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CORRIGENDA POROLISSENSIA (II). AUTHENTIC, OR FORGERY? CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME EARLY CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE AT POROLISSUM

Coriolan Horațiu Opreanu[1]

Abstract: *The author briefly presents some famous forgeries in Roman archaeology and epigraphy starting from the Renaissance till to the 21st century. After this introduction he is reanalyzing a Roman shard from Porolissum having incised after burning signs and letters interpreted several times as Early Christian symbols and texts. The author carefully examines the find starting from the unknown conditions of discovery, till to the interpretation of the texts. His conclusion is that the signs and inscriptions are not authentic, but it is a forgery not identified by the archaeologists of the period. In a second part of the study the author is debating other two false interpretations of two Roman buildings at Porolissum. First one was the temple of Palmyrene god Bel which was considered as transformed into a Christian Basilica in the 4th century after the Roman administration left Dacia. The allegation was not supported by any positive evidence and on this ground is rejected by the author of the present article. The second case is the shrine of goddess Nemesis identified based on an inscription under the stone stands of the amphitheater. The idea of a Christian martyrial church proposed cannot be accepted. The author demonstrates why it is impossible to imagine at Porolissum the existence of these Christian churches in the 4th century.*

Keywords: *Porolissum, forgery, Early Christian inscriptions, Christian Basilicas, chronology*

Archaeology is often seen by people as the way of finding valuable treasures, senzational finds. It is the romantic label inherited by archaeology from famous discoveries of the 19th and 20th centuries, by founders of the discipline, as Heinrich Schliemann, or Howard Carter. But in time great expectations were also addressed by modern societies to archaeology, seen as the science able to bridge the gaps of written history. Many times along the centuries some talented artists and brilliant minds dug deep in the enigmatic antique past. But when the past did not offer all its secrets, they used their imagination and skilfull and produced themselves the missing ancient documents. Their passion created a false reality, very dangerous for the other people who became convinced the documents were real. In Renaissance Italy many scholars admired so much the Roman past and Latin that they were not able to resist the temptation of reconstructing by imagination lost inscriptions. The "sovrano creatore dei falsi epigrafici"[2] was the 16th century Italian scholar Pirro Ligorio. Almost 3000 *falsae ligorianae* were recorded in Rome, even some of them proved later to be genuine[3]. It is not always easy to separate original artifacts, from the fake ones. In the case of epigraphic *falsariae* there are some obvious forgeries, as for example the inscription from the base of the statue of Dioscuri in the Piazza del Quirinale in Rome on which in Renaissance was carved a fake inscription: *opus Praxitelis//opus Phidiae,* transmiting to the viewers the untruth that the statue was the work of the famous Greek artists

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[2] GUARDUCCI 1967, 492.

[3] ORLANDI/CALDELLI/ GREGORI 2015, 44–50.

Phidias and Praxiteles[4]. But other monuments declared false in Mommsen's CIL were recently rehabilitated as genuine[5]. The trend of falsifying ancient archaeological, or historical sources deeply influenced the evolution and the history of Christianity starting from the Middle Ages many times with dreadful political and religious consequences. Among the first forgeries in the field was the so-called manuscript "Donation of Constantine"[6]. This false manuscript copied several times from the 8th century onwards, pretended that the emperor Constantine the Great handed to pope Sylvester I and to his successors the secular authority over the territories of the Roman Empire. The severe historical consequences of this forgery, the permanent fights for supremacy between the Pope and the kings and emperors of Mediaeval Europe continued for centuries in spite the 15th century Italian scholar Lorenzo Valla demonstrated with arguments that the document was a fake. More recently another dispute grew around the so-called "Gospel of Jesus' Wife", a fake manuscript which perturbed the history of Early Christianity[7]. An astonishing case of forgery in Western European archaeology was recently recorded, in a period when the progress of democracy and of the scientific ethic did not announced continuity of this old practice. During the archaeological campaigns from 2005 and 2006 performed in the Roman site of Iruña-Veleia, in Northern Spain, more than 400 ostraca with etched words in Latin, Basque and Greek, Egyptian hieroglyphs and drawings with Christian themes, dating from the 2nd to 5th centuries, were discovered[8]. The "exceptional finds", as they were presented by the archaeologists who found them, were discovered in two different buildings: the first group came from a room interpreted as a deposit for old ostraca used to perform writing exercises in Latin and drawings with daily life scenes. The owners of the house would have had a *paedagogium* with a teacher of Egyptian origin tasked to teach Latin and Christian religion to the children of the owner; the second group of ostraca were found in another *domus* and consisted of Basque language inscriptions and Christian symbols, being interpreted as a possible *ecclesia* where local inhabitants from Veleia were taught to write in their native language and being good Christians, as well[9]. First suspicion of forgery appered in 2007, when three archaeologists from the research team at Veleia abandoned the project and declared the ostraca were not identified during the excavation, but later when the pottery was cleaned[10]. Later a large and representative Scientific Advisory Committee was tasked to clarify the authenticity of the finds. The specialists in many fields, plus the archaeometric analyses rejected the authenticity of the inscriptions and symbols incised on the potshards and declared them forgeries[11]. In 2020 a court convicted the authors of the forgeries at Veleia for different crimes[12]. Among the many ostraca from Veleia, one drawing showing the crucification scene worth to be commented. Pretending it is genuine the group of "veristas" suggested it is the oldest representation of Calvaria in the Christian West. On the upper part of the cross it was scretched the inscription ***RIP*****,** instead of well-known ***INRI*****.** Some supporters of authenticity tried to read *R(ex) I(udeorum)P(assio),* but the formula *r(equiescat) i(n) p(ace)* was more probable in the mind of the falsifier. This formula is unacceptable in a Christian millieu, because it denies the resurrection of Jesus[13]. Summarizing, the authenticity pretention was ruined by the scientific critic based on the religious doctrine's incompatibility of

