescu 2002, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Gudea 1989, p. 534-535.

<sup>21</sup> Macrea 1956, p. 106-108, no. 3, fig. 3.

<sup>22</sup> ILD, p. 254, no. 664.

<sup>23</sup> ILD, p. 256, no. 668.

<sup>24</sup> CIL III 7638.

<sup>25</sup> IDRE I, 153.

## Abbreviations

CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin.
IDR	Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae, Bucharest.
IDRE	C. C. Petolescu, Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie, Bucharest, I (1996) – II (2000).
ILD	Constantin C. Petolescu, Inscricții latine din Dacia, Bucharest, 2005.

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Kovács, Szabó 2010	Péter Kovács, Ádám. Szabó (eds), <i>Tituli Aquincenses I-III</i> , Budapest, 2010.
Macrea 1956	Mihail Macrea, <i>Inscricții de la Porolissum în Muzeul raional Zalău</i> , Activitatea Muzeelor, 2, 1956, p. 101-117.
Macrea et al. 1961	Mihail Macrea, Dumitru Protase, Mircea Rusu, <i>Șantierul arheologic Porolisum</i> , Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, 7, 1961, p. 361-390.



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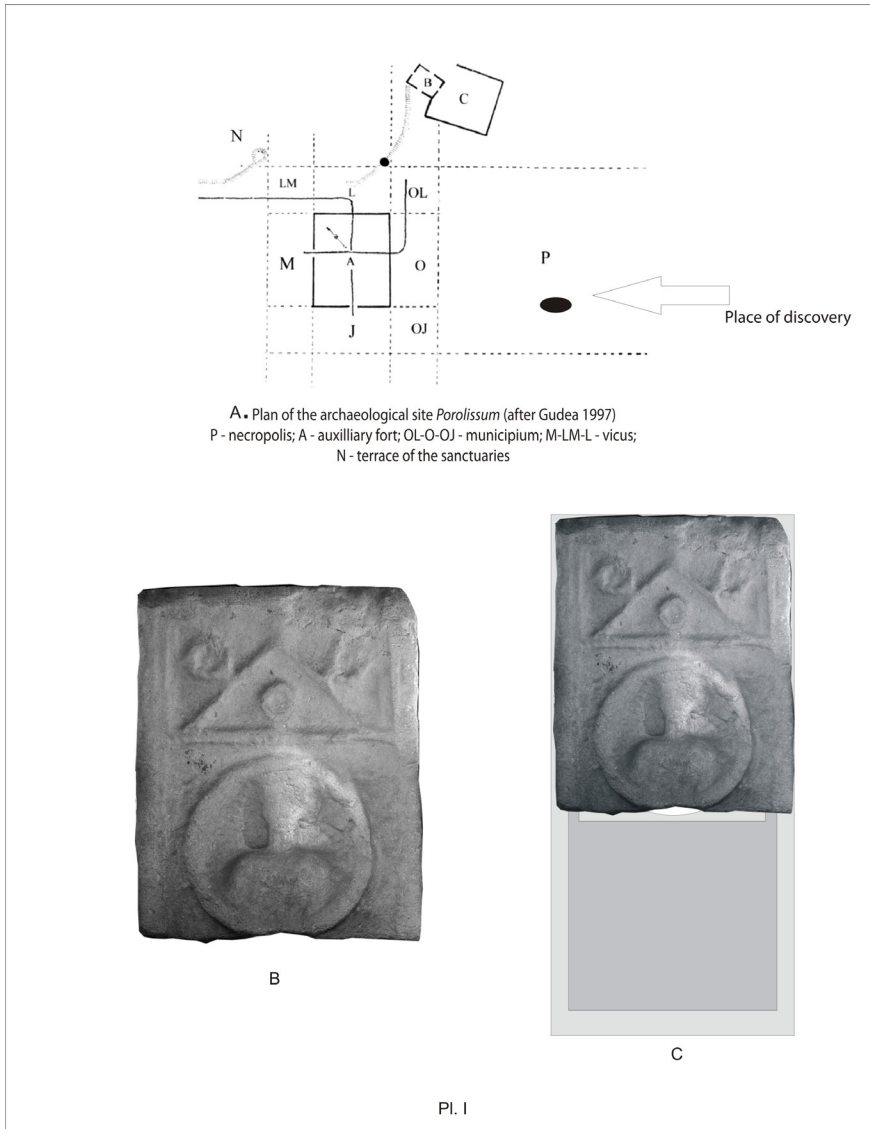




Fig. A Stela from Orăștioara de Jos as IDR III/3 264



Fig. B Stela of *Cornelius Businnius* from Micia as Ciongradi 2007, pl. 33, S/M5



Fig. C Stela from Sarmizegetusa as Ciongradi 2007, pl. 33, S/S28



Fig. D Stela from Mintiul Gherlii



Fig. E Stela of *Senuatius Tertius* from Köln as Noelke 1996, Abb.2



Fig. F Stela of *Superinus Rusticus* as Noelke 1996, Abb.15



Fig. G Stelae from Tres Tavernes



Fig. H Stela from Aquincum Lupa 2799