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GIVE TO CAESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESAR'S AND TO JUPITER THE THINGS THAT ARE JUPITER'S. THE *CONCORDIA CONSACRANIS* RELIEF FROM NOVAE AND ITS CONJECTURAL CONNECTION TO SEVERAN DYNASTY RECONSIDERED.

Abstract: The paper contains a reanalysis of a well-known relief from Novae (unearthed in the first year of regular archaeological excavations) depicting the Capitoline Triad, with an inscription mentioning its erection in the context of a religious association of *consacrani Iovianorum* (*AE* 1964, 180 bis = *ILBulg* 273 = KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987 = SCHALLMAYER *et alii* 1990, pp. 503–504, no. 653 = *ILNovae* 18 = *AE* 1991, 1370 = KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991 = *IGLNovae* 24 = LUNGAROVA 2012b, p. 151, no. 310 = VALCHEV 2022, pp. 253–254, no. 87).

The aim of this article is to propose a different interpretation of the monument and a new dating taking into account the religious, social and political context of its dedication. New methods of documentation enabled an improved reading of the text. It is proven that the inscription was dedicated not by an *ex beneficiarius consularis*, but by a former *beneficiarius legati*, which changes the understanding of the dedicant's career and his role in military administration. The same documentation also allowed for additional considerations regarding the name of the dedicant himself and was useful for identification of some badly damaged letters.

Keywords: Novae, Moesia, Roman army, administration, *beneficiarii*, religious associations, Capitoline Triad, *Concordia*, Severan dynasty

Introduction

Novae¹ (near modern Svishtov, Bulgaria) is one of the better-known legionary fortresses on the Danube, thanks in large part to more than 60 years of regular Polish-Bulgarian archaeological excavations.² While over the years only a few sacralised spaces have been excavated and studied,³

¹ The project has been financed with resources provided by the National Science Center, Poland, allotted on the basis of decision NOVAE DEC 2018/31/B/HS3/02593 and the Bekker NAWA Programme fellowship (number BPN/BEK/2021/1/00220) at the Department of Ancient History, Papyrology and Epigraphy at the University of Vienna.

² For the history of research of the site see e.g. DYCZEK 2008; SARNOWSKI *et alii* 2012, pp. 12–14; BIERNACKI, KLENINA 2022.

³ KOLENDO 1990a; DZIURDZIK 2025 (forthcoming).

numerous objects associated with Roman religion were discovered, mostly in secondary contexts. An important discovery of this type has been made already during the first, 1960 season of regular Polish-Bulgarian archaeological excavations — a relief plaque, dedicated by a veteran to the Capitoline Triad for the *Concordia* of a religious association of *consacrani Iovianorum*. It is currently preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Veliko Tarnovo (a branch of the Regional Museum of History — Veliko Tarnovo).⁴ Due to its interesting iconography and the different readings of the accompanying inscription, the monument was the subject of several discussions. The aim of this article is to present a corrected reading of the text and its implications. While the basic results have been presented elsewhere,⁵ the methodology itself deserves a longer description as it offers a new tool for deciphering hard-to-read fragments of inscriptions. Moreover, the historical implications of the new reading, as well as a new analysis of the relief, allow us to propose a new dating and interpretation of the monument.⁶

The find and its publication

a. Context of the find

The circumstances of this discovery were described in a preliminary report.⁷ The relief was found reused in a Late Antique wall (located in sector IV, hectare II, square 320 — in the provisional grid used in 1960 this area was numbered as squares 3 and 4) [Fig. 1]. The wall belonged to a rather poorly preserved building, erected with stones bound with clay. It was named the Building of the Inscription,⁸ after yet another epigraphic discovery.⁹ However, after further excavation campaigns it was proven that this was a much larger structure, possibly a pottery workshop,¹⁰ and the Building of the Inscription was just a part of that complex.

This construction, dated probably to the reign of Justinian and functioning probably until the reign of Justin II, followed a hiatus after the abandonment of the second half of fourth – fifth century phase, the so-called Portico Building, which was preceded by the military hospital, and before that, the legionary baths.¹¹

It was assumed that the inscription was meant to be visible on the outer face of the wall.¹² Judging by the available photographs of the findspot [Fig. 2], this interpretation is probably incorrect. The reconstruction of the context is somewhat hampered by the fact that in the pioneering year of the excavations stratigraphic exploration was not used in this sector. However, it seems that the relief was located below the first layer of squared stones (except for the cornerstones, which were set at a deeper level). It also appears to protrude at a slight angle from the facing of the wall. This position seems to follow the cut of the foundation trench. Judging by the relation to the stone flight of stairs inside the building, the relief was probably also at a lower level than

⁴ The authors would like to express their gratitude to Dr Ivan Tsarov, the Director of Regional Museum of History – Veliko Tarnovo for his kind consent to our research and preparation of new documentation. The monument's inventory number is 1019a/TOM.

⁵ DZIURDZIK, NARLOCH 2023. The authors are grateful to Professor Werner Eck for his comments on that paper.

⁶ The authors are indebted to Professor Jerzy Żelazowski for the invaluable discussion of their interpretations. The current paper also benefited from the comments of the participants of the Papyrology and Epigraphy Seminar at the Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, where preliminary results were presented.

⁷ SULTOV 1962, pp. 118–122, fig. 88.

⁸ MAJEWSKI *et alii* 1963, pp. 86–87, fig. 57–58.

⁹ Later connected with its second fragment: BUNSCH, KOLENDO, ŻELAZOWSKI 2004, p. 50; *AE* 1966, 347 = *AE* 2004, 1244.

¹⁰ DYCZEK 2011, p. 39.

¹¹ For the history of research of this sector and the architectural phases see DYCZEK 2011.

¹² KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, pp. 371–372; KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991, p. 33.