[4] GREGORI 1994.
[5] VAGENHEIM 2011.
[6] GRAFTON 2010; PARK 2012.
[7] GATHERCOLE 2015.
[8] RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO 2017, 198.
[9] RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO 2017, 201–202.
[10] RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO 2017, 206.
[11] RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO 2017, 206–210; GORROCHATEGUI 2011.
[12] RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO/YÁÑEZ 2021.
[13] RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO/YÁÑEZ 2021, 404.

the inscription, but also on inadequate chronology and the membership to a group of ostraca, all demonstrated as fakes. The Veleia case was complex and complicated, a huge effort being necessary to fix the harm social consequences of this ample forgery.

Archaeological forgeries are not absent in Romania too. It is true, the scale, context and *modus operandi* are very different from the Spanish case above described. In this paper we will reopen the file of Early Christianity in the former province of Dacia. Generations of scholars were preocupated by the problem. Rethorical question addresed by C. Daicoviciu[14] in 1935 concerning the existence or the missing of Christian monuments in Roman Dacia got an answer from archaeology. During the 85 years of research passed from that moment not any relevant and indubitable Christian monument was discovered in the province of Dacia. During the last period of the communist regime in Romania a strong nationalistic trend was promoted by the political propaganda. The using of history and archaeology with political interests and in the advantage of nationalistic doctrines was a common place in other parts of Europe too during the 20th century. The communist regime of Romania's "golden age" followed the same pattern. History and archaeology were defined as tools used for the "new education" of the people. Unfortunately for the propagandistic clichés of the "glorious multimillennial history of the Romanian people" and for the "ceaselessness of the unitary and centralized state from the Dacian king Burebista till to the communist state of Ceaușescu" the scientific evidence so much wanted remained unseen. In that situation, to demonstrate they are not useless, some archaeologists wrote papers containing allegations without scientific support and adopted unacceptable interpretation for some categories of artefacts. Early Christianity was a key-link of the ancient history of Romania and the demonstration of existence of Early Christianity became in time an obsession for some researchers. The peak of this trend was reached in the final years of the communism when the "progress" of the research was synthetized[15]. Strange enough, after the collapse of the communism the freedom of expression was understood by some archaeologists as a chance to voluntary develop the overdrawn and imposed theories on Early Christianity[16]. They did their best to interpret some Roman period artefacts as being marked with Christian symbols. Thus, they supported the idea of the existence of Christian communities during the 2nd–3rd centuries AD in Roman Dacia. The results were a succession of unlikely interpretations which reduced the credibility of archaeology as science. But why all these efforts? Because they wanted to explain that the 4th century AD Christian artifacts from former province of Dacia cannot be other way understood only as a continuity of faith and of believers from the previous centuries. But if the 2nd–3rd centuries' membership to Early Christianity of some objects is not credible, nor the 4th century evidence is in a better situation. Not a single object of this kind was found in a regularly archaeological excavation in former Dacia. Among the seven (!) sure artifacts with Christian symbolistic accepted by the most realistic author of the period[17], one item came from Porolissum. It is a pottery fragment first time published in 1979 by N. Gudea[18] (Fig. 1). For a correct understanding of the intellectual context of the period we must pin down that the 3rd issue of the yearbook of the Museum from Zalău was carefully watched by the local and central communist propaganda instrument. The volume offered room for two articles signed by the local head of the propaganda and by one of the official historians of the communist regime, both summarizing the official view of the communist party upon the history of Romania. The lower part of a pottery bowl of fine dark-grey fabric was the item analyzed by Gudea. He concluded

[14] DAICOVICIU 1935.
[15] GUDEA/GHIURCO 1988.
[16] RUSU 1991, for example.
[17] HOREDT 1982, 218, Fundliste 14 B.
[18] GUDEA 1979.

