

# Votive monuments from Dacia Superior in Lugosi Fodor András' manuscript

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**Abstract.** The present study presents two votive monuments from Dacia Superior that in the nineteenth century Lugosi Fodor András saw and documented. I have identified the items as among those depicting Mithraic and the Dolichenian iconography, I have detailed their typological identification, and have provided a brief discussion of the religious context in which they must be placed.

**Keywords:** Lugosi Fodor András, votive monuments, Dacia Superior, Mithras, Dolichenus.

**Rezumat. Monumente votive din Dacia Superior în manuscrisul lui Lugosi Fodor András.** Studiul de față prezintă două monumente cu caracter votiv din Dacia Superior văzute și consemnate în secolul al XIX-lea de Lugosi Fodor András. Am identificat piesele ca aparținând iconografiei mitraice, respectiv dolicheniene și am realizat încadrarea lor tipologică, precum și o scurtă discuție asupra contextului religios în care trebuie plasate.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Lugosi Fodor András, monumente votive, Dacia Superior, Mithras, Dolichenus.

The manuscript left by Lugosi Fodor András (1780? - 1859) has only been partially published. As a surgeon in the county of Hunedoara and a passionate collector of antiquities and art objects, Fodor András has noted down for decades his observations on monuments and ancient artifacts that he saw in the area where he practiced, but also in other parts of Transylvania<sup>1</sup>. His heirs have donated the manuscript to the Transylvanian Museum Society and it is currently kept at the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Csörgő 1998, *passim*; Ferenczi 1914, *passim*; Wollmann 1982, 44sq; Russu, 1972, 647; Bodor 1995, 78-79.

<sup>2</sup> BCU no. 754 (Special Collections, manuscripts *Lugosi Fodor András Kézirata*), vol. I-VIII; <http://dspace.bcucluj.ro/handle/123456789/22029>.

Out of the eight volumes, the first five (I, II, III, IV, V) are in fact several variants in Hungarian and German of the text that Fodor was about to publish. The final three volumes (VI, VII, VIII) contain drawings, in several variants, of the items inventoried in the text. One must nevertheless note that there are significant differences among the drawings he made of one and the same item; the differences envisage not only the drawing manner but also the details, dimensions, and proportions. After a brief introduction, the text presents the narration of the Dacian wars, the transformation of Dacia into a Roman province, the history of the province, and the period after its abandonment until the time of Constantine the Great. The author then repertories the settlements where Roman antiquities had been found, structuring them thus: the county of Hunedoara, Lower Alba, and Turda, and then the other monuments from Ardeal, Oltenia, Banat, and Hungary. The settlements are structured alphabetically and presented geographically and historically. The city of Deva is presented amply and the corresponding plates numbered from XII to XXXII. Fodor "inventoried" circa 165 monuments and small artifacts among which some are medieval or even modern. In some cases the author mentions the collections and the houses where he saw the items, and to the best of his knowledge the place where they had been discovered. In such cases one can note the fact that some of the inventoried artifacts had been found outside Deva, especially at Vețel (*Micia*)<sup>3</sup>.

Plate XXI (Tab. XXI) illustrates five sculptural fragments (Pl. I), but no information on their origin is available in the text. Fodor describes the items thus: a) marble fragment with the depiction of Phaeton or some other character; b) sandstone base that preserves the depiction of a human leg and the inscription *Longinus*; c) male head made of limestone, statue fragment; d) marble fragment with the depiction of a priest sacrificing a wild animal on an altar; e) female head made of marble, statue fragment<sup>4</sup>. I was mainly interest in fragments a) and d) that can be clearly identified typologically. The other items, all statue fragments, allow for several interpretations due to their fragmentary state and lack of specific attributes, thus rendering their identification an almost futile initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/handle/123456789/22029> (BCUCLUJ\_FCC\_MS754I-VIII); Csergő 1998, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> BCUCLUJ\_FCC\_MS754II; BCUCLUJ\_FCC\_MS754VI.

The first envisaged item, (a), is according to Fodor a fragment of white marble depicting a seminude character in a triumphal chariot, holding the horses' reins. The character might be Phaeton or some other divine entity. The item measured one Viennese foot in height.

Analyzing the image carefully, I must partially agree with the author: one notes a chariot, probably a *quadriga*, with the front wheel nicely detailed. There are also three horses at a gallop, with the forelegs raised up high. In the chariot a seminude character holds the reins in his left hand. The lower part of the fragment depicts a lintel, probably the lower part of the sculptural piece.