Fig. 1. The inscription *in situ* (T. Biniewski, photograph in the archive of Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre, University of Warsaw)



Fig. 2. View of the trench during excavations (T. Biniewski, in SULTOW 1962, 119, fig. 88)

the floor inside the building. All in all, it was most probably placed below the ground level, in the foundations of the wall. As such, the stone was reused purely as building material, not as an item of religious significance or as a sort of an (ideologically neutral) embellishment. In contrary, one can presume that, especially in sixth century, i.e. during early Christian times, a monument related to traditional Roman religion was purposefully placed out of view.

b. The original context of the dedication

The survival of the relief in very good condition in a secondary context, reused several centuries after its dedication, is worth noting. It was suggested that originally it could have been

positioned in the courtyard of the military hospital,¹³ close to the place of its final reuse. But this is probably incorrect. As it was set up by a veteran in the context of a cult association, it had to be erected outside the legionary camp. While veterans were allowed to make dedications in selected locations inside military camps, both as individuals and in groups,¹⁴ an association other than an association of veterans¹⁵ would not be allowed such access. The only other option would be that the monument was set up already in the late third century, when the legionary camp was turning into a civilian-military town (and the rules governing the performance of religious acts inside the fortress would be changing as well). But that would be the exact period when the military hospital was already inactive.¹⁶ Thus, its most probable original location is somewhere in the area of the *canabae*,¹⁷ in all likelihood inside a venue used by the *collegium* for their gatherings.

Concerning its reuse, the example of numerous pieces of gravestones reused in the so-called *via inscriptionum* already in the late third century¹⁸ is a perfect example how former sacral character often had little bearing on the decision to reuse stone monuments brought from the extramural areas of Novae. On the other hand, the number and distribution of monuments related to cult that were brought inside the legionary fortress from the area of the *canabae* shows a possibility that some of them were brought in groups. Whether that was to preserve their sacral character in a new location or just because of the way the material was procured for a construction project is difficult to judge,¹⁹ since the fate of any such monument between the dedication (reconstructed original context) and the final reuse (the archaeological context of the findspot) is often completely unknown. The same is true for the discussed monument, but its good state of preservation suggests that the relief could have remained in adequate care, regardless of whether it was moved to a secondary position, or remained in the original location.

c. Physical description of the monument

The discussed monument is a limestone relief plaque measuring $94 \times 83 \times 15$ cm [Fig. 3]. It is made from a variety of good quality limestone brought to Novae from quarries to the south, which in the research is traditionally called Hotnitza (or Hotnica) limestone.²⁰

Its upper part is a relief depiction of three figures (deities or their statues) of Juno, Jupiter and Minerva (from left to right), in an arched framing with Ionic columns on the sides. Both Juno and Jupiter are holding sceptres in their left arms and sacrificing on altars from *paterae* held in right hands. Juno is depicted in a very long garment tapered under the bust, from underneath which the tips of what are probably closed shoes can be seen. The top of her head is covered with what appears to be a long veil. Her hair appears to be parted along the middle. Her face is slightly damaged. Jupiter is represented in a fairly standard way, in a himation with the right side of his upper body naked. Most probably he wears sandals on his feet. His head is unproportionally large, with curly hair, and a short beard that appears to be separate from the moustaches. Minerva holds a spear with a very large spearhead in her left arm, and her right hand rests on an oval shield with a small round umbo in the middle. She is wearing a short tunic with elbow-length sleeves over a long chiton, probably closed shoes, and on her head she has a much-simplified, open helmet with a large plume on top.

¹³ DYCZEK 1999, p. 496.

¹⁴ SCHMIDT HEIDENREICH 2013, pp. 202–203.

¹⁵ On such groups see PEREA YÉBENES 1999, pp. 455–475.

¹⁶ The proof for this could be a hiatus in coin evidence beginning with Gordian III, and the collapse of some roofs, see DYCZEK, KOLENDO 2012, p. 44.

¹⁷ TOMAS 2017, p. 66.

¹⁸ DYCZEK 1998; KOLENDO 2000.

¹⁹ DZIURDZIK 2025 (forthcoming).

²⁰ BIERNACKI 2019.



Fig. 3. Votive relief with the inscription (T. Dziurdzik)

Taking into account the state of preservation of the monument, which is characterised by some damage to the surface (which is due to the tendency of this kind of limestone to flake), the original sharpness and quality of the sculpted details must have been quite good. This is especially true of folds of the garments. On the other hand, the faces of the figures, with very large eyes, and other much simplified elements of the anatomy, are depicted in a characteristic “provincial” manner. The spacing of various elements of the relief was imperfect, as the group is too far from the column on the left side of the plaque, resulting in uneven positions of the figures and an unnaturally bent left arm of Minerva next to the column on the right. This caused some of the proportions to be disturbed, such as limbs that are too long, or the very small and narrow shield.

Below the arch and above the figures is the first, detached line of the inscription. The height of letters in this line is 1.9 cm. In its execution, it was not planned properly, as due to the relief not being properly centred, the last two letters are squeezed above the plume of Minerva’s helmet. The main part of the inscription is inscribed below the relief, on a *tabula ansata* (13 × 55 cm in size), set within a wide frame in the lower part of the plaque. The height of the letters in this part is 1.9 – 2.2 cm, with slight variation within particular lines.

d. Previous research on the *Concordia consacranis* relief

At first, the relief has been only briefly mentioned in various reports.²¹ Unfortunately, one of those preliminary remarks about the find mentioning just the first line of the text²² was noticed by the editors of *L'Année Épigraphique* and became the basis for an entry in this publication.²³ Through this misunderstanding, the inscription unfortunately entered the scientific discourse in a very abridged form. This led to some confusion and a separate life of something that was basically an artificial creation.