that it is the first sure local Christian document[19]. We will see how much truth contains this statement. The pottery fragment was not found by archaeologists in a sistematic archaeological excavation. The official version of the story tells that in the spring of 1975, two years before E. Chirilă and N. Gudea started the excavation at Porolissum, it was picked in the plough-soil of the fields from the site at Porolissum by children from the local school of Moigrad village and brought together with other shards and objects to the school collection under the supervising of the history teacher Ștefan Simoc. It was him who handed the fragment to N. Gudea in autumn of 1975, as the last one storied[20]. From the beginning Gudea described the pot as having inside and on the exterior side **letters and signs incised with a sharp instrument before burning**[21]**.** This observation is obviuosly very important, transmitting the idea of authenticity to people who did not see the artifact. In 1988 N. Gudea wrote a synthesis of archaeological evidence of Christianity, this time having as co-author a priest and published by The Romanian Orthodox Bishopry Oradea. Here the pot from Porolissum was catalogued again and described as having the letters and symbols **"incised" with a sharp instrument before burning**[22]**.** Gudea's latest approaches from 2011 and 2016 took up the Early Christianity at Porolissum theme passing in review the same known artifacts. Among them the pot in discussion is again presented as having the signs **incised in soft fabric**[23]**.** Gudea's terminology is contradictory. The term "incised" does not fit with "soft fabric". When discussed the meaning of the find, Gudea showed that he believed the pot had not from the beginning a cultic role, because in that situation the **letters and signs would have been impressed (i.e., in soft fabric before burning)**[24]**.** He continued his judgement declaring that because they were incised (that means later scratched on the pot) it got the religious destination only in a later moment. So, when were done the letters and signs? Before burning in soft fabric, or they were etched sometime later after the pot was burnt in the kiln? Among the many papers on this pot, there is one where Gudea is telling the truth: **the signs were scratched after the fabric was burnt**[25]. Examining visual the artifact (few years back when it was still in the main exhibition) kept in the Sălaj County's Museum of History and Art from Zalău[26] it was obviously that the signs and letters were **incised (etched) with a sharp instrument after the pot was burnt in the kiln.** Gudea's refferings to the "incision in soft fabric" are nothing but an attempt to defend artifact's authenticity, in which he probably believed. There are many aspects which plead against its authenticity:

1. The obscure condition of discovery and the arrival of the artifact in the most appropriate hands (i.e., Gudea). The "important" find appeared just before the moment when large scale excavations at Porolissum were ready to begin, stressing the scientific value of the site in the eyes of the authorities.

2. The chronology. The pot fragment is the bottom part of a type of small ordinary bowl worked in fine grey fabric in local pottery workshops very common in the 2nd–3rd centuries, found in unknown context. There is no archaeological evidence for a pottery production after AD 271 when the site was abandoned. No 4th century archaeological structure, or artifact was ever found in an archaeological excavation at Porolissum. The twelve 4^{-th} century coins from the Museum of Zalău were abusive considered from Porolissum, as they are coming from

[19] GUDEA 1979, 523.
[20] GUDEA 1979, 515.
[21] GUDEA 1979, 516.
[22] GUDEA/GHIURCO 1988, 139.
[23] GUDEA 2011, 261; GUDEA 2016, 139.
[24] GUDEA 1979, 523.
[25] GUDEA 1989, 518.
[26] Inv no. CC 78/1978.

private collections and for all of them the place of discovery is unknown[27]. The most recent coin found in the excavations in the Roman fort from Pomet Hill is Salonina's coin dating AD 253–260[28]. The ten years excavation in the Roman municipium at Porolissum (the so-called "Porolissum Forum Project" co-directed by Al. V. Matei and Eric de Sena) ended with a conclusion: "Construction Phase 4 (260–271)...In past years we assumed, following the orthodox version of Porolissum's chronology that all such "late features" necessarily pertained in immediate post-Roman period (AD 271–375), the so-called Daco-Roman phase. After such scrutiny and careful analysis of the features and artifacts, the PFP now considers these features to date to the **final decade of the Roman period**. The hearth in trench 22A incorporate concrete in its construction, that was not used by non-Roman during this time period. Moreover in seven years of excavation, the PFP **did not reveal a single artifact that can be dated in late 3rd, or 4th centuries.** The latest coins unearthed through PFP excavations date to the reign of Severus Alexander, while **none of the pottery or small finds are attributed to the period after the Roman withdrawal from Dacia"**[29]**.** A similar conclusion results after our own eleven years of excavations in the fort and town at Porolissum. The 17 inhumation graves excavated by A. Buday at the beginning of the 20th century inside a Roman building from the Roman town and considered as post-Roman[30] proved to belong to the Middle Ages, after recent archaeological research, being probably related to the Benedictine monastery recorded in the Meseș area in the medieval written sources[31]. So, there is no any reason to consider that the pottery workshops at Porolissum continued to produce after AD 271. The pot in disscusion was sure a product of the period of the province, before AD 271. Gudea is dating the pot at the beginning of the 4th-till the middle of the 4th century (even he admits that its analogies are from the 2nd–3rd centuries) based on the symbols incised and on this ground he postulated the continuation of pottery workshops in the 4th century[32]. Later he appreciated the chronology of the pot is even the second half of the 4th century[33]without any supplimentary explanation.

