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NEW EPIGRAPHIC MONUMENTS FROM RATIARIA AND ITS TERRITORY

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The article presents 17 recently discovered epigraphic monuments from the Roman colony *Ratiaria (Moesia superior)* and its territory. Fourteen of the monuments (Nos. 1-13) were found during rescue excavations or surveying on terrain between 2010 and 2012. Three of them (Nos. 14-17) were donated to the National Museum of History in November 2013. All inscriptions are Latin. Most of the inscriptions have been unpublished until now, for four of them (Nos. 11, 15-17) this is second publication.¹

The inscriptions dedicated to the Emperor are listed first (Nos. 1-5). One partially preserved inscription, erected for the health of Emperor Antoninus (Caracalla) and his mother Julia Domna, mentions the construction of a *schola* and erecting an inscription in municipal land (*concessa*, which probably refers to *area*?). The rest of the letters A and probably R after the word *schola* could suggest a possible reading as *schola ar[maturarum]*, since *Ratiaria* could have provided a base for the Moesian navy (*classis Flavia Moesiaca*) and one such *schola armaturarum* (of the Misene Fleet) has been already epigraphically attested in *Misenum*.² This construction could be interpreted as an act of benevolence of municipality (or even the Emperor?) towards the Moesian Fleet. It is hard to be said whether this act had something to do with Antoninus' presence and activities on the Middle and Lower Danube around 214 AD. Other two fragmented dedications (Nos. 2-3) mention solely the titles of an unknown Emperor. Judging by the word *sanctissimus* and the title *princeps*, the inscription No. 2. probably also refers to Antoninus - Caracalla (as a sole ruler or *princeps iuventutis*?). The third inscription (No. 3.) provides the second testimony so far for the presence of personnel of the *portorium publicum Illyrici* in *Ratiaria* and it is likely to be dated in the time of Marcus Aurelius or Commodus. Another inscription (No. 4) was dedicated to the *genius* of the two ruling Emperors and was raised

1. Thorough commentaries on Nos. 15-17 s. in Stoev, K., Iv. Hristov: Epigraphic monuments from Ratiaria. - In: Proceedings of the National Museum of History, Sofia. Vol. XXVI, 2014: 77-88.

2. An inscription from Naissus, Moesia superior (IMS IV 31) testifies that legionary soldiers were trained for sailors in the province.

by the *collegius (!) fabrum* of the colony. The fourth and fifth surviving lines presents the words *praefectur(a) CHELTITIANI*. The prefectures are an earlier administrative entity in *Moesia*, so the last word could be hardly interpreted as a name of geographical or administrative unit. More probably the expression should be deciphered as *praefectura C(aii) Helvii Titiani*. Thus, the inscription must have been raised during the prefecture of a certain *C. Helvius Titianus*, *praefectus collegii fabrum* and probably also *praefectus i.d.* of the City. It seems that the monument should be dated in the time of the Severian dynasty (the co-rule of Septimius Severus and Antoninus). This is the first evidence of such extraordinary magistrate in this town.

The presented votive monuments, dedicated to different deities of the Roman *Pantheon*, provide us with new information about town's religious landscape. Thus, No. 7 informs about the construction of shrine and statue of *Aesculapius*. The epithet of the god *Ratiarensis* probably shows that *Aesculapius* had considerable importance as protector of the town. The next inscription (No. 8) attests the construction of a temple in honour of *Apollo*, sponsored by an *Augustalis*. The new votive inscriptions enrich our knowledge about the *Pantheon* of *Ratiaria* by mentioning the god *Aesculapius* for the first time in the town; No. 5 mentions *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* as *Conservator* and No. 6 gives the first evidence for the worship of „All gods” - *omnium deorum* - in *Ratiaria*. An inscription (No. 5) from the late Roman times attests *Aurelius Priscus*, a *praeses* of the Roman province of *Dacia Ripensis*.

The building inscription, dedicated to *Aesculapius* presents some epigraphical peculiarities. We don't find any traces of *verbum aedificandi* on the stone. The construction was undertaken by divine order, but instead of traditional expression as *ex iussu Hygiae* we find *iussit Hygia*. The name of the dedicator was *Antonius*, his office remains unknown - maybe *Antonius p(ontifex?)*. Besides the initial sum (unfortunately also unknown), we find another 3000 sesterces, mentioned at the end of the inscription. Judging by the letters, the inscription should be dated in the first half of 2nd Century AD.

The rest of the inscriptions (9 - 17) are grave *stelae*. Among them we find three tombstones that belonged to families of ordinary citizens (No. 9, 15, 17), two inscriptions that attest the military (12, 13) and four inscriptions erected in memory of *augustales* of *colonia Ulpia Ratiaria* (10, 11, 12 again, 16). Particularly revealing is No. 16. It is an eloquent testimony for a close link between members of the town aristocracy and the „middle class” – *ordo augustalium*. Both orders seem to be connected through patronage. No. 12 seems to provide an evidence about the relations between the „military man” of slightly higher statute and the *augustales*, since the *decurio* of *ala numeri Illyricorum* (stationed in *Dacia*) was probably a patron (?) of the *augustalis* mentioned at the end of the inscription. We must point at the fact that *Ratiaria* continues to be a site which offers an abundance of *augustales* - inscriptions (15 until now, listed in the table). This is a testimony of their important role in the society.

At the end of the article are listed three fragments of Latin inscriptions, found at *decumanus maximus* of the colony.