A number of factors led to the full publication being postponed by several decades. In a tragic twist of fate, it was again interrupted by the passing away of Bogdan Sultov, the discoverer of the monument and one of its first two editors, in 1982. After his death, the work was finished by Jerzy Kolendo and published in 1987²⁴ in French, and again in 1991 in a slightly modified Polish version.²⁵ Kolendo and Sultov are referred to as the editors in the subsequent parts of the text. Judging by a photo in the publication,²⁶ a paper stamping of the epigraphic field with lines 2–6 of the inscription was perhaps used in the analysis. Those complicated circumstances of the publication and the use of an imperfect medium in the preparation of the *editio princeps* can be of importance for the evaluation of the previous interpretations of fragments of the text that are badly preserved and hard to read.²⁷

The text of the inscription

a. The previously accepted reading of the text

The previously widely accepted reading of the text²⁸ was as follows:

CONCORDIA CONSACRANIS
//
I O M ET IVNONI REG ET MINERVAE
C STABORATIVS VET EX B(NF) C
4 CONSACRANIS IOVIANORVM
OB OHNORE INMVNITATIS EIVS DQ
NUM DEDIT

Concordia consacranis. || I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et Iunoni Reg(inae) et Minervae | C(aius) Staboratius vet(eranus) ex b(e)n(e)f(iciario) c(onsularis) | consacranis Iovianorum | ob <ho>nore inmunitatis eius do | num dedit.

²¹ For a full list of those mentions, see KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 369, n. 2.

²² MAJEWSKI 1962, p. 319.

²³ *AE* 1964, 180 bis.

²⁴ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987.

²⁵ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991.

²⁶ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 370, fig. 2.

²⁷ Curiously, the publications concerning the monument seem to have been plagued by further bad luck, with many typos and accidental errors that do not help following the discussion (e.g. DYCZEK 1999, p. 496, where figures are described as Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta instead of Septimius Severus, Iulia Domna and Caracalla.

Cf. also: LUNDGREEN 2004, p. 86, where the relief is mentioned as set up “in honour of the Great Jupiter, Queen Juno, Minerva and the consul”; KRÓLCZYK 2009, p. 163, where the monument is named an altar; LUNGAROVA 2012b, p. 151, no. 310, where the end of fourth line is marked as abbreviated – Iovianor(um); SARNOWSKI 2015, pp. 516–517 where the amount of money – following one of the proposed readings – is once given as 500 and once as 600 sesterces).

²⁸ *IGL Novae*, p. 24; the same text, but with different preservation of letters as in *AE* 1991, 1370, based on SCHALL-MAYER *et alii* 1990, pp. 503–504, no. 653.

To Concord for the brotherhood [of devotees of Jupiter]. || To Jupiter the Best and Greatest, and Juno the Queen, and Minerva. Caius Stabratius, a veteran, a former *beneficiarius* of a *consularis* (?), for the immunity with which they honoured him, gave a gift to the members of the brotherhood of devotees of the cult of Jupiter.²⁹

The crucial argument of the first editors was the connection of the relief to the propaganda of the Severan family, an idea that the current article tries to challenge. Based on this interpretation of the iconography, they dated the monument to 209–217 AD,³⁰ and the invocation to *Concordia* became for them a basis for an even more precise dating, somewhere between 04.02.211 and 27.02.212 AD, the turbulent co-reign of Caracalla and Geta.³¹ Revisions followed, especially considering the relief itself.³² The new iconographical interpretation was accepted by J. Kolendo, who revised the dating to the later part of Severus's reign.³³ Alternative readings of some parts of the inscription were also offered.³⁴ Those aspects and their interpretations will be discussed below in the context of the separate research questions.

b. The need for new research

While most of the inscription is quite well-preserved and the text is fairly obvious, being a dedication by a veteran commemorating the unity of a religious association, made to the Capitoline Triad because of the privilege of being freed from an obligation, two fragments proved to be much more complicated [Fig. 4], and several possible readings have been proposed.

The first of those fragments is the end of the third line, where the editors proposed a two-letter ligature NF, in consequence reconstructing the ending of this line (and the former military position of the dedicant) as EX B(NF) C — ex b(e)n(e)f(iciario) c(onsularis). This abbreviation would however be very unusual.³⁵ It was explained as unintended, a result of a stonecutter's mistake and of a subsequent attempt at altering it by transforming the existing letter shapes into a ligature by the addition of a diagonal stroke. According to the editors, the erroneously carved letters B LEG were thus changed into BNE C³⁶ — the correction intended, in fact, to be understood as BNF C. Some have already doubted that such a correction had taken place,³⁷ but the rough surface of the stone and the quality of available photographs did not allow for a definite answer. In fact, J. Kolendo, one of the original editors, at a later point also considered the reading B LEG as another, less likely possibility.³⁸ Another reading has been proposed — b(e)n(e)f(iciario) c[o(n)s(ularis)].³⁹ This would require two further letters, no traces of which can be seen on the stone.

The second disputed fragment is the ending of the line 5, and the much shorter line 6. The worse state of preservation of bottom-right side of the monument made the reading difficult, which led to different interpretations. Apart from the reading eius do|num dedit⁴⁰ — also including differing opinions about the preservation of some letters: eiu[s do]|num dedit⁴¹ — several other variants were proposed: eius[d](em) | num(inibus) de[orum?] or eius[d](em) | num(inibus) de [suo] or eius[d](em) | num(inibus) de[dit];⁴² eius DC | num(mum) dedit,⁴³ and even eiu[s]d(em) | num(inibus) de[orum?].⁴⁴

²⁹ Reading and translation after *IGLNovae* 24.

³⁰ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 374.

³¹ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 378.

³² MIKOCKI 1988, p. 338, no. 389; MIKOCKI 1995, pp. 72–73 and p.212, no. 424, pl. XIX, fig. 424.

³³ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991, p. 42, n. 44.

