Recycling of the Ancient Epigraphic Monuments in the Wider Split Area

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DOI: 10.17234/9789531757232-12

Over 6,000 inscriptions have been found in Salona and its immediate vicinity so far, which makes Salona one of the most important cities of the ancient world in terms of epigraphic heritage. According to data obtained from the archaeological research in Salonitan area, most of the inscriptions were found in their secondary use. Taking the epigraphic monuments from their original environment and re-using them for a completely different purpose is characteristic for the whole area where Greek and Roman civilizations left proofs of their presence, and traces of such practice in Dalmatia can be followed back to Roman times. We most often think of *spolia* as a stone monument that has been reused for construction or modified into another utilitarian piece. Reasons for re-using a stone monument for a new purpose can be widely discussed, but a frequent starting point is an economic profitability or practicality. However, when we talk about the reuse of stone monuments, this custom and the reason for their exploitation sometimes outweighs the builder's need for economic profitability or practicality, as these are already processed and often free of charge pieces that can be used in construction. In addition to the aforementioned practical reasons, the aesthetic-decorative ones may also be present; by installing a monument in a private house, the owner can send to the society a message saying that he is as a person who takes care of heritage; on the other hand, by incorporating stone fragments with pagan features, the symbolism of the victory of Christianity over pagan polytheism can be emphasized, etc.

During all historical periods in the wider Split area, Antique and Late Antique inscriptions were abundantly used in the construction of buildings of all purposes, especially the stelae, sepulchral altars, and honorary bases. It is hard to find a type of building in Dalmatia in which the *spolia* have not been used, from private houses or stables, mills and taverns or ramparts, street pavements or churches and bell towers....

In the city such as Salona, where there were tens of thousands of epigraphic monuments, one can expect the secondary use of inscriptions since Antiquity. The ramparts in Salona were built in 170 AD, and during their research, a great number of inscriptions that ended up as a building material in different periods was found, since for centuries the ramparts required restoration, especially in the 6th century. Those monuments, that were pre-

viously set along the rampart line, were probably incorporated into new city walls. This is best seen along the western rampart that ran across the Salonitan western necropolis, and the most famous among monuments found there is the tombstone of Pomponia Vera. When it comes to the long-existing ancient buildings with reused inscriptions, it is difficult to determine when these inscriptions were built into them as *spolia*. On the road near Porta Caesarea, an inscription in the Greek language from 56 BC which mentions missionaries from Issa who wanted to negotiate with Caesar was found in its secondary use. In the excavations of the main baths in Salona, which were built in the 2nd century, several embedded inscriptions were found. One of the most important recent Salonitan epigraphic finds is the honorary base for the statue of Empress Aurelia Prisca, wife of Diocletian, which is also the first epigraphic testimony of her in the Empire. The monument was installed in the lateral side of the Late Antique embankment in the eastern part of the city.

The most famous building in this area that originated from Roman times and is still in function is the Diocletian's palace. It is a monument which provides insight into the continuity of life from Diocletian's era to the present time. Within the Palace itself, but also in its immediate vicinity, numerous epigraphic *spolia* that pre-date the construction of the Palace were found. Some of the inscriptions were certainly taken from Salona, while some come from the nearby area. Salonitan monuments were also found in Trogir, where some twenty inscriptions were built in the wall of the Garagnin-Fanfogna Park at the beginning of the 19th century.

There are many cases of inscriptions where we do not even know that they were used as *spolia* until the demolition, restoration or conservation of the building in which they were used as an ordinary, inconspicuous building material. Speaking of Trogir urbanism, notable examples of these invisible *spolia* are the altar of the goddess Salacia, and a part of the monumental imperial inscription whose other fragment was found in the 60-kilometer distant town of Skradin, where it was originally set up.

Relation to ancient heritage has never been unilateral: for some people, stone monuments represented traces of paganism that should be destroyed; for others, they represented testimonies of the Antiquity that should be preserved, while for some a stone monument was only a working material that could be used for various purposes. Most of the people from the two latter categories displayed their personal attitude towards Antiquity in the way they decorated their houses, especially during 18th and 19th centuries, e.g. houses in Solin districts Paraći and Barišić, the house Benzon in Vranjic, the house Geremia-Zlendić, and the house Katić in Split. It should also be said that, during history, the stone material from Salona was not only used locally but, on the opposite Adriatic coast as well, as Salona was exploited for centuries as a quarry for the construction of Venetian churches and palaces. Tombstones, especially the sarcophagi, were used for the same purpose. Individuals in the early Christian period obviously had no problems with using pagan monuments for personal need, and the exploitation of pagan sarcophagi for Christians continued in the later periods as well. Regardless of the pagan origins of epigraphic monuments, their use in the church architecture is evident from the early Christian era onwards. On some church floors, the inscriptions were found with the inscribed side up, which could be interpreted as negating paganism by stepping on the inscription. I believe that this could have been the case in the Early Christian period, but after Christianity has completely prevailed, it seems that the Christian world became rather indifferent towards the stone remains of pre-Christian civilization. Hence, I believe that from Middle Ages onwards the Christians by incorporating the *spolia* in church architecture were more affirmative in their indifference than in any triumph over the pagan world. As an example of the purely utilitarian purpose of pagan monuments embedded in church architecture, there are the *spolia* that were built into the bell tower of St. Domnio cathedral in Split, among which were the significant inscriptions, the so-called *tabulae Dolabellae*.

In the category of other reused monuments there are those which were not used for building material but were instead transformed into objects of everyday use. For example, stone urns were used to store cheese in oil or to store figs and walnuts, and sarcophagi were used as containers for oil or water for cattle and horses, for washing, and even as bath tubs. The phenomenon of *spolia* is multilayered and it can be discussed much more widely than it was covered here. Regardless of why stone monuments became *spolia*, it is certain that their use is the result of complex social events in the area of their origin, including economic circumstances, religion, social status, education, but also collective consciousness. Most of the inscribed *spolia* were extracted from their secondary environment, so today we cannot get the visual impression of their use throughout history in the described area. For a great deal of the inscriptions preserved today, it can be said that we have them just because of their reuse as *spolia* over the long span of centuries from Antiquity onwards.

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