

Mihai Bărbulescu, *Inscripțiile din castrul legionar de la Potaissa / The Inscriptions of the Legionary Fortress at Potaissa*, Editura Academiei Române, București 2012, 288 pages, 150 figures.

The book of Professor Mihai Bărbulescu is not an epigraphic corpus, despite its title and despite the fact that it presents 67 epigraphic items, namely inscriptions in Latin and Greek written on marble, limestone, bronze and burnt clay. It is firstly a history book, the inscriptions, some published for the first time, being, to the author, no other than historical sources, occasion for lengthy narrative expositions regarding important events in the history of the province of Dacia and the Roman Empire (*exempli gratia* emperor Caracalla's visit in Dacia or the troubled period of Gallienus).

The bilingual work, in Romanian and English, presents to the public a rich and new epigraphic material of key importance for the history of the Roman town Potaissa, for the province of Dacia and for the history of the Roman Empire. The inscriptions come from the author's own systematic research, namely the 41 archaeological campaigns that Mihai Bărbulescu conducted in the fortress at Potaissa (today Turda, Cluj county).

The ruins of the city of Turda allured travellers like Pierre Lescalopier or Jacques Bongars, as early as the Renaissance, while the discovered inscriptions or sculptures were recorded in the manuscripts of the first epigraphic *corpora* or those of the collections of antiquities. Since any presentation of the inscriptions found in the fortress at Turda could not ignore either the first epigraphists like Mezerzius, Zamosius, Gruterus, Ariosti etc. or the modern collectors (the collections of Kemény József, Nagy Miklós, of the pharmacist J. Wolff, of Botár Imre or Téglás István), in the "Introduction" (p. 18–51) Professor Mihai Bărbulescu summarizes "the epigraphic research of Potaissa". Concerns regarding the epigraphy of Potaissa are discussed exhaustively, all who published or improved the reading of the inscriptions found at Turda, from Mezerzius to Petolescu being mentioned.

The inscriptions' presentation is judiciously organized. The first part discusses the older inscriptions, known since the modern period and already published in epigraphic *corpora*, yet which speak of the fortress and its buildings. Where possible, previous readings were improved, new fragments sometimes completing the old inscriptions. Furthermore, the archaeological research revealed the layout and internal planning of the fortress. Thus, chapter A. "The fortress" presents a series of inscriptions (some already known from CIL, others found recently) speaking of the buildings in the fortress (especially, the area from the headquarters building, *principia*). Some of the inscriptions are very important for understanding the existence phases of respective buildings. One should note that all datable inscriptions referring to *aedificia* belong to the Severan period (AD 195, 198–209) or the reign of Gordian III (those recording a *basilica legionis*, a *schola beneficiariorum*, a *schola signiferorum*). In terms of the restoration of these building plates, broken into many pieces, we note the author's effort

to complete this epigraphic puzzle, not only with the parts of inscriptions discovered during the archaeological research but also with fragments known as early as the 19th century, either published or in the museum collections. For instance, the building/repair inscription of a *schola signiferorum* was discovered in the campaigns of 1981, 1988, 1995 etc., while a fragment (CIL III 927) was already in the possession of Góró Lajos, later found in the Kemény collection, from where it passes into the collection of the Erdélyi Múzeum (Muzeul Ardelean). Thus, inscription parts were discovered in the first decades of the 19th century until the last decade of the 20th century.

In the second chapter, B. "The legion", important moments in the history of legion V Macedonica and its fortress are illustrated with the aid of the honorific inscriptions. Of special importance are proven the inscriptions of statue bases erected in the *basilica* of the headquarters building for Caracalla and Iulia Domna, but also those on votive altars, like the two monuments dedicated by M. Publicianus Rhenus, which noticeably change the historical view of the last decades and of the end of the province of Dacia.

The *laterculi* decorating the statue bases erected in the *basilica* of the headquarters building for M. Aurelius Antoninus Caracalla and his mother Iulia Domna contain the lists of names of the centurions in the ten cohorts of the legion, the ones who paid for the erection of respective statues, likely in occasion of the emperor's visit in 214. If in 1987, 21 centurions of legion V Macedonica were known, in the present day, their number, owing to these inscriptions, has reached 64. As noted by the beginning, the inscriptions are not discussed only for restoration purposes, to complete the epigraphic rebus. The inscriptions for Caracalla and Iulia Domna allow the author a historical exposition resuming the context of the supposed visit of Antoninus in Dacia. Whether the emperor reached the province or not, whether he inspected the towns and *castra* of the Trajanic province or not, one thing is certain, namely, he was expected to do so. Statues and inscriptions for Caracalla alone or beside his mother, votive altars dedicated to the health of the imperial family appear everywhere, at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, Tibiscum, Micia, Germisara, Ilișua, Inlăceni, Cășei, Gilău, Porolissum and, of course, Potaissa.

A sub-chapter B. b. is titled "History moments", broadly discussing three very interesting inscriptions and the issues they raise. A small altar documents the presence in the fortress at Potaissa of the soldiers of legio VII Gemina Felix, camped at Leon, in Hispania Tarraconensis. The presence of this legion at Potaissa and Porolissum generated an entire "epigraphic-historical dispute" which the author sums up therein.

Two altars dedicated by a certain M. Publicianus Rhenus, discovered in 2000, in the south-western corner of courtyard E in the *thermae*, are possibly the most interesting inscriptions discovered in the last decades in Dacia. Despite the fact they are difficult to decipher (they are written on a coarse calcareous conglomerate and contained erased rows), one thing is clear, as Professor Mihai Bărbulescu pointed out, namely that M. Publicianus Rhenus is *praefectus alae I Batavorum milliariae* and, concurrently, legion commander deputy (*agens vice praefecti legionis*). This office places us after Gallienus's reform, during his turbulent reign or just after, until Dacia was officially abandoned by Aurelian. Thus, these two altars shed an entirely new

light over that *amissio Daciae* under Gallienus, being comparable, *mutatis mutandis*, with the inscription of M. Simplicinius Genialis at Augsburg. Just like Simplicinius Genialis's altar triggered endless debates, was the subject of colloquiums and volumes of studies, similarly, the discussion regarding Publicianus Rhenus's altars will not end soon. However, regardless the erased emperor, either Gallienus, Claudius or one of the known Danubian usurpers (Ingenuus or Regalianus), we find that the legion (or a small part of it) was still in the fortress subsequent to Gallienus's reform.

The last part, chapter three C. "The daily life" contains votive inscriptions and *instrumenta* (*tegulae scriptae*, *lucernae*, *amphorae*, *pondera*, *anuli* and pieces of military equipment inscribed), completing the modern view of the daily universe of a Roman legionary camp.

By the end of this brief presentation, one may conclude that this is a volume written accurately and skilfully by a historian of the Antiquity, a famous archaeologist who turns a true epigraphist. The Book "Inscriptiile din castrul legionar de la Potaissa" / "The inscriptions in the legionary fortress at Potaissa" is not only a *corpus*, a working tool, but a history fragment of the legion and its camp, seen from epigraphic point of view. Obviously, it is also a tool, however, past the simple epigraphic restorations, of special importance is the historical interpreting, a significant gain for our science.

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