³⁴ *ILBulg* 273; *IGLNovae* 18; LUNGAROVA 2012b, p. 151, no. 310.

³⁵ SCHALLMAYER *et alii* 1990, pp. 808–813.

³⁶ *IGLNovae* 24 and 61.

³⁷ E.g. RAEPSAET-CHARLIER 1999, p. 497.

³⁸ *IGLNovae* 24.

³⁹ VALCHEV 2022, p. 253.

⁴⁰ *IGLNovae* 24; VALCHEV 2022, p. 253.

⁴¹ SCHALLMAYER *et alii* 1990, p. 653.

⁴² *ILBulg* 273.

⁴³ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991, p. 34.

⁴⁴ LUNGAROVA 2012b, p. 151, no. 310.

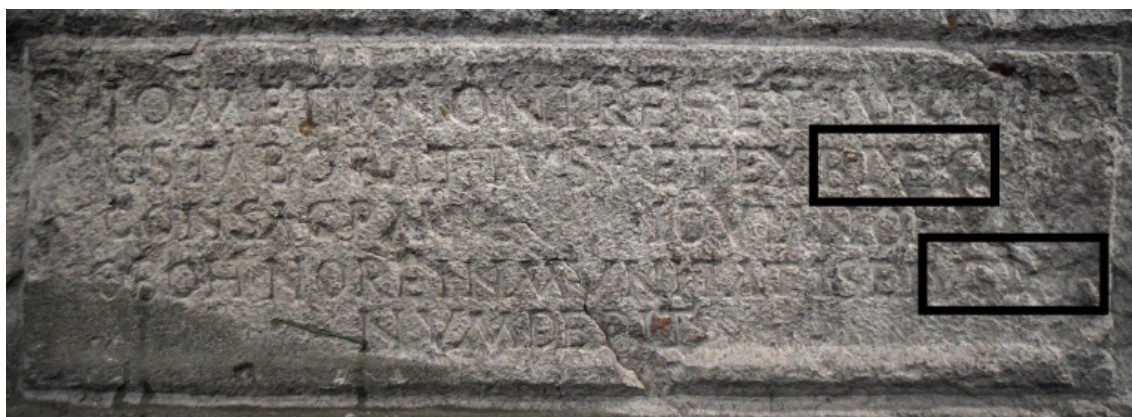


Fig. 4. The part of the inscription on the *tabula ansata* and the controversial fragments of the text (T. Dziurdzik)

This involves important differences in meaning of this part of the text, ranging from possibilities such as a declaration of a financial gift to the religious association (or the price of the dedicated monument), the information that the dedicant used his own money to pay for it, to various options concerning the clarification to whom the dedication was addressed. Those alternative readings sometimes served as the basis for further considerations, especially popular was the reading which would mean that the dedicant made a financial contribution to the religious *collegium*.⁴⁵

c. New research on the inscription

Because of those uncertainties, we decided to study the monument in person, and to use modern methods to solve the questions about the reading of poorly preserved fragments of the inscription. In the summer of 2022, in addition to high-resolution photographs, we prepared new documentation of the inscription using the Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) method. This proved most helpful in reading the two disputed sections.

Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) is a photographic technique that involves taking a series of photographs with light of varying intensity, wavelength, and direction of incidence to record surface attributes and colour. To make an RTI model, 40-80 photos are needed. It is built and presented using two applications developed by Cultural Heritage Imaging (CHI). Both are distributed under Gnu General Public License version 3, in addition to being free and open source, and therefore available to anyone. The end result is a 2.5D model with mathematically enhanced surface and colour attributes, according to the implemented algorithms.

RTI technology was created by HP engineers more than two decades ago.⁴⁶ Since then, as a result of its further development, it has found application in documentation and conservation of cultural heritage in the broadest sense. In archaeology it can be successfully used in documentation of large objects in the field — such as stone blocks,⁴⁷ graffiti⁴⁸ or rock art,⁴⁹ and also much smaller items such as bones,⁵⁰ flint tools,⁵¹ chalk plaques,⁵² amphora stamps.⁵³

⁴⁵ KRÓLCZYK 2003, p. 277; KRÓLCZYK 2009, p. 163; LUNGAROVA 2009, pp. 204–205; LUNGAROVA 2012a, p. 84; SARNOWSKI 2015, pp. 516–517.

⁴⁶ MALZBENDER *et alii* 2000; MALZBENDER, GELB, WOLTERS 2001.

⁴⁷ DURUSU-TANRIÖVER 2020.

⁴⁸ DiBIASIE-SAMMONS 2018.

⁴⁹ DÍAZ-GUARDAMINO, SANJUÁN, WHEATLEY 2015.

⁵⁰ NEWMAN 2015.

⁵¹ FIORINI 2018.

⁵² DAVIS, HARDING, LEIVERS 2021.

⁵³ LECH, MATERA, ZAKRZEWSKI 2021.

Taking photographs for an RTI project can be done in two main ways. The first, which has the undeniable advantage of relatively low cost, requires only the use of a camera or other image capturing device, a moving light source and a shiny sphere. The lens should be positioned perpendicular to the object being photographed. The whole procedure requires moving the light source around in several circles, making sure that it is at a constant distance from the subject to create a virtual light dome over it. All the time there should be a shining sphere in the frame, which allows the software to reproduce the exact position of the light source.

The second, much more convenient, but also more expensive way, is to use a purposely constructed dome, equipped with regularly positioned light sources. Its main advantage is the automation of the entire process and insensitivity to external conditions. Covering the photographed object with such a device effectively nullifies the influence of external light. The disadvantage, however, is its very structure, which limits the frame depending on the diameter of the dome itself. Such devices are used primarily in laboratories and research centres.

In our case, we were forced to use the second way and focus only on the details. The plaque is part of the museum's permanent exhibition and has been affixed to the wall in a niche. In addition, there are two large showcases on its two sides, which prevent free light handling and cast a shadow on the monument being photographed.

