

Digital Edition of Roman Inscriptions from Serbia: A Work in Progress

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Introduction

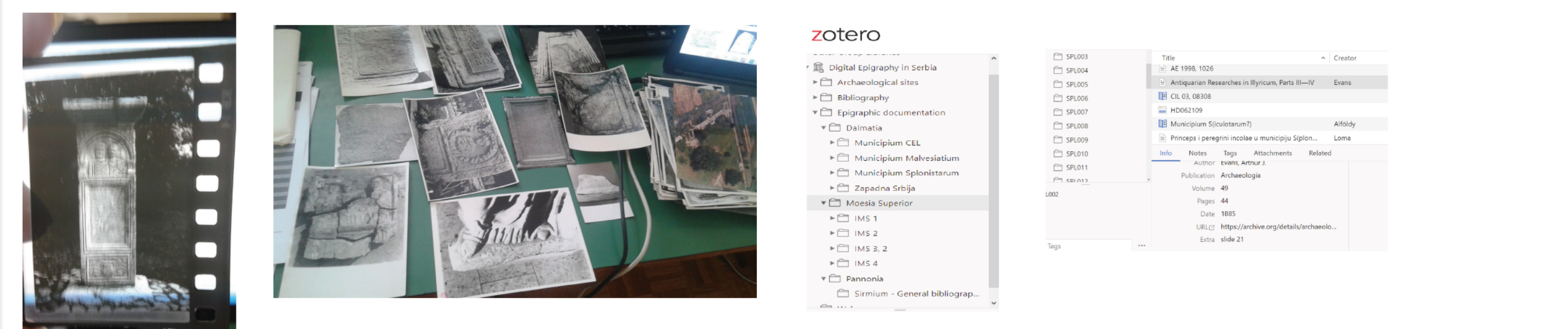
The Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts runs a project of digitisation of Roman Inscriptions from the territory of Serbia that is intended for publication in an open, digital archive of Latin and Greek inscriptions encoded in EpiDoc TEI-XML. The project aims to create a knowledge base about the ancient Roman epigraphic heritage in Serbia, offering a specialist, innovative approach to scientific data that is at the same time cultural heritage. It departs from a practical need to systematise the knowledge on the Roman period in Serbia and focuses on interdisciplinary research and critical editing of the Roman inscriptions that represent the most important sources for studying the ancient past of this region, beina are a unique, eloquent type of historical sources that are crucial for understanding ancient history, civilisation, language and literacy, society, cults and religion, demographic and cultural dynamics, different types of identities. The land covered by the present-day Republic of Serbia covered the parts of the territories of several Roman provinces: the largest part of Upper Moesia, southern parts of Lower Pannonia, the eastern part of Dalmatia, the westernmost part of Thrace, also including one tiny corner of Dacia. This region was positioned at the crossroad of important ancient communication axes that linked the eastern and western parts of the Roman world. In Antiquity, this region was a contact zone of Latinophone and Hellenophone spheres that linked the Danubian limes with the interior, the heart of the Balkans. It was a homeland to different heterogeneous native peoples that came under Roman rule and left trace only in the Roman monuments by adopting the Greco-Roman culture and, consequently, the "epigraphic habit". The need for a greater visibility of the ancient patrimony and the Serbian contribution to the studies of the Antiquity focusing on the region has become more apparent with the emergence of digital technologies that have brought about the significant advancement to the research field. In the "digital age", when the limits in research are constantly and rapidly being pushed forward, the existence in the digital world has an outstanding importance. This project is the only project in Serbia with such a focus. It seeks to involve and unite, directly or indirectly, the domestic community of scholars focusing on the Roman period and we will work towards intensifying the intersectoral and regional and international cooperation.

Methodologies and Workflow

The project has a solid foundation in the country's epigraphic tradition, which is of high quality. A crucial reference for the ancient inscriptions of Upper Moesia is the renowned series *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure (IMS)* edited by Fanula Papazoglou in French language. The project of the Institute for Balkan Studies will go beyond digitising the existing editions — it sets out to prepare a new up-to-date corpus that is born digital and available in both English and Serbian. The work involves all traditional methods of the epigraphic discipline: research, documentation, critical edition and commentary, and it includes the methods of digital epigraphy, encoding editions in EpiDoc TEI-XML.

Bibliography and Documentation

The first step is gathering, digitising and updating the existing epigraphic documentation and compiling new records, scanning photographs, films and publications and compiling bibliographies. The project has compiled a bibliographic database that contains bibliographic references about the ancient inscriptions in Serbia in the Zotero group library "Digital Epigraphy in Serbia", that it is available online. It is divided into Epigraphic bibliography containing general references and Epigraphic documentation: bibliographies for each inscription. When available, the records link to an open content (articles, repositories, databases, etc.). The editions also contain bibliographies in TEI that are based on the Zotero records.



Fieldwork

The fieldwork is a very important aspect of the project. The main tasks include performing autopsies of the monuments, both in museum collections and in the field, checking the precise location and the state of the monuments as well as for determining a range of details important for the edition as well as making quality digital photographs and squeezes, if necessary.



