

MEN* ANEIKETOS

IN A BI-LINGUAL INSCRIPTION FROM DACIA

Fifty years ago an inscription was found at Potaissa (now called Turda), whose text is of special importance for finding out the dissemination of the cults of Oriental divinities in Roman Dacia. The monument was discovered in the autumn of 1910, among the ruins of a Roman building, east of Dealul Cetății (Várhegy)¹, a modern name corresponding to the Roman castrum of the 5th Macedonica legion of Potaissa. After its discovery, the inscription went to the private collection of István Téglás of Turda², and is now in the collection of the lapidarium of the National Antiquities Museum of Bucharest (fig. 1).

The inscription was carved in a calcareous block in the shape of a common altar, having a capital with a tympanon on one of the sides, which formed a framework for an ornament in the middle in the shape of a small rosette and leaves. The upper part of the capital has a small hollow in the shape of a vessel. As a result of the examination of the monument and from Téglás' drawing (fig. 2), it was inferred that the capital was most deteriorated, especially the right-hand corner. The size of the monument is that of a small altar, with a height of 70 cm and a breadth of 23 cm. The letters, which are not too deeply carved, are not longer than 3 cm. When the inscription was discovered, although in some places they were faint, the letters were still beautiful and most of them sufficiently clear.

On examining the text more carefully, one finds that the monument is actually a bi-lingual inscription; the first two lines are a Greek text made up of two words, while the last three letters of the second line are the beginning of a Latin text which continues the inscription.

* As general bibliography for the god MEN see: J. Smirnoff, *Über den phrygischen Gott Men* Στῆφάνος, St. Petersburg, 1895; P. Perdrizet, *Men*, in BCH, XX, 1896, p. 55–106; W. Drexler, *MEN* (Μήν) *der phrygische Mondgott*, in *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (W. Roscher), II, 2, Leipzig, col. 2687–2770;

A. Legrand, *Lunus*, in DA, III, 2, p. 1392–1398; Lesky, *Men*, in RE, XV, col. 689–697.

¹ I. Téglás, *Potaissai feliratok és domborművek*, in AE, XXXV, 1915, p. 46, fig. 3.

² Concerning the remarkable archaeological and epigraphical activity of I. Téglás, see note by I. I. Russu, in «Materiale», VI, 1959, p. 878.

Because of its bi-lingual character, the inscription faced Téglás with certain difficulties, especially as concerns the first lines, where, in fact the text was most deteriorated. Of the whole epigraph Téglás was only able to read lines 3 — 4, *Marcianus signifer*. When the original was re-examined, taking into account also Téglás' reproduction, it was clear enough that in the first line appears the letter μ (*my*) with the bars rounded off, as one meets in other Greek inscriptions of the Roman epoch³. The next letter is certainly H (*eta*) and not E (*epsilon*), since as we shall see further on *epsilon* also appears rounded off. The space, however, makes us suppose that here was the ligature with the next letter N (*ny*), therefore HN, the common ligature in Greek



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

epigraphy⁴, also used in an inscription from Dacia⁵. We thus obtain without any difficulty the dative of the name of the god MHNI, known on the monuments and coins of Asia Minor. Then follows ANEI which goes on in line 2 with IKHΩ. The last letter can only be *omega*, written as ω, a shape met on Greek monuments of the Roman epoch⁶, and also found in Dacia⁷. The

³ W. Larfeld, *Griechische Epigraphik*, Munich, 1914, p. 271.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁵ C. Daicoviciu, in «Dacia», VII—VIII, 1937—1940, p. 302, fig. 1.

⁶ W. Larfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

⁷ CIL, III, 1107, 7740 a, 7762, 7781 (= CIG 6815 b); CIG, 6913 (=CIL, III, p. 230); C. Daicoviciu, in AISC, I, 1, 1928—1932, p. 85, fig. 3 a; idem, ACMIT, IV, 1932—1938, p. 392, fig. 38;

word is therefore ANEIKH(Ω), which can only be explained as the mistaken writing of the word ANEIKHT(Ω), a mistake probably due to a lapicide who knew little of the Greek language and writing.

The inscription therefore is as follows:

MHNI ANEI	Μήνι ἀνει-
IKH(Ω) AVR	<ι>κή(τ)φ <i>Aur(elius)</i>
MARCIANVS	<i>Marcianus</i>
.IGNIFER	[s]ignifer
.L-G VOTO	[e]g(ionis) voto
POSVIT	posuit.

What is important is the epithet 'ἀνείκητος which does not accompany the name of this god in the Greek and Latin dedications known so far⁸.

