

FELIX MILLEKER'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF THE ANTIQUITIES OF BANAT BETWEEN THE 1880'S AND 1940'S*

Ljiljana Bakic**

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(Abstract)

This paper describes the contributions of the historian and archaeologist Felix Milleker (1858–1942) to the study of antiquities of his native Banat, in southern Pannonia, formerly in Austria-Hungary. From the beginning of his scholarly work in the 1880's until the very end of his life, he published over 200 titles on the history, archaeology and ethnography of Banat. He was curator of the museums in Bela Crkva (1881–1883) and for a very long time in Vršac (1894–1942).

In 1881 Milleker published his first work on Roman antiquities in the periodical *Történelmi és Régészeti Értesítő* in Temesvar. Until 1902 he continued publishing in this periodical dozens of papers on ancient history, archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics of given area including his studies on paleo-lingustics and paleo-ethnography.

In addition to numerous articles he published the register of all sites from prehistoric times to the Migration period in three volumes with appendices *Délmagyarország régiségleletei a honfoglalás előtti időkből* (*The Antiquarian Finds from Southern Hungary... I–III*, Temesvar 1897–1906). In the second volume he registered all the known sites and described ancient monuments and finds of the Roman period in the territory of whole Banat: present – day western Serbian part, and eastern Romanian part. This corpus is of lasting value and still represents the starting point for modern researches of ancient history, archaeology and numismatics of given area.

For his outstanding work Milleker received several prestigious awards as the “St. Savas of Serbia (Belgrade 1923) and medals of the Hungarian Numismatic Society (Budapest 1901) and the Deutsche Akademie (Munich 1934).

F. Milleker: Education and activities

Felix Milleker (1858–1942) was one of the most significant scholar in Banat at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Milleker didn't leave us any biographic details. He belonged to the generation of German colonists in Banat. According to few his biographers, mainly Germans, the family Milleker probably originate somewhere from Meltal (Möltal) in Tirol. Its assumed that Millekers arrived as miners with German colonists in 1723 in Majdanpek (Serbia), moved in 1738 to Oravica (Romania), in 1763 they settled in Vršac¹.

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** National Museum Vršac, Republic of Serbia. E-mail: lili.num@hotmail.com.

¹ A. Scherer, *Felix Milleker (1858–1942) Persönlichkeit und Werk des Archäologen, Polyhistor und Schöpfers des Städtischen Museums zu Werschetz (Banat)*, München 1983, 13–14; idem; in *Neue-Deutsche-Biographie* (ed. Historischen Kommission

Milleker was active during the specific historical-political circumstances in the last decades of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy up to the World War II. According to his biographers he was known as “unpolitische Mensch” dedicated himself to work and museum. A German by heritage he was full of tolerance and understanding diversities of various nations in his native Banat. With a grate enthusiasm he recorded history and culture of different nations that used to live in south-east Pannonia.

Milleker was born in Vršac on 14 January 1858 in the family of craftswork. He attended the School for Teachers in Szeged between 1873–1877. Milleker started his work in 1878 as a teacher in Bela Crkva (then Weissenkirche) where he met L. Bem (Leonhard Böhm) the first known collector, writer

Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), 17. Band, Berlin 1994, 511; recently A. Medaković in: *Felix Milleker (1858–1942)*, Vršac 2008, 8. The short biographical records about Milleker activity and education are reused from quoted literature.

and researcher of the Roman period in Banat.² He had a great influence on young Milleker. Many years later in a monograph dedicated to the work and character of L. Bem he called himself one of his disciples.³ Following Bem's example Milleker began with researching antiquities and publishing in periodical *TRE*, edited in Timișoara⁴. From 1881 to 1883 he was a curator of the museum in Bela Crkva giving a great contribution for enlarging of its collections and their first opening for public. The extensive engagement of young Milleker in the Bela Crkva museum was noticed with great praises in reports of that time⁵.

Starting from 1883 Milleker's activity was directed to his home town Vršac. He first worked as a teacher, as a librarian from 1887 and in 1894 he was appointed as a curator of the museum in Vršac. In 1899 he completed a course for managers of archeological collections in Budapest, where the most famous archaeologists and numismatists of Hungary gave lectures, among others J. Hampel (József Hampel) on the subject of antique as well as L. Reti (László Réthy) and E. Gol (Ödön Gohl) on numismatics. In 1902 he completed a course for librarians in the same city.

During his work in the Vršac museum of many decades (1894–1942) he created a significant collections (by purchases, gifts, exchange, research) which contained over 130,000 items in 1939⁶. Milleker was established a General Inventory book (1894) for all museum collections in which

items were registered successively as they reached the museum as well as those that went to other museums across the Southern Hungary (Pančevo, Bela Crkva, Szeged, Timișoara, Budapest, etc.).