The Edition

The records are initially compiled in a relational database containing categories of data and meta-data standard for epigraphic editions. The data-structuring conforms to the EpiDoc template. The records also include references to other online epigraphic databases such as Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg, Trismegistos, Pleiades, etc. that also incorporate the material from this region, but the editions are formed independently, based on the project's documentation.

```
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114 <div type="edition">
115 <ab>
116 <lb n="1"/><persName type="divine" key="Mars (conservator?)" ref="divine.xml#Mars(conservator?)">Martī
117 <expn><abbr>C</abbr></expn><ex cert="low">onservatori</ex></persName>
118 <w lemma="sacer"><expn><abbr>s</abbr></expn><ex acrum</ex></expn></w>
119 <lb n="2"/><persName key="(Titus) Aurel(ius) Marcus" ref="AttestedPerson.xml#TitusAureliusMarcus">
120 <name type="praenomen" nymRef="Titus"><expn><abbr>T</abbr></expn><ex></expn></name>
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122 <lb n="3"/><name type="cognomen" nymRef="Marcus">Marcus</name></persName>
123 <lb n="4"/><rs><roleName key="veteranus"><expn><abbr>vet</abbr></expn><ex></expn></roleName></rs>
124 <g type="hedera">
125 <w lemma="cum">cum</w>
126 <lb n="5"/><w lemma="suus">su</w><w lemma="libens"><expn><abbr>l</abbr></expn><ex></expn></w>
127 <w lemma="pono"><expn><abbr>p</abbr></expn><ex></expn></w>.
128 </ab>
129 </div>
130 <div type="apparatus">
131 <listApp><app loc="1">
132 <lem><abbr>C</abbr></lem>
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A snippet of an EpiDoc file with the edition of an inscription from Virovo (Serbia), the territory of *Municipium Malvensiatium* (MAL004) displayed on the photo below.

Markup and Software

The editions of inscriptions are marked up using the EpiDoc schema, a leading international standard for publishing ancient documents in TEI-XML. The corpus is richly annotated by semantically marking up diverse occurrences in the epigraphic texts (lemmas, geographic and personal names, institutions, linguistic phenomena, etc.), and it is equipped with commentaries, metadata, and digital photographs. The edition complies with the international standards for publishing ancient inscriptions, including standard categories of metadata pertaining to the description of the text-bearing object and the text itself. The project follows the EpiDoc Guidelines (<https://epidoc.stoa.org>), and keeps its own documentation of the encoding practice. The project is strongly committed to using open software and making contributions to its development, as well as promotion of the application of open software in humanistic research in Serbia. For the display of electronic corpus of inscriptions, the project uses EFES (**EpiDoc Front End Services**), an open-source platform, that was developed by an international team of scholars (digital epigraphers), <https://github.com/EpiDoc/EFES>



The photo the inscription from Virovo (MAL004). The monument is recorded during the fieldwork and first published as one of the project results by Svetlana Loma and Dragana (Grbić) Nikolić (*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 2018, 207, 278-288).

Monument	Type of monument	Altar
	Monument	Monument
	Description and condition	Capital decorated with rosettes and acroteria
	Find place	Virovo
	Find circumstances	Unknown
	Find context	Unknown
	Modern location	Village cemetery in Virovo. Seen by Svetlana Loma in 2016.
	Coordinates	45.133344, 19.417778
	Institution and inventory	Virovo Cemetery, no inv. no.
	Placement of text	Rehabilitated inscription fast. Dimensions: h. 35 cm, w. 28 cm.
	Style of lettering	Crossed lettering. Letter height 5 cm.
	Origin	Dalmatia, Municipium Malvensiatium
	Category	Votive inscription
	Date	Second half of the second century
	Dating criteria	
	Editions	Loma - <i>GK&N</i> 2018, 202, no. 2, 443. AE 2018, 1363 https://www.zotero.org/groups/epigraphy_in_serbia/items/collections/epigraphy_in_serbia/items/1363

Martī C(onservator?) (sicrum)
(Titus) Aurel(ius)
Marcus
vet(eranus) (hedera) cum
sua (libens) (pono).

Apparatus
1: C(-) C(onservator?) (sicrum)?

Commentary
L. 1 C(onservator?) could also be restored C(onservator?), cf. IMS 03, 2, 7; AE 1994, 1446. The dedicant can be identified with T. Aurelius Marcus, a veteran who set up an altar that is built into the wall of the village church in Pilišćak, 3.5 km to the north of Virovo, as well as with the decurion municipi who died in Salona according to the inscription on his funerary monument set up by his sons in the village of Vlasjevići. All three find spots are located within a 15 kilometre radius, in the environs of Požega. T. Aurelius Marcus was a Romanized native who received citizenship under Marcus Aurelius, probably after completing military service in the cohorts II Aelia Delmatarum, stationed near present-day Čačak (25 kilometres to the east from Požega). In the last years of Marcus Aurelius' reign the tribune of this cohort was T. Claudius Gallus, later elected by Septimius Severus to the Senate. The senator had an estate in the vicinity of Virovo as is indicated by the funerary inscription of his daughter from Artaj.

The inscription MAL004 displayed in EFES

Future Plans

To better fit the project's needs, mainly to display all the encoded data in the front-end, a customisation of the EFES is needed in the future. The project will also attempt to bridge the gap between archaeological, epigraphic-historical, and philological research of this region by cross-fertilization between the disciplines that will be enhanced by using cutting-edge digital technologies. The team plans to develop a digital Atlas of Roman settlements and archaeological localities in Serbia which will accompany and complement the epigraphic database. It will contain records about the settlements, localities, architectural structures, communications, ancient landscapes, rivers, administrative status of settlements, dating, description, annotated bibliographies, photographs (new and, when available, old as well, ortho-imagery), geolocation (the project will collect references to different online mapping resources e.g. Trismegistos Places, Pleiades Project, Pelagios: Enable Linked Ancient Geodata in Open Systems, etc.).

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