3. The etched letters and "symbols" (?). The incisions are disposed on the entire area of the inner side of the pot's fragment. Supposing they were executed with an instrumet having a fine sharp point when the pot was intact (as Gudea thought), it was a difficult and useless action because an inscription and many symbols are usually placed in such a position to be seen. If the action had taken place in the second half of the 4th century, that means there was not any reason to be hidden from the eyes of the pagan authorities which did not existed any longer. Anyway, criptic Christian symbols on objects known in other provinces are not so many on a single artifact. But our fragment has also the outer side of the standing ring and the central circle of the stand again full of incisions. Our conclusion concerning the place of the incisions on the pot is that technically was very difficult, if not impossible at all to be done when the pot was not broken. Even the fragment represents less than 1/5 from the pot it contains almost all the possible Early Christian inscriptions and symbols, which is inordinate.

On the other side it is unusual for a period from the second half of the 4th century (as Gudea thought) that a pot used in the divine service (an eucharistic chalice after the same

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[27] GĂZDAC/GUDEA, 2006, 155–156, no. 1664–1681.

[28] GĂZDAC/GUDEA, 2006, 155, no. 1661.

[29] SENA/WANNER 2016.

[30] MATEI 1979, 478, no. 5b; GUDEA 1989, 342, who wrote that in the area were found 4th century coins, which is not true, as the numismatic monograph of Porolissum did not register them (see footnote 27); for the plan the building and the finds recorded see, TAMBA 2008, 334–336 who is only mentions 10 coins from Faustina to Maximinus Thrax.

[31] BENCZE 2018.

[32] GUDEA 1979, 521; GUDEA 2011, 63.

[33] GUDEA/GHIURCO 1988, 140.

author) to be an ordinary pot reused and "christianized" by scratching symbols and inscriptions on the outside and mainly on the inside face (!). Such a sacred object, even accidentaly broken at a moment, is hard to think was abandoned and thrown away with the garbage. But even the destination proposed by Gudea is hard to be accepted. He reconstructed the main inscription inside as "EGO ....VIVS (or, ...VLVS) VOT(VM) P(OSVI)"[34]. The meaning of the text (if accepted as correctly solved), very similar with the well-known *donarium* from Biertan (Sibiu County), suggests the object inscribed was a votive gift offered by a believer to the local Christian community. In this case its destination of eucharistic chalice used in the holly service cannot be accepted. As in the case of the chandelier from Biertan[35] the inscription must have been visible for the members of the community, because the gift was a valuable one. To write such a text for offering a humble ordinary clay pot and hidden the inscription on the inside bottom of the pot are both nonsense. Another inscription reconstruted by Gudea (even it is evident that none of these letters really existed on the shard) is also incongruous with the artifact: *ute(re) fel(ix)*[36]. In most of the cases the formula is a wish inscribed on a gift addressed to a person who will used it and is always visible. To conclude, it is impossible to accept that in the 4th century a local member of the Christian community at Porolissum (if it existed) granted to a supposed (unidentified) church such a gift. If we accept that the main inscription reconstructed by Gudea was in reality a text, the pattern of the Biertan's *donarium* is so evident[37] that a modern forgery is very probable. As the other proposed Christian formulas like "*vivatis in Deo*"[38], "*in Christum unum victoria*" the life's tree, the pidgeon[39] they cannot be even supposed on the shard. All are pure imagination of the author who published it.

The conclusion is that somebody, who remained unknown till today, having some knowledge on Early Christianity, incised the fragment of pottery with the intention to pretend it is an authentic, ancient epigraphic document. The forgery must have been produced not too far from the moment when it arrived in the hands of the archaeologists because the effect of the false could exist only after the specialists were deciding it is authentic and it contained valuable information for the ancient history. So it was not about an ordinary forgery, but one which once declared authentic would have had history changing consequences. That is the reason we insisted so much on the demonstration it is not authentic, but a fake. Remains the question why the archaeologists who first seen it did not establish it was a forgery.