In the period from 1893 to 1935 he participated in numerous archaeological excavations in the Serbian and Romanian part of Banat mostly prehistoric, but thanks to him some Roman sites are recorded.

From 1881 almost to the very end of his life he had been publishing over 200 titles on history, archaeology and *ethnography* of Banat.

In 1920, he founded the edition "*Banater Bücherei*" dedicated to cultural history of Banat⁷.

Milleker was a member of many scientific societies: in 1880 he became a member of the Southern Hungarian Historical Archaeological Society (Timișoara), in 1901 of Hungarian Numismatic Society (Budapest), in 1914 of Scientific Department of Matica Srpska in Novi Sad. He was also the member of Literary Society „Arany János” and Natural Society of Banat (Timișoara) and one of founder of German Society for Prehistory in Berlin⁸.

Milleker had signed his works on three ways: Felix-Bódog-Srećko, depending of language they were published or translated: German, Hungarian, Serbish.

His heritage is probably not preserved as a whole and untill nowadays not completely published. The bibliography of Milleker has been published partially and uncompletely mostly by Germans authors dealing with different numbers of titles. The most completely bibliography was made by R. Rašajski (the curator of Vršac museum from 1945 to 1979). He registered 250 published and 37 unpublished works⁹.

This paper try to shed light on Milleker's work regard on antic basing mostly on his relevant published works according to Rašajski's bibliography. Besides, we singled out Milleker's contribution to study antic numismatic of Banat, provides by author investigations.

The work of F. Milleker in regard to research of the antique can be divided as follows:

² F. Milleker, Vorgeschichte des Banats II, *Starinar* XII, Beograd 1937, 61–62; L. Böhm (1833–1924), major of Bela Crkva, collected between 1856–1867 coins and material from the period of Antiquity mainly originated from Nova Palanka on the Danube and Bela Crkva. The part of personal collection of L. Böhm was purchased for the Vršac museum by his son K. Bem (Karl Böhm) between 1909–1936. The collection is recorded by Milleker in his Inventory book; for more details about personality of L. Böhm his work as researcher, writer with bibliography see in: F. Milleker, *Leonhard Böhm, der Monograph des Banats. Sein Leben und seine Werke*, 1833–1924, Bela Crkva (Weisskirchen im Banat) 1925, 1–17.

³ F. Milleker, *op. cit.*, 14.

⁴ This periodical started in 1875 was of great importance where for the first time, the most famous researchers of the region published in a continuous articles related to archaeology, numismatics and history of Banat. The periodical was edited by the Southern Hungarian Historical and Archaeological Society established in 1872 in Timișoara. Milleker became the member of the Society in 1880 and in 1881 he published his first article in their periodical.

⁵ L. Böhm, Egyveleg (Varia), *TRE* IX/IV, Temesvárott 1883, 187.

⁶ С. Милекер, *Вођ кроз збирку старина Градског музеја у Вршцу*, Вршац 1939, 4.

⁷ A. Medaković, *op. cit.*, 55–57. The author gives a completely review of *Banater Bucherei* issues (73 issues had been published from 1921–1941). We may notice that 59 of them were written by F. Milleker.

⁸ Ibidem, 27–28.

⁹ R. Rašajski, *Bibliografija radova Feliksa Millekera*, Vršac 1995, 29–138 with a short content of presented titles and review of previous incompletely bibliographies by Irene Elter and Kurt Wilfonseder. The unpublished works of Milleker are housed in the Historical Department of City Museum Vršac.

1. Publishing

The most significant articles and studies regard the antique were published between 1881–1902 in above mentioned periodical *TRE*. Some of them were published as special imprints or volumes due to their importance.

In 1881 Milleker published his first report on Roman antiquities from Banat, i.e. from Vršac and its vicinity. He recorded rest of water pipes and finds of Roman silver and bronze Roman coins from 2nd to 4th century¹⁰.

In 1883 he recorded the significant coin find from the Serbian and Romanian part of Banat: golden coin of Alexander the Great originated from Mercina (Romania)¹¹, several hoards of the Roman coins from the IV century originated from site Veliki Rit near Vršac which counted over 3000 coins of Constantine period, misplaced already in his time. Besides, the article contains two tables: the first presents precise plan of hoards sites while the second shows surface archaeological finds¹².

The early period of Milleker's publishing activity includes also the monography dedicated on archaeology and history of Vršac and its vicinity from praehistoric to Roman period. He described all previous Roman finds known to him up to 1885: the rest of roman architecture, two stone monuments with inscriptions, roman coins. All mentioned finds had been seen and lost before Milleker. Besides, he described the trace of Roman ditches near Vršac and the most important place mentioned in sources¹³.