For our purposes, we used a portable multispectral RTI illuminator operating in the UV (375 nm), IR (840 and 930 nm) and VIS (465, 520, 638 nm and broadband white light) ranges, which allows us to automatically collect a series of 50 images to build an RTI image not only using white light, but also at selected other wavelengths. Our device has been supplemented with a mirrorless camera with 32.5MP Dual Pixel sensor and two different macro lenses. The use of such set of equipment allowed us to reconstruct all damaged, difficult to read and controversial parts of the inscription, with the results presented below.

d. Improved reading of the inscription

In the line 3, the photographs and RTI models [Fig. 5] undoubtedly show no traces which could suggest that the letters were subject to any corrections. We were able to establish that the line, which was thought by the editors to be the diagonal part of the letter N added in order to turn the mistakenly carved letters into a ligature, is merely a crack in the surface of the stone. It is quite deep, has jagged edges and in fact continues well into the next line.

Of special note is the shape of the letter L in this line: its base is curved downwards, and it reaches quite far below the line, almost touching the letter below. This must have been influenced by the handwriting — in the Latin cursive similar shapes are common especially from the second century, developing from forms attested already in Pompei and Vindonissa. The base of letter L pointing downwards is present in several forms also in other inscriptions from Novae.⁵⁴ Interestingly, the most similar form, with a curved base, was used in an inscription from 431 AD.⁵⁵

Some damage to the surface of the stone made the identification of the last letter in line 3 challenging [Fig. 6]. Again, we are dealing with a shape adapted from handwriting. It is a letter G with a wide, open curve and an approximately vertical tail, a form sometimes used in Latin cursive writing, especially from the middle second century,⁵⁶ and close to those present in uncial and half-uncial; comparable forms are attested in other inscriptions from Novae.⁵⁷ The same,

⁵⁴ MROZEWICZ 2010b, pp. 53–55, 82–83.

⁵⁷ MROZEWICZ 2010a, pp. 55 and 80.

⁵⁵ MROZEWICZ 2010b, p. 82, no. a16.

⁵⁶ Similar in shape is a letter written on a wax tablet from Alburnus Maior precisely dated to 167 AD: *CIL III Instrumenta Dacica I*, pp. 924–927 = *IDR I* 31



Fig. 5. Part of line 3. Results – RTI (K. Narloch)

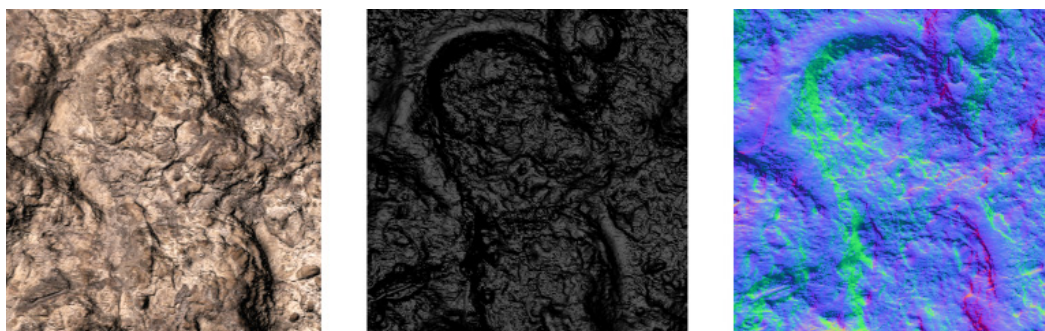


Fig. 6. The last letter in line 3 – RTI (K. Narloch)



Fig. 7. The letter G in the second line – RTI (K. Narloch).

but better-preserved shape of the letter G can be found in line 2 of the inscription [Fig. 7]. Its identification is obvious not only thanks to its better state, but also because it is a part of an abbreviation of a common epithet of Juno, Reg(ina). While the original editors noticed this shape in line 2,⁵⁸ they were unable to identify it in line 3 due to the state of preservation. Now, thanks to the application of RTI, we can be sure that the ending of line 3 with the former military position of the dedicant should in fact be read as EX B LEG — ex b(eneficiario) leg(ati).

The lines 5 and 6 are also somewhat difficult to read using standard methods due to the preservation of the monument. The new documentation [Fig. 8] clearly proves that the reading eius do|num dedit is correct, as the letters S D O can be securely identified at the end of line 5, despite major damage to this part of the surface of the epigraphic field.

All in all, we were able to establish the text as follows:

CONCORDIA CONSACRANIS
 //
 I O M ET IVNONI REG ET MINERVAE
 C STAB ORATIVS VET EX B LEG
 4 CONSACRANIS IOVIANORVM
 OB OHNORE INMVNITATIS EIVS DO
 NUM DEDIT⁵⁹

Concordia consacranis. || I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et Iunoni Reg(inae) et Minervae | C(aius) Stab(---) (H)oratus vet(eranus) ex b(eneficiario) leg(ati) | consacranis Iovianorum | ob <ho>nore(m) inmunitatis eius do | num dedit.

The Concord of co-worshippers. || To Jupiter the Best and Greatest, and Juno the Queen, and Minerva. Caius Stab(---) (H)oratus, a veteran, former *beneficiarius* of a legate, gave (this relief) as a gift to the co-worshippers of Jupiter, because of the honour of having been freed from an obligation.

⁵⁸ Described it as common in the third–fourth century, KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 373. ⁵⁹ DZIURDZIK, NARLOCH 2023, p. 300.