In the same third issue of the yearbook Acta Musei Porolissensis, another study is also proposing a hypothesis concerning the identification of a Christian basilica at Porolissum. The author, Al. V. Matei was one of the few archaeologists who first saw the pot from Porolissum we have analyzed above. He correctly wrote that the inscription and the symbols were **incised after burning**[40]**,** but he did not have any doubt on its authenticity**.** In the same catalogue Al. V. Matei added himself another "proof" of the existence of an Early Christian community at Porolissum, an Early Christian basilica layed out inside the former temple of Bel[41]. Even he admitted that no artifact supporting the late third–4th century chronology of a post-Roman building was recovered in his excavation, the author used as argument the stratigraphy and a plan of the latest construction phase which, in his view, reminded the plan of a Christian basilica. In the

[34] GUDEA 2016, 49, no. 42.

[35] For the discussion upon the belonging of the artifact from Biertan to a *gabata*, or to a *polycandelon* (*corona*) see, CHRZANOVSKI 2014.

[36] GUDEA 2016, 420.

[37] The possibility that the name was even *Zeno(vius),* at GUDEA 1979, 519: GUDEA/GHIURCO 1988, 140.

[38] GUDEA 1993

[39] GUDEA 2016.

[40] MATEI 1979, 478, no. 5/d.

[41] MATEI 1979, 478–479, no. 5/e; GUDEA 2016, 52 accepted the supposition.

next issue of the local yearbook he briefly reported the results of his excavation in the temple of Bel.[42] He wrote that the Christian basilica was reusing the apse of the former temple and besides the old stone walls were added some new stone walls with reused Roman monuments, but using earth as binding instead of mortar. This argumentation is very weak and inconclusive, without any drawn profile ever published. First of all, stone walls without mortar do not exist, maybe they were basements for wooden walls in the best case. The reusing of Roman monuments, even sacred votive altars taken from the temples, is very common at Porolissum during 2nd–3rd centuries[43]. So the imagined plan of a post-Roman building is unlikely. Matei's allegation cannot be accepted not even as a hypothesis. Recently we reopened the file of the temple of Bel at Porolissum, establishing three main construction phases of the shrine: a first stone chapel (AD 149–151), later in the second century a larger temple of basilical plan, a consolidation and enlargement after a fire at the beginning of the third century (not later than AD 217)[44]. A fourth main construction phase dated after AD 271 must be rejected as it was nowhere recorded in Porolissum[45] and not supported by any contemporary artifact found in the excavations. The idea of transforming ancient pagan temples buildings into Christian basilicas was largely discussed for the Roman Empire in the 4th–5th centuries AD. Even there are situations when former pagan temples were transformed into Christian basilicas, these cases were not numerous in the Later Roman Empire[46]. First of all the orientation of the temple of Bel was South-Est-North-West, having the apse (*cella)* to the North-West[47] a total unsuitable orientation to be reused for the altar of a Christian basilica. The social mechanismes which guided this phenomenon are very complicated even in the Empire: it was the Christian intolerance which had as consequence the distruction of many temples on one side and the operation of desacralization of a former pagan place on the other. The last one was not always successful[48]. But this 4th–5th centuries AD social pattern cannot be imagined in Porolissum and general in Dacia which were abandoned by the Roman administration in AD 271 and ceased to belong to the Roman Empire. The consequences of the great persecutions against the Christians from the middle of the 3rd century under Decius and then later under Diocletian and Galerius are not palpable in Dacia, as no Christian martyrs were recorded, as in the other Balkan provinces[49]. As the martyrs of the 3rd century were everywhere in the Empire members of the religious hierarchy, their absence in Dacia and missing of any attestation of bishops mean the missing of the church as institution[50]. In conclusion, the decision to organize a church in a former pagan temple at Porolissum cannot be even imagined. Hipothetically it is possible that small groups of Christians existed in the 3rd century at Porolissum even they are not documented by any kind of historical source. But the number of Christians in the other provinces of the Empire was also very small till the middle of the 3rd century[51]. Before the Constantine tolerance edict the Christians used

[42] MATEI 1980, 91–95.

[43] Two votive altars dedicated to Iupiter Optimus Maximus by high officials of the Roman municipium were found rebuilt on the first row of stones of the defense wall, of the fort on its south-eastern side (see, GUDEA 1980, 89–90, Fig. 3)

[44] OPREANU/TALOȘ 2020, 104–105.

[45] See below, footnote 28.

[46] CUDORGE 2015, 54–62.

[47] MATEI 1980, 92.

[48] CUDORGE 2015, 59–71.

[49] GARTZONIKA 2009, for Illyricum, Macedonia, Thrace, Scythia Minor, Dalmatia and in the towns along via Egnatia.

[50] For example, the first bishop martyr in Pannonia, Eusebius, was put to death between AD 257–260 (KOVÁCS 2003, 114).