The beginning of last decade of the 19th century was marked by Milleker interest regarding the antique toponyms mentioned in the sources for the territory of Banat sector of Roman province of Dacia. He made an attempt to indentify two significant stations marked in Roman itineraries as *Centum Putea* and *Arcidava* on the important

Roman road ran from *Lederata* (Serbia) to *Tibiscum* (Romania)¹⁴.

His assumed identification of the station Centum Putea with present place of the Surduk based on investigation by analogies in the modern toponymy and archaeological finds by earlier explorers is not confirmed. It should be point out Milleker's contribution to identification of antique station *Arcidava*¹⁵. According to chance archaeological objectives, previous explorers more than one century ago made an attempt to determine location of the station *Arcidava* in Vărădia (Romanian Banat). But starting from Milleker the archaeological evidence for such presumptions were reached. He made the first archaeological researches 1901–1902 at two locations in vicinity of Vărădia where he registered the rests of Roman architecture interpreting them as Roman fortification, as well rest of Roman pottery, lamps, iron finds, bricks with stamps, coins¹⁶. Later investigations carried out in 1932, especially from 1970s untill present-day, at points marked by Milleker, confirmed the existing of two Roman fortification (castra)¹⁷.

In folows years Milleker published mainly general studies refer to antic geography of Banat which are basically presentations of all known toponyms and hydronyms in Dacia mentioned in written sources and their identifications by other explorers. We emphasize his attempt to identify fortification *contra Margum* on the left bank of Danube mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* with locality of Grad in Kovin or with farmland of Manastirište east of Kovin. Milleker's assumptions based on the numerous finds of bricks with stamps at mention location have not been confirmed¹⁸.

In the period from 1892 to 1906 he published his most significant papers in periodical *TRE*. Some of them due to their importance were published as

¹⁰ B. Milleker, Régészeti közlemények Verseczről, *TRE* VII/III, Temesvárott 1881, 121–126; Milleker attributed water pipes to Roman period, but it most likely that they were from Türkisch period. The coins belonging to Divus Antoninus (1 silver issue) while Constantinus I and Maximinus I are represented by one bronze issue of each.

¹¹ Idem, Varia (Egyveleg), *TRE* IX/III, Temesvárott 1883, 152: according to Milleker the coin entered Bela Crkva museum.

¹² Idem, Ujabb délmagyarországi őstelepek, *TRE* IX/IV, Temesvárott 1883, 167–171 (Tb. I–II).

¹³ F. Milleker, *Die Werschetzer Gegend im Alterthume*, Werschetz 1885, 13: Milleker wrongly attributed Roman ditches to August period; he is not quite sure about identification modern Vršac with Bacaucis by Hungarian researcher K. Torma according sources (Ravennatis Anonymi): see p. 33.

¹⁴ Segmentum VII 2 according to K. Miller numbering in: *Itineraria romana. Römische Reisewege an Hand der Tabula Peutingeriana*, Stuttgart 1916.

¹⁵ B. Milleker, Centum putei, *TRE* VI/IV, Temesvárott 1890, 214–217.

¹⁶ Idem (I): 120; Milleker (II): 69–72; Milleker (III): 257–262.

¹⁷ Important vestiges found by Milleker still provide valuable informations for modern researches. See for instance: E. Iaroslavschi, O. Bozu, Raport preliminar privind principalele rezultate ale cercetărilor arheologice din castrul de pământ de pe dealul Chilii, *Banatica* 16, Reșița 2003, 295–300; E. Nemeth, O. Bozu, Noile săpături din castrul roman de la Vărădia-“Pusta” (jud. Caraș-Severin), *Banatica* 17, Reșița 2005, 201–210. The most of modern results are still unpublished.

¹⁸ Idem, Három aldunai római erőd, *AE* XXI, Budapest 1901: 28–34.

special imprints. We single out the study regarding *Roman Antiquities of the Southern Hungary* where he registered 103 Roman sites from the Romanian and Serbian part of Banat and described all Roman archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic findings (known until that time) together with the overall previously known references. Besides, he noted data on the year of discovery, method of acquisition, disposition (place of keeping): museums, institutions or private collection where finds reached to. The findings which were lost in his time were also described. The description of the Roman ditches routes in Banat was given at the end of this study¹⁹.

In the general study *South Hungary under Roman occupation* Milleker presented a well-known data on history of Roman province Dacia from Daco-Romans wars and its occupation from Traianus to the Roman withdrawal in the 70s of the third century. Besides, he summarised all known epigraphical and archaeological finds regarding military units known from Banat with complete bibliography²⁰.