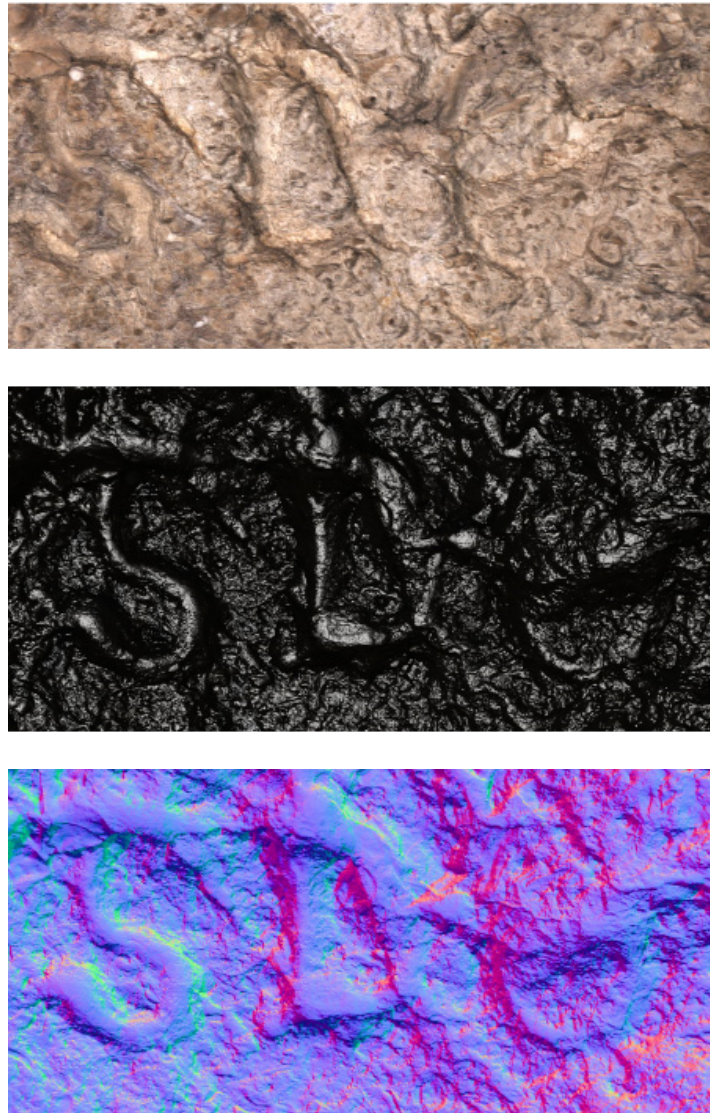


Fig. 8. The ending of line 5 – RTI (K. Narloch).

The division of the text into lines is noteworthy and shows a conscious attempt at organising it. The first line, above the relief, provides the intention of the erection of the monument, the unity of members of a religious association. The second, opening the part on the *tabula ansata*, contains the dedication to the Capitoline Triad, while the third names the dedicant. In the fourth line the members of the association for whom the relief was set up are given. Thus, the inscription was formatted in such a way that all those lines are self-contained. The only exception are the last two lines, which are to be read together, providing information that the dedication was made because of the privilege of being freed from an obligation. The last line, notably shorter, is almost centred, but slightly closer to the left; it is noticeable also in the preceding lines that the stonecutter was aligning the lines to the left. While they paid some attention to where the lines finish on the right (such as by adding a striking wide gap between the words in the fourth line), they did not attempt to fully adjust the length of the lines to be identical.

A reassessment of the monument

a. The dedicant's name

The name of the dedicant has been the subject of some discussion. The original editors assumed that he was called C(aius) Staboratius.⁶⁰ Some scholars even went as far as to propose an origin from “other [i.e. other than Noricum] Celto-Germanic provinces” based on this name.⁶¹ His *nomen* in this case would be otherwise unattested. However, a combination of a *praenomen* and *nomen* would be uncommon for the period they proposed as the dating of the monument, when *tria nomina* or a combination of *nomen* with *cognomen* could rather be expected. Another reading was suggested: C(aius) Stab(erius) Oratius,⁶² but this idea remained neither accepted nor rebutted in further publications dealing with the monument, as most scholars followed the text given in original publication or in *corpora* of inscriptions from Novae, rather than the entry in *L'Année Épigraphique*. While we agree that the suggestion of Patrick Le Roux that the dedicant bore *tria nomina* is probably correct,⁶³ we would like to offer some additional possibilities for the *nomen*, and discuss in more detail the form of the *cognomen* used on the monument.

Staberia was a minor plebeian *gens* of relatively little importance, with the notorious exception of the consul Marcus Pompeius Silvanus Staberius Flavinus,⁶⁴ possibly related through adoption or inheritance through a female line. Among the members of the *gens*, some were connected to the military. Titus Staberius Secundus, son of Titus, was in command of an *ala* in Germania Inferior during the time of Vespasian.⁶⁵ Caius Staberius Primus, with his *origo* given as *castris*, has been attested in a list of legionaries from Lambaesis.⁶⁶ We can assume that he was probably also included in a second, analogical list, though his name is not preserved completely.⁶⁷ No data exists that could link any previously known Staberii to the dedicant of the Novae inscription.

But other *nomina* are also possible, including Stabius or Stabilius. A Lucius Stabius Tertius from Berytus (modern-day Beirut) was a legionary honourably discharged from legio II Traiana *fortis* in Egypt in 156/7 AD,⁶⁸ and Marcus Stabius Colonus, son of Marcus, from Luca, inscribed in the *Fabia tribus*, was a tribune in legio XI Claudia in Moesia Inferior during the reign of Antoninus Pius.⁶⁹ A tombstone of a Marcus Stabilius Caelestinus has been found in Barcelona, ancient Barcino,⁷⁰ while a Stabi[lius St]atut[us] erected a monument in Mogontiacum⁷¹ — though the name Stabilius (as well as Stabilio) functioned also as a *cognomen*, sometimes borne by slaves and freedmen. A Greek text contains yet another name, Stabenus.⁷²

Current lack of certainty about the abbreviated *nomen* of the dedicant provokes the question whether it was understandable to those who were reading the text when it was set up. The abbreviation could have been made in order to facilitate the abovementioned division of the text into self-contained lines, but perhaps the person preparing the text was sure that no confusion was possible. We can probably assume that since we are dealing with a monument erected in relation to a religious association, this must have been the deciding factor. It is interesting to note that all of the proposed *nomina* have been attested only in modest numbers in the Danubian provinces of the Empire.⁷³ But those who were meant to read the inscription — the members of the

⁶⁰ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987; KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991; *IGL Novae* 24.