[51] HOPKINS 1998.

private buildings for their religious gatherings, the so-called "house-churches"[52]. An appropriate parallel can be made between Porolissum and Dura-Europos in Syria. Both were small towns in frontier provinces. At Porolissum was stationed *numerus Palmyrenorum Porolissensium* and at Dura-Europos was garrisoned *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*[53]. Due to the presence of the military units in both towns were temples of the supreme Palmyrene god Bel[54]. The archaeological researches at Dura-Europos uncovered, besides the temple of Bel, a synagogue and a Christian "house-church"[55]. Dura-Europos was destroyed in AD 256 and never reconstructed[56]. So, the chronological frame is commune to both towns, as well. A "house-church" it is acceptable to have existed at Porolissum even though it was not identified at the moment. But if addmitting this hypothesis and also if the Christians who used to gather in such a house did not leave the province at AD 271 remaining undefeated in former Porolissum (although the barbarians from the very neighbourhood were not more sympathetic to the Christians than the Roman imperial administration) it is more plausible to imagine they continued to use the same holly space having no reason to change it and transforming a former pagan temple (after AD 271 were available plenty of former official buildings in the town and in the fort, as well; none of these were necessary to be desacralised and many were bigger than the temple of Bel).

But imagination of modern authors did not stop with this case. D. Benea, an experienced archaeologist of the Roman period in Dacia, declared the *sacellum* of Nemesis from the amphitheatre at Porolissum was built only in the 4th century as a Christian basilica[57]. She contradicted the archaeological knowledge of Christian archaeology and distorted the well documented excavation and interpretation of the monument[58]. The author of the reasearch published all the probatory archaeological information and artifacts demonstrating without any doubt the identification of a shrine dedicated to Nemesis, in an attempt to defend the scientific truth[59]. After a while, D. Benea reopened the discussion reiterating her intimate surenesses and rejecting Bajusz's scientific demonstration[60]. The most astonishing among Benea's allegations is the supposition the votive altar with the inscription of Nemesis found inside the *sacellum* (as the other monuments of pagan divinities as Venus, Silvanus) were taken by Christians in the 4th century from another place and reused as building material. More, the monument with the inscription of Nemesis was used, in her view, to serve as support for the holly altar of the Christian church[61]. She thought the pagan monuments were reused to be desacralised, which is totally wrong. The action of desacralisation of former pagan religious buildings and objects was different[62]. It is an unbelievable blasphemy to imagine that in Antiquity a presumed Christian community at Porolissum, speaking Latin, was accepting a pagan inscription mentioning a pagan god to exist unaltered in the church and on top of it to be celebrated the holly Christian eucharist. The cult of Nemesis and its relation with the amphitheaters is well represented in the archaeological documentation in the provinces of the Roman Empire[63]. In general, the amphitheatres in the Roman world were assumed as places of Christian martyrdom and future churches inside these buildings were associated with the martyrs, but recent research concluded that "the great

[52] BALDERSTONE 2007, 5–6.
[53] JAMES 2019.
[54] For Porolissum, see OPREANU/TALOȘ 2020; for Dura-Europos, see KAIZER 2016.
[55] MELL 2010; PEPPARD 2016.
[56] KAIZER 2015, 92.
[57] BENEA 1999, 122–132; BENEA 2000, 7–18.
[58] BAJUSZ 1992.
[59] BAJUSZ 2003.
[60] BENEA 2006.
[61] BENEA 2006, 234.
[62] See, CUDORGE 2015.
[63] BOULEY 1990; ARISTODEMOU 2016.

majority of amphitheaters, theaters, hippodromes and stadia did not see Christian buildings constructed in their remains"[64]. Among the approximately 20 examples of Christian re-use of ancient spectacle monuments in Late Antiquity, only three possible *martyria* were identified: in the amphitheater at Tarragona, Salona and Caesareea Maritima[65]. The closest situation for Benea's proposal is at Salona. Here two spaces beaneath the *podium* with directly access from the arena were identified by the excavator (E. Dyggve) as shrines of Nemesis, but without any relevant evidence. Later the inner walls were covered with frescoes showing a nimbed character with inscription *Asterius*, the name of a local martyr put to death by Diocletian. The chapel was interpreted as a *martyrium* and dated to the middle of the 6th century. For Salona the amphitheatre or other building are not mentioned in any martyrology source as the place for martyrdom and the same situation is in all the other provinces[66]. Concerning the amphitheatre at Durres (Dyrrachium), three Christian chapels are known under the masonry structure of the *cavea*. The main chapel under the *pulvinar* having frescoes and mosaics was dated to the 7th century and had no relation with any martyr's cult, but was probably a private funerary chapel, while other Christian traces in the amphitheatre date from the Middle Ages[67].