The most complete and significant publication by Milleker, is his capital work in three volumes *The Antiquarian Finds from Southern Hungary*²¹. Two volumes of this Milleker's corpus were dedicated to the Roman findings which had been recorded in the area of then Southern Hungary. He described in detail the architectural remains, ceramics, plastics, jewelry, epigraphic monuments, Roman fortifications, bricks with stamps, coin findings, remains of the Roman roads with the detail review of all previously known references. Drawings and photographs of important finds with chart of Roman sites, roads and ditches are added. This is the first complete evidence of Roman finds originated from the territory of then Banat (Serbian and Romanian) with preserved data of documentary value. On the basis of Milleker's precisely records of finds and place of their depositions if they were known to him, some of them can be recognized not only in the collections of Vršac museum but also in Romania and Hungary.

Apart from these significant publications in Timișoara, in the period from 1896 to 1909 Milleker continuously sent annual reports

regarding the activity of Vršac museum in periodical *AE*, edited in Budapest. He registered number of items in all collections reached the museum in previous year, informations of acquisitions (purchases, donations, contributions made by institutions), numbers of visitors, informations on excavations and precious description of the most significant findings. We single out the data on some finds of coins: gold coin of Diocletianus discovered in Veliko Središte in the vicinity of Vršac²² (recognized in collection), silver barbarian tetradrahm of Filip Macedonian from Gaj (dispersed)²³.

Milleker's last papers on the Roman antiquities were published in 1937 and 1941. They were printed in Vršac as a part of *Banater Bücherei* edition which was, as we said, founded by him²⁴. We deal with two small monographs dedicated to the most significant ancient monuments from Vršac and its vicinity known to him (roman pottery, bricks with stamps, epigraphic finds, jewelry, plastic). Besides, he was registered the finds which were lost before his activity.

2. Archeological researches

Milleker's terrain work was mostly focused towards investigations of prehistoric sites. Regarding the antic Milleker constantly visited antic sites, recording and gathering material, making drawings of fortifications, plans of find spots, and collecting of data on previous known accidental findings. The only antic archaeological investigations by Milleker were carried out 1901–1902 in the vicinity of Vărădia at two points. As we mentioned above Milleker presumed that it could have been location of the antique *Arcidava*²⁵.

3. Creation of collections

During his work in the museum of several decades he formed rich collections particularly archaeological and numismatic. Milleker persistently enlarged the museum collections by purchases mostly from individuals, by gifts²⁶, and

¹⁹ Idem, Dél-Magyarország római régiségleletei, *TRE VIII/II–III*, Temesvárott 1892, 101–143. The sites are noted together with the names of counties they belonged in XIX century: Temes, Torontál, Krassó-Szörény. The significance of this article is noted in periodical *AE XII* 1892, 440.

²⁰ Idem, Dél-magyarország a római alatt, *TRE IX/I*, Temesvárott 1893, 1–38.

²¹ Idem, *Dél-Magyarország régiség leletei a honfoglalás előtti időkből*, Temesvár (I: 1897; II: 1899; III: 1906).

²² Idem, A verseczi városi múzeum, *AE XX*, Budapest 1900, 90.

²³ Idem, A verseczi városi múzeum, *AE XXII*, Budapest 1902, 191.

²⁴ F. Milleker, *Denkmäler des Glaubenslebens im römischen Banat*, *Banater Bücherei* LXI, Wersches 1937, 1–14; Idem, *Römisches Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe*, *Banater Bücherei* LXXIII, Wersches 1941, 1–20. The significant find are two (lost) monument with inscriptions found in Vršac park between 1828–1850.

²⁵ See *supra* notes: 15–16.

²⁶ Besides others Ignjat Weifert, the owner of the mine in Kostolac donated to Vršac museum in 1900: 32 specimens of bronze coins of Viminacium, 121 specimens of silver coins of

excavations²⁷. Thanks to him, the Vršac museum possesses significant antique findings originated from Banat. We single out the golden bracelet with Latin and Greek inscription which was found in Vatin – purchased in 1897, published in *CIL*²⁸, the rare specimen of aureus of Diocletianus originated from Veliko Središte – purchased in 1899²⁹; a fragment of Roman military diploma from Banatska Palanka³⁰. Milleker bought for the Museum in several purchases the significant antique collection of L. Bem³¹. Thanks to Milleker the museum of Vršac possess a significant numismatic collection, especially Medieval coinage.