⁶¹ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2019, p. 137.

⁶² *AE* 1991, 1370 by Patrick Le Roux.

⁶³ DZIURDZIK, NARLOCH 2023, p. 300.

⁶⁴ ECK 1972.

⁶⁵ *CIL* XVI 23.

⁶⁶ *CIL* VIII 18068 = *AE* 1890, 107 = *AE* 1891, 149 = *AE* 1992, 1875.

⁶⁷ *AE* 1989, 884

⁶⁸ *AE* 1969/70, 633 = *AE* 1955, 238.

⁶⁹ *AE* 1901, 48 = *CIL* III 14214¹.

⁷⁰ *CIL* II 4586 = *CIL* II 4586, add. p. 982.

⁷¹ *AE* 1990, 742.

⁷² SOLIN, SALOMIES 1988, p. 175.

⁷³ *OPEL* IV, 92.

collegium — obviously knew the dedicant. His name was included in the text to commemorate his contribution among his colleagues from the same association, rather than to inform strangers. That the *nomen* Stab(---) was abbreviated could also suggest that the *cognomen* of the dedicant was deemed more important for his proper identification. This would reflect changes in naming practices, the processes which led to the reduction of importance by the *nomen*.⁷⁴

The *cognomen* Oratius also raises some interest. Firstly, though (H)oratius is a quite common *nomen* (Horatia was one of Roman patrician *gentes*), its use as a *cognomen* is rather rare.⁷⁵ However, it may have been a *cognomen* of other legionaries as well.⁷⁶ Perhaps it could have been a nickname given by colleagues, rather than a name given at birth. Since a *beneficiarius* was required to be able to write, and a job in the *officium legati* was mostly a bureaucratic one, perhaps it was a form of mockery of the soldier's education and everyday tasks? Secondly, its orthography is noteworthy — a silent H has been omitted. Such spelling often appears in inscriptions, including a number of examples from the Balkan and Danubian provinces, for example from Aquincum,⁷⁷ and Narona.⁷⁸ A perfect example is offered by a group of lists from Philippi,⁷⁹ where the same person is listed both as C(aius) Oratius Sabinus and as C(aius) Horatius Sabinus. The spelling Oratius is also consistent with the orthography of line 5 of the Novae relief. The inscribing of *ohnorem* in place of *honorem* should probably be understood as not just a mistake in the order of letters,⁸⁰ but rather as a reflection of a phonological phenomenon. It may also be connected to the way the name was rendered in Greek, Ὀράτιος.⁸¹

b. The dedicant's career

Importantly, the new reading of the inscription allows us to correct the information on the career of the dedicant. His former military post was not a *beneficiarius consularis* as it was assumed in earlier research, but rather *beneficiarius legati*. In Novae this almost certainly meant a post in the *officium* of the legate commanding the unit stationed there, legio I Italica. In comparison to soldiers chosen from legio I Italica as *beneficarii consularis*, who were often given policing functions in the mining district around Montana,⁸² as well as in other provinces, e.g. in Dalmatia,⁸³ the career of the dedicant was probably rather static and limited to administrative tasks in the military bureaucracy. Not only this was a less prestigious rank — the rank of a *beneficiarius* was directly related to the rank of the person appointing the soldier to this function — but it also probably offered more limited prospects for further advancement.⁸⁴ This is reflected by the number and distribution of other inscriptions set up by former or active *beneficarii legati* of the commander of legio I Italica, who appear to have quite limited mobility and strong ties to the place where their unit was garrisoned. A poorly preserved inscription has been set up at Novae by a group of *beneficarii* from the *officium* of the legate.⁸⁵ Several grave monuments of veterans who had this rank have been found in the region of Novae: between Pordim and Valchitran,⁸⁶

⁷⁴ SALWAY 1994, p. 137.

⁷⁵ OPEL III, 183 lists just a single case; there is also a military diploma awarded to Thaemus Horati f(ilius), an Ituraean demobilised in Dacia in 110 AD (cf. CIL 57).

⁷⁶ CIL VIII 18086; DEAN 1916, pp. 88 and 202; a similar *cognomen*, Horatianus, is certainly attested, CIL VIII 18065 and 3283.

⁷⁷ CIL III 3444.

⁷⁸ CIL III supp. 1 1848, add. p. 1494.

⁷⁹ CIL III 633.

⁸⁰ MROZEWICZ 2010b, p. 42.

⁸¹ E.g. in an inscription from Cyzicus: see IMT Kyz Kapu Dağ 1474; for how bilingualism affected written texts see e.g. ADAMS 2003.

⁸² E.g. AE 1987, 872; AE 1987, 873; AE 1987, 881; CIL III 7447.

⁸³ E.g. ILJug 1522; ILJug 2087; CIL III 14631; CIL III 2023 = CIL III 2023, add. p. 1030 = CIL III 8578.

⁸⁴ NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, pp. 87–131.

⁸⁵ ILNovae 47 = IGLNovae 68.

⁸⁶ ILBulg 236.

in Iatrus,⁸⁷ and in Pavlikeni.⁸⁸ We can assume that the dedicant of the discussed relief also chose to permanently remain in the area, as joining a *collegium* probably meant not only involvement in local religious matters, but perhaps that he also expected to be buried at Novae, since that was one of the functions of such associations.