Coming back to the Nemesis shrine from the amphitheater at Porolissum and to D. Benea's interpretation, she stated an up-side-down reasoning: "...the lack of discoveries of Christian or Christianized pieces in this edifice of the amphitheater is common for Dacia. In fact they are missing even in the Christian chapel erected above the temple of Liber Pater (i.e., of Bel)"[68]. So, in spite of the absence of any Christian evidence in the two buildings (which is a characteristic of Dacia), we have the right of not taking into consideration this rule specific for the scientific research. The final conclusion of the author is that at Porolissum the chapel in the amphitheater is connected with the Christian martyrdom and can be dated to the end of the 4th century[69]. But in absence of any acceptable evidence this allegation must be rejected. Scientific research method learns us that the objective study of the archaeological evidence comes first and this is the only source towards interpretation. Speculative thinking proposing ideas and conclusion before identifying the historical evidence makes the authors to travel out of the record, avoiding or contradicting the historical background of the theme, the scientific reasoning and the historical logic.

Our conclusion is that not any Christian cult building can be identified at Porolissum at the moment. The two discussed cases are both wrong interpretations. In a final analysis they are fakes following to operate changes to the historical truth, weather they were deliberate or not. If they were simply mistakes, it means was only a problem of poor scientific methodology and documentation. Our intention was to chase away some of the ghosts of the past decades which still perturb the honest efforts to reconstruct the ancient history of Romania. We think it is the only way Romanian historiography can achieve an earned credibility abroad. Arnaldo Momigliano's advice, that the historians have to comply with the "rules of the game" („le regole dell gioco") during the study of ancient history, continues to be in the pipeline. Regarding fakes and forgeries, he wrote:

> "VII. Every type of evidence is susceptible to falsification, that is, the fabrication by someone with the intention to deceive. Falsification can occur in the moment of the document's production or be added centuries later. In the former case, the falsification often has propagandistic

[64] BOWES 2014, 94.
[65] BOWES 2014, 94–98.
[66] BOWES 2014, 97–98; 109–112.
[67] BOWES/MITCHELL 2009.
[68] BENEA 2006, 236.
[69] BENEA 2006, 236.

elements...Falsification of the propagandistic or ideological sort can itself become an object of historical investigation. These ideologically motivated fables and forgeries have much to tell us about their creators and disseminators, and it is hard to draw the line between these forgeries from unconscious or semi-conscious distorsion or fantasy, which is a universal phenomenon... Devising techniques to detect forgeries constitutes part of the historical method, techniques grounded essentially in improving one's understanding of authentic objects..."[70].

The present paper grew up from my professional counciousness that makes me considering the duty of the researcher in history is to look for the truth, *sine ira et studio*. This difficult task must be watched by the scientific/critical method[71] of investigation of the facts (only *res factae*, not *res fictae*). "Historical texts are not simply narratives like any other: they result from the form of research and critical argument that footnotes document"[72].

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[70] MOMIGLIANO 2016, 43 (translated into English after original Italian by Kenneth W. Yu).
[71] LORENZ 2008.
[72] GRAFTON 1997, 232.

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Fig. 1. The pottery fragment at Porolissum with incised signs and letters considered as authentic with Christian significance from the 4th century AD (after GUDEA 2016, Fig. 26).

ABBREVIATIONS THAT CAN NOT BE FOUND IN BERICHT DER RÖMISCH-GERMANISCHE KOMMISSION

Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin	= AKAWB
Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debrecensis, Debrecen	= ACD
Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae (Budapesta)	= Acta Ethnogr Acad Scien Hungaricae
Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile secţiunii istorice	= An. Acad. Române. Mem. Sec. Istor.
Analele Banatului (Timişoara)	= An. Banatului
Analele Dobrogei (Constanţa)	= An. Dobrogei
Muzeului Judeţean Vaslui (Vaslui)	= Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis
Muzeul "Vasile Pârvan" (Bârlad)	= Acta Musei Tutovensis
Analele Universităţii Bucureşti	= An. Univ. Bucureşti
Analele Universităţii Iaşi	= An. Univ. Iaşi
Analele Universităţii „Dimitrie Cantemir" (Constanţa)	= An. Univ. Constanţa
Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations (Paris)	= Ann. Écon. Soc. Civil.
Arheologia Moldovei, Institutul de Arheologie (Iaşi)	= ArhMold
Arkheologiya, Natsional'na akademiya nauk Ukraini. Institut Arkheologii (Kyiv)	= Arkheologiya
Annales Universitatis Apulensis (Alba Iulia)	= AUA
Annali di scienze religiose, Milano	= Annali di scienze religiose
Anuarul Institutului pentru Studii Politice, de Apărare şi Istorie Militară	= Anu. Instit. Stud. Pol. Apăr. şi Istor. Milit.
Archaeologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich (-Ungarn), Wien	= AEM
Archiv des Vereines für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, Hermannstadt – Kronstadt (Sibiu – Braşov)	= AVSL
Archaeologia Baltica Polonia = Peregrinatio Gotica (Łódz)	= Arh Baltica
Arheologia Medievală (Iaşi)	= Arh. Medievală
Antigüedad, religiones y sociedades, Huelva	= ARYS
Az alsófehérmegyei történelmi régészeti és természettudomány évkönyve (Alba Iulia)	= AlsóTermÉvkönyve
Balcanica Posnanensia. Acta et Studia. Czasopismo wydawane przez UAM w Poznaniu	= Balcanica Posnaniensia
Buletinul cercurilor ştiinţifice studenţeşti (Alba Iulia)	= BCŞS Alba Iulia
Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice (Bucureşti)	= BMI
Instrumentum Bulletin du Groupe de travail européen	= Bull Instrumentum