The dedicatory *Aur. Marcianus* was a *signifer leg. V. Mac.*, a military unit stationed at Potaissa. This is not the only instance at Potaissa of the lack of an indication of the military unit⁹. As is testified by epigraphic documents, this legion, whose garrison was at Troesmis and then, after 168/9 at Potaissa¹⁰, recruited most of its soldiers from the territories of the old Italic colonies in Asia Minor¹¹. One may therefore assert that *Aur. Marcianus*' homeland was also a province in Asia Minor, whence he brought this divinity. At Potaissa, however, *Men* is not the only deity from Asia Minor; recently, an altar was discovered in the same locality, probably dedicated by a soldier of the same unit to *Iovi Sabazio*, a divinity from Asia Minor too¹².

As for the date of the inscription, the fact that the dedicatory was a *signifer leg. V. Mac.*, makes it possible to fix a date subsequent to the year 168/9, when the legion was brought from Troesmis to Potaissa. The graphic of the Greek letters E, M, (Ω), makes us think, however, more of the years of the 3rd than of the 2nd century¹³. The lack of a praenomen to the name of the dedicatory also seems to point to the 3rd century. Moreover, the gentilium *Aurelius* becomes more frequent only during the reign of Emperor Caracalla. The whole name, *Aur. Marcianus*, is met in the Danubian provinces only in the 3rd century, and in most cases only after Caracalla's reign¹⁴.

The inscription of Potaissa is the second altar in Dacia bearing the name of the god *Men*. The epithet ἀνείκητος, which is not proper to *Men* and is not met elsewhere connected with the name of this god, makes us infer a possible fusion with the cult of the god Mith-

idem, in «Dacia», VII–VIII, 1937–1940, p. 302, fig. 1 and 2.

⁸ For *Men*'s epithets see: L. Heuzey-H. Daumet, *Mission Archéologique de Macédoine*, Texte, Paris 1876, p. 390; C.F.H. Bruchmann, *Epitheta deorum quae apud poetas Graecos leguntur*, Leipzig, 1893, p. 170; Perdrizet, *op. cit.*, p. 86–88; Drexler, *op. cit.*, 2750 sqq.; Cecil Smith, in BCH, 1899, pl. I; Legrand, *op. cit.*, p. 1395; J. Keil-A. Premerstein, *Bericht über eine zweite Reise in Lydien*, Vienna, 1911, p. 109; G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, Munich, 1912, p. 326–327; O. Kern, *Die Religion der Griechen*, I, Berlin, 1926, p. 155; II, Berlin, 1938, p. 60, 143–144; Lesky, *op. cit.*, col. 694 sqq.; Johanna Schmidt, in RE, XX, 656; J. H.

Jongkees, *Mnemosyne*, VI, 1938, p. 364; C. Daicovicu, in «Dacia», VII–VIII, 1937–1940, p. 310.

⁹ CIL, III, 887, 895, 6255, 7672, 7675, 7688.

¹⁰ C. Daicovicu, *La Transylvanie dans l'antiquité*, Bucharest, 1945, p. 99.

¹¹ R. Vulpe, in SCIV, IV, 1953, p. 559–560; Ritterling, in RE, XII, 1585; cf. also CIL, III, 7503, 12489 and V. Pârvan in ARMSI, XXXV, 1912–1913, p. 493–502.

¹² I. I. Russu, in *Din activitatea Muzeelor noastre*, I, 1955, p. 102–103.

¹³ W. Larfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 271–272.

¹⁴ See CIL, III, 1317, 8117, 8707, 12666, 12899, 13137, 14564.

ras¹⁵. It is therefore possible that the popularity of Mithras in Dacia should have had certain consequences on the other Oriental divinities too. We must also take into consideration the religious syncretism of the second and third centuries in the eastern Latin provinces, which were in direct touch with the East. We also wish to recall that at Potaissa Mithras' cult was one of the most widespread, even among the soldiers of the 5th Macedonica legion¹⁶.

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¹⁵ In connection with the Mithras-Men inter-fusion see Wissowa, *op. cit.*, p. 373; Drexler, *op. cit.*, 2757. Yet, as concerns the inscription of Kavaia (Heuzey-Daumet, *op. cit.*, p. 390 = CIL, III, 603) I O P (or I O R) MENI AVG, we dare not propose the reading *i (nvicto) o (mni) p (otenti) Meni aug (usto)*. It seems more likely that we have here an *interpretatio Romana* materialized through the dedication I O M MENI AVG (the last letter in line I is rather M than P or R). For the epithet *invictus* used in Dacia and the possible fusion of the cult of Mithras

with that of other gods, see M. Macrea in AISC, V, 1944–1948, p. 228–231.

¹⁶ CIL, III, 899 (= Fr. Cumont, *Textes et Monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, II, Brussels 1896, p. 131, 232, p. 317–318 no. 204, p. 490), 900 (= *Ibidem*, p. 132, no. 233, p. 318 no. 205), 6255 (= *Ibidem*, p. 132 no. 234, p. 318–319 no. 206), 7685 (= *Ibidem*, p. 132 no. 235), 7686; *Ibidem*, p. 319 no. 207, fig. 180; I. I. Russu, in « *Materiale* » VI, 1959 p. 881.