This is one of the typical scenes associated to the tauroctony scene and the fragment is part of a Mithraic relief. Decorated with either two or three figurative rows, Mithraic reliefs depict the tauroctony scene in the main row and a series of episodes from the Mithraic legend in the upper row, the lower row, or around the central scene. The number of scenes and their selection varies from one item to the next, but they most frequently depict the following episodes: Sol in a chariot, the birth of Mithras from the rock, the miracle of the water, the bull in the boat, the bull in the temple, Mithras Taurophoros, the reconciliation between Sol and Mithras, Sol's consecration, Mithras hunting, the initiation, the sacred banquet, and Mithras' apotheosis in the presence of Oceanus<sup>5</sup>. In case of the item under discussion, it is part of the lower figurative row, depicting the apotheosis scene: Mithras climbs into Sol's chariot that rises on the firmament while from below Oceanus looks at them<sup>6</sup>. The characters are always turned to the right. On the left, Mithras is aided by Sol, on the right, to climb into the *quadriga*. Sol holds the reins of the horses that are depicted at a gallop, rearing up high, their position suggesting the moment of take off. The fragment under discussion only partially preserves the depiction of Sol's body and the *quadriga*, but the identification is certain. From an iconographic perspective, according to the LIMC, the scene can be included in type XI. D. *Auffahrt des Mithras mit Sol im Wagen*. I. *Sol reicht dem aufsteigenden Mithras die Hand*. The fragment preserves nothing from the right corner of the relief, but one can presume that Oceanus was once depicted there (XI. D. I. d. γ. *Mithras, Sol und Oceanus*. In *Quadriganach r.*)<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Toutain 1909, 235-238; Le Glay 1978, 279-285; Clauss 1990, 71-110; Cumont 2007, 136-145; Cumont 1896-1899, I, 159-179.

<sup>6</sup> LIMC, VI, 1, 1992, 611-614; 624-625, s. v. Mithras, [R. Vollkommer].

<sup>7</sup> LIMC, VI, 1, 1992, 614, s. v. Mithras, [R. Vollkommer].

The shape of the relief cannot be reconstructed in all certainty and the original number of figurative rows is uncertain. Nevertheless, in the context of the entire Mithraic iconographic repertory from Dacia<sup>8</sup>, the fragment most probably belonged to a rectangular relief with three rows. On such reliefs the apotheosis scene was usually placed in the lower row, closing the illustrated mythical narrative (Pl. II/1). As for the dimensions of the item, the manuscript mentions the fact that it measured one foot (= one Viennese foot), namely 31.601 cm. One can estimate that the lower row had a height of circa 40 cm, thus rendering the total height of the item of more than one meter. In this case, the relief might have been the central relief of a *mithraeum* (Kultbild).

In Roman Dacia, 17 reliefs depict the above mentioned scene. They were found in Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa - 6, Apulum - 4, Slăveni - 3, Sucidava - 2, Romula - 1, and one unknown location. The items from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and Slăveni were discovered in *mithraea*<sup>9</sup>.

The cult of Mithras has enjoyed great popularity in the province of Dacia<sup>10</sup>. During the Imperial Era the god of the mysteries was identified with Sol and this brought it closer to official and imperial religion and ensured for it a significant role in the devotion of soldiers. The fact that it had the character of an invincible divinity and the solar and soteriological dimension of the divine personality have aided the diffusion of the cult in all strata of society in an even manner, without ethnical specificities. Thus, in a strongly militarized province such as Dacia, the number of Mithraic monuments is considerable in the urban centers and in the proximity of the camp<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Sicoe 2014, 137-258.

<sup>9</sup> Cumont 1896-1899, nr. 137a, fig. 121, nr. 137b, fig. 122, nr. 165, fig. 148, nr. 167, fig. 150; nr. 169, fig. 152, nr. 170, nr. 171, fig. 154, nr. 180, fig. 161, nr. 192 bis, fig. 168, nr. 199, nr. 211, nr. 270, nr. 271, nr. 273, 279; CIMRM nr. 1972, fig. 513, nr. 1958-1959, fig. 512, nr. 1975-1976, fig. 515, nr. 2034-2035, fig. 533, nr. 2036, fig. 534, nr. 2044-2045, fig. 538, nr. 2048-2049, fig. 540, nr. 2051, fig. 542, nr. 2052, fig. 543, nr. 2166, nr. 2167, nr. 2171, fig. 591, nr. 2182, fig. 595, nr. 2187, fig. 598; Sicoe 2014, nr. 30, Abb. 77, nr. 40, Abb. 25, nr. 41, Abb. 95, nr. 43, Abb. 87, nr. 111, Abb. 98, nr. 113, Abb. 92, nr. 118, Abb. 53, nr. 119, Abb. 79, nr. 120, Abb. 80, nr. 129, Abb. 89, nr. 219, Abb. 108, nr. 232, Abb. 104, nr. 241, Abb. 109, nr. 242, Abb. 90, nr. 244, Abb. 145, nr. 248, Abb. 105, nr. 251, Abb. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Sicoe 2014, *passim*;

<sup>11</sup> Nemeti 2005, 309-316; Popescu 2004, 126-130.