4. General Inventory Book

Thanks to Milleker in 1894 a *General Inventory Book* was established for all the museum collections. He registered all items successively as they reached the museum from 1894 till 1940 – nearly to the end of his life. He noted data on their origin, method of acquisition, general informations on items, place of deposit. Unfortunately, the majority of items is classified in general terms such as: Roman coins, Macedonian coin, barbarian coin, Roman pottery, bricks with seals, lamps, remains of architecture etc. Some items can be recognized by comparing inventory records with more detail informations in above mentioned corpus and periodicals (*TRE*, *AE*).

Conclusion

Milleker's heritage has not been to present-day completely investigated. The work of Milleker on discovery and study of antiquities of his native Banat was done over the period of six decades (1881–1941). The results of his long-term work are well-known to many researcher of antic archaeology and numismatic of present-day Serbian and Romanian Banat, in southern eastern Pannonia. In his above mentioned periodicals and his corpus (*The antiquarian Finds in South*

Hungary II–III) he published all known antic finds with precise topographic-geographical data. Besides, he registered many microtoponyms and hydronyms occur in Banat. His corpus has been cited in refferent literary starting from the first decades of 20th century and still is, confirming his map of finds and can only be supplemented with new findings.

Having in mind that archaeological investigations of Roman period after Milleker have been extremely rare and many significant sites have been lost by spreading of urban settlements, his records of Roman period on the territory of Banat are nearly only saved for us.

Although, Milleker's informations had been given on the scientific level of 19th century, according to modern investigations were not complete (we deal with accidental finds without archaeologic context), it must be point out that they still represent the basic source and starting point for each research of ancient archaeology, history and numismatic in all areas that once composed historic Banat.

His precise locations of finds and remains of architecture related to zone of Banatska Palanka and nearby island of Sapaja on the left bank of Danube, were used as the source before starting of archaeological excavations in the 1970's prior to the construction of the hydroelectric power station Iron Gate I³².

The most important items (mainly from Bem's collection) have been published in the last decades of 20th century. Unfortunately, some of them are wrongly attributed according to location of the finding as a result of non-consulting Milleker Inventory and published reports in periodical³³.

Without going deeper into his discussing the antique toponyms and attempts to locate some of them we single out his researches in the area of

the Roman Republic, and 3 specimens of Roman Imperial: General Inventory nr. 11/30.03.1900.

²⁷ Archaeological and numismatic material discovered during excavations in Vărădia in 1901: General Inventory nr. 5/8.07.1901.

²⁸ General Inventory: nr. 18/25.03.1897, *CIL* III, 14496,4.

²⁹ General Inventory: nr. 5/29. 06.1899; published: Lj. Bakic, Aureus Dioklecijana iz zbirke vršačkog muzeja, *GMB* 11/12, Pančevo 2002, 47–51.

³⁰ Archaeological department, Vršac museum: Inv. no. Aa 3329, Mileker's number 12636, unpublished; we possess only data of the provenience according to list of localities and Milleker's numbers done in German language probably during World War II.

³¹ About L. Böhm and his collection see: *supra*, note 1 and *infra*, note 34.

³² The finds from Banatska Palanka and nearby island of Sapaja often have not been distinguished due to uncarefully readings of Milleker records. Even some findings originated from Serbia and Romania were published with the wrong attribution to Banatska Palanka or island of Sapaja: about contradictions see in: D. Dimitrijević, Sapaja, rimsko i srednjevekovno utvrđenje na ostrvu kod Stare Palanke, *Starinar* XXXIII–XXXIV (1982–1983), Beograd 1984, 32–33 with notes 11–19.

³³ The most significant pieces of jewelry and figurines from Bem's collection have been published in Serbian periodicals and catalogues; the ceramic material with inscription was published in *IDR* III/I: 34–39. Review of the published material and contradictions according to their precise location in: Димитријевић (1982–1983: 32–33); S. Barački, *Arheološko nalazište na dunavskoj adi kraj Stare Palanke*, Vršac 1995: 18–20.

Vărădia where he looked for antique Arcidava. His precious informations on previous finds and his own researches were single out in modern investigations. Many of his results have to be confirmed archaeologically in future.

Milleker's heritage has not been to present-day completely investigated. Milleker's archive which is kept in City Museum Vršac contains 37 unpublished titles refer mostly to history of sites in Banat, cultural history of various nations and institutions, prehistoric archaeology etc.

Any masters and doctoral theses concerning of Milleker's work have not been done to present-day. Results of his long-term researches are so great that are fascinating even nowadays.

For his outstanding work Milleker received several prestigious awards, such as the "St. Sava" of Serbia (1923), the medals of Numismatic Society in Budapest (1901), Deutsche Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart (1928), Deutsche Akademie in Munich (1934).