sur l´artisanat et les productions manufacturées dans l´Antiquité (Montagnac)	
Bulletin antieke beschaving Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology	= BABesch
Bulletin de l´Institut historique belge de Rome (Rome)	= BullInst Hist Belge (Rome)
Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz, Sorbonne (Paris)	= Cahiers Centre Gustave Glotz
Complexul Muzeal „Iulian Antonescu" (Bacău)	= Carpica
Cercetări arheologice, Muzeul Naţional de Istorie a României (Bucureşti)	= Cercetări Arheologice
Muzeul Municipiului Bucureşti (Bucureşti)	= Cercetări arheologice în Bucureşti
Classical Philology (Chicago)	= Class. Philol.
Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România (Bucureşti)	= CCA
Cronica Numismatică şi Arheologică (Bucureşti)	= Cron. Numis. Arh.
Dacia. Recherches et découvertes archéologiques en	= Dacia
Roumanie, Bucureşti, I-XII (1924–1928); Nouvelle Série: Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne (Bucureşti)	
Muzeului de Istorie Galati	= Danubius
Dialogues d´Histoire Ancienne, París-Besançon	= DHA
Dicţionarul limbii romîne moderne (Bucureşti 1958)	= DRLM
Documenta Romaniae Historica (Bucureşti)	= DRH
Les Dossiers d'archeologie, París	= DossPar
Ethnic and Racial Studies (London)	= Ethnic and Racial Studies
Ephemeris Napocensis, Institutul de Arheologie şi Istoria Artei, Cluj-Napoca	= EphemNap
File de Istorie = Revista Bistriţei (Bistriţa)	= FI (Rev. Bistriţei)
Muzeul judeţean Ilfov (Bucureşti)	= File de Istorie
Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford 1966)	= Greek-English 1966
Harvard Studies in Classical Philology	= Harvard Stud. Class. Studia Philol.
A Herman Ottó Muzeum Évkönyve (Miskolc)	= HOMÉ
Hrvatski arheološki godišnjak (Zagreb)	= Hrv. Arh. God.
Historica. Historia Antigua (Salamanca)	= Stud. Hist. Hist. Antigua
Il Mar Nero Annali di archeologia e storia (Roma)	= Il Mar Nero
Izvestija Russkogo Arheologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole	= Izv. Ross. Arch. Inst. Konstantinopole
Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien	= ÖJh
Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology and History of Art Cluj-Napoca	= JAHA
Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve (Nyíregyháza)	= JAMÉ
Journal of Indo-European Studies (Washington DC)	= JIES
Journal of the Society for Ancient Numismatists	= Journal Soc. Ancient Numism.
Könyv és könyvtár, Budapest	= Könyv és könyvtár
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Lateinisch-Deutsch Schulwörterbuch (Leipzig 1891)	= Lateinisch-Deutsch 1891
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Muzeul Municipiului Bucureşti	= Materiale de Istorie şi Muzeografie
Materiale şi Cercetări Arheologice (serie nouă) (Bucureşti)	= MCA (S.N.)
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Monumenta Germaniae Historica (München)	= MGH
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A Nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve (Nyíregyháza)	= Josa Andras Múz Évk
Muzeul National de Istorie a României (Bucureşti)	= Muzeul Naţional
Norba Revista de arte, geografía e historia (Cáceres)	= Norba
Numismatische Zeitschrift	= NZ
O Arqueólogo Portugués, Lisboa	= Arque. Portugués
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Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica, Lovaina (Leuven)	= OLP
Ostraka Rivista di antichità (Napoli)	= Ostraka
Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Prague)	= Památky Archeologické
Patrimonium Apulense, Alba Iulia	= Patrim. Apulense
Rossijskaya Arkheologiya. Institut arkheologii Rossijskoj akademii nauk (Moskva).	= RA
Rad Muzeja Vojvodine (Novi Sad)	= Rad Muz. Voj.
RepArAb Repertoriul arheologic al judeţului Alba, Alba Iulia, 1995 [= Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis, II]	= RepArAb
Res Antiquae (Bruxelles)	= Res Antiquae
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Revista Bistriţei	= Rev. Bistriţei
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Slovenská Archeologia. Archeologický ústav SAV (Nitra)	= SlovArch
Stratum plus, Vysshaya Antropologicheskaya Shkola (Chişinău)	= Stratum plus
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Uniwersytet Im Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Seria Historia (Poznań)	= Uniw Adama Mickiewicza Poznan
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