The second fragment envisaged here is the item labeled d) in Fodor's list, described as an altar made of white marble, measuring seven fingers in height, supporting the head of a bull with the neck pierced by a priest with a knife that he holds in the right hand; the upper and lower parts are missing.

A close analysis of the image reveals a male character in military costume, wearing a *lorica anatomica* with lambrequins over a short *tunica* that reveals the legs until above the knees, and a *paludamentum* on the shoulders. On the chest one finds a good representation of the *balteus*, placed diagonally, over the right shoulder and down to the left hip, supporting the *pugio* sheath. The handle of the *pugio* can be seen protruding from the sheath. The contraposto is on the left leg; the right arm is missing, but the left is extended in front of the body, the hand holding an object of which only the lower part has been preserved, prolonged or slightly conical in shape. On the left side of the person, at pelvic level, one can note the head and chest of a bull.

This is a statuette or a relief depicting Iupiter Dolichenus. The posture is classical: the god in military costume, probably wearing the Phrygian bonnet on his head, standing on the bull, holds the double axe in his raised right hand and the bundle of lightning bolts in his left hand, extended in front of the body<sup>12</sup> (Pl. II/2). According to the LIMC, the item is to be included in type I. A. *Iuppiter Dolichenus allein*. I. *Mit bedenen Füßen auf einem Stier stehend*<sup>13</sup>. According to Fodor's manuscript, the fragment measures 7 fingers (= Viennese fingers), namely 18.430 cm. Adding the approximate size of the missing elements – the god's head, the body of the bull, the possible base in case of a statuette or an epigraphic field in case of a relief, one can estimate that the entire item measured between 30 and 40 de cm and was an *ex voto*.

Eight such depictions of Iupiter Dolichenus standing on the bull are known from Roman Dacia (envisaging here only those cases when the depiction of the bull has been preserved). These are marble statuary groups, bronze statuettes, and reliefs made of marble and bronze that were found in Porolissum - 3, Potaissa -1, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa - 1, Surducu Mare - 1, Răcari - 1, and an unknown place - 1<sup>14</sup>. The items from Porolissum were discovered in the temple of Dolichenus.

<sup>12</sup> Merlat 1960, 31-35; Hörig 1984, 2140-2142.

<sup>13</sup> LIMC, V, 1, 1990, 422, s. v. Iupiter Dolichenus [R. Vollkommer].

<sup>14</sup> Berciu/Petolescu 1976, nr. 7, pl. III, 3; nr. 28, pl. X, nr. 30, pl. XI; nr. 34, pl. XII/3; Florescu/Miclea 1979, nr. 53, fig. 47; CCID nr. 135; nr. 142, nr. 158, Taf. XXX; nr. 170,

A celestial god, a military god *par excellence*, Iupiter Dolichenus is attested in Roman Dacia by a significant number of sculptural and epigraphic monuments. The ample diffusion of the cult in both the civilian and the military environments is demonstrated by the concentration of votive monuments in cosmopolite urban centers and in the proximity of the castra<sup>15</sup>.

The items presented and identified here complete the Mithraic and Dolichenian repertoires from Dacia. Mithras and Iupiter Dolichenus are the most popular gods from the group of oriental divinities in the pantheon of this province. One cannot state with certainty where the items have been found in Dacia Superior, but they were most probably found in Micia, as many other monuments and artifacts that Fodor András saw in various collections from Deva.

The manuscripts of modern collectors and antiquarians record a significant number of the most varied Roman monuments and artifacts. Many of the items have disappeared since then and modern notes are in fact the only kind of documentation available. Naturally, many of these items have been published over time, but rarely in an extensive manner. The study of manuscripts left behind by modern antiquarians still holds the possibility of new “discoveries”.

## Illustrations

Pl. I. Fodor’s manuscript, page XXI.

Pl. II. 1. Mithraic relief from Apulum ([ubi-erat-lupa.com](http://ubi-erat-lupa.com), no. 17299); 2. Iupiter Dolichenus from Savaria ([ubi-erat-lupa.com](http://ubi-erat-lupa.com), no. 8422).

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nr. 174, Taf. XXXIII; Sanie 1981, nr. 12; Gudea/Tamba 2001, nr. 2, fig. 18-19, nr. 3, fig. 20-21; Gudea 2001, 166-172; Nemeti 2005, nr. 206, 207, 225, 228, 234, 240, 242, 255.

<sup>15</sup> Balla 1976, 61-66; Kan 1979, 13-22, 53-57; Nemeti 2005, 227, 352-336; Popescu 2004, 135-140.

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Pl. I



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Pl. II