All in all, our veteran spent his professional life at a very modest level of administration, far from the higher echelons of the imperial administration. Even at a provincial level his position was rather limited, as the peak of his career was when he served in the *officium* of the legate of the legion stationed in Novae, ranking lower than e.g. the *beneficarii* of the provincial governor. After *honesta missio*, he was probably still strongly bound to his place of service, which makes the plaque he founded an important source for understanding the integration of veterans into the civilian population in the environs of Novae.

The relief and the Severans

a. Previous interpretations of the relief

The key element of existing interpretations (and dating) of the monument is the idea that the Capitoline Triad was represented with the facial features of some members of the Severan dynasty. At first, the original editors assumed that the way Jupiter was depicted followed the portraits of Caracalla.⁸⁹ Later, a new identification, with Septimius Severus, was cautiously proposed.⁹⁰ This was accepted by some scholars.⁹¹ Tomasz Mikocki's interpretation of the relief also included the suggestion that the sculptor rather unsuccessfully attempted to give Juno some features of Julia Domna's portraits (the hairstyle), and to allude to Caracalla in the depiction of Minerva.⁹² If correct, this would connect all three gods of the Capitoline Triad with members of the imperial family. Regrettably, the very careful wording of the author of this theory, which included a significant level of uncertainty, would often be oversimplified in further scholarship.⁹³ This led to the association of the discussed monument with the imperial cult, namely, that the religious association of *consacrani Iovianorum* would be involved in the cult of the emperor.⁹⁴ We will discuss this interpretation in relation to the ample evidence for increased building activity and the erection of numerous building inscriptions during the Severan period at Novae, as well as look in more detail into the previous iconographic analyses of the relief, as well as any possible connection to the imperial cult in the text of the dedication.

b. *Concordia* — a Severan ideology?

The idea that the monument was connected to the portraits of the Severan dynasty was based not solely on an interpretation of the iconography of the relief, but also on a general supposition

⁸⁷ *AE* 2003, 1540.

⁸⁸ *ILBulg* 430 = *CIL* III 12408.

⁸⁹ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 374.

⁹⁰ First in dissertation: MIKOCKI 1988, p. 338, no. 389; published as MIKOCKI 1995, pp. 72–73 and 212, no. 424.

⁹¹ E.g. OPPERMAN 2012, p. 235, including also J. Kolendo, who accordingly revised his dating of the monument to the later part of Severus's reign: KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991, p. 42, n. 44.

⁹² MIKOCKI 1988, p. 338, no. 389; MIKOCKI 1995, pp. 72–73 and 212, no. 424.

⁹³ What has resulted in different proposals for dating this monument often presented by one and the same author, e.g. LUNGAROVA 2012, p. 231, where the monument is dated to the fourth of February 211 – 27th February 212, while in the catalogue part of this work (LUNGAROVA 2012b, p. 151, no. 310) where Jupiter is assumed to have the features of Caracalla, the monument is dated to 205–211 AD.

⁹⁴ BOTTEZ 2008, p. 128.

about the connection of the accompanying inscription to the imperial cult. Even as the exact iconographic identifications of figures were subject to changes, the core idea that the relief is connected to the Severans was still upheld. This was based on a very specific interpretation of the text. Namely, it was assumed that the inclusion of an invocation to *Concordia* was directly related to its use in the official propaganda and association with the relations between Caracalla and Geta, and that the dedicant was alluding to the political situation of the Empire.⁹⁵ Some interpretations went as far as to suggest that the representations on the monument were proof of the official character of the cult of *Concordia*.⁹⁶ However, those ideas of a link of the Novae relief to the Severan family contain elements of circular reasoning. The perceived link between the relief and the official iconography depends on the association of *Concordia* with the Severans, while at the same time serving as an argument for the validation of this association.

Of course, the idea of concord was consciously used in the promotion of the dynasty and the creation of its positive social image. During the imperial period, the concord expressed harmony and unity within the imperial family. It signified good relations between spouses, siblings or co-rulers. From the beginning of the reign of Septimius Severus, concord played one of the main roles in the ideological programme he created. This can be seen in the coinage programme of the early Severan period. Throughout the entire reign of Septimius Severus and his sons, *Concordia* continued to appear on coins.⁹⁷

However, the invocation of this idea is not limited only to this period. *Concordia* as a personification of a public virtue had a temple in Rome already since the Republic, and was invoked after almost every major political or social crisis. Similarly, the cult of her Greek counterpart, *Homonoia*, had a long history. *Concordia* then became a crucial part of the imperial propaganda,⁹⁸ already since Augustus and Tiberius. In the aspect of *Concordia Augusta* it could be understood as the idea of harmony guaranteed by the ruler. While it was quite often employed by co-rulers to underline their cooperation and understanding (or to beseech for them), it could also signify general order in the society. The idea of *Concordia* was employed by numerous emperors, including e.g. by Marcus Aurelius, both during the periods of co-rule: with Lucius Verus and later with Commodus, as well as during his sole reign. In this context it is worth noting that Cornelius Firmus, a centurion from legio I Italica, erected an altar for the well-being, victory, and concord of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.⁹⁹ *Concordia* appears to be included somewhat more often in inscriptions from late second and early third century than in other periods, perhaps due to the way tropes originating from official propaganda spread in the society. The popularity of an idea could have grown among the wider population because of how often it was referenced e.g. in coinage, and could be internalised and appropriated also for other means — including also as a reaction to a gap between propaganda and realities of an emperor's rule.¹⁰⁰

c. *Consacrani Iovianorum* and their *Concordia*

The meaning of *Concordia* during the Empire was never limited to the sphere of politics and social order, and the person of the ruler. It was often invoked on many levels of everyday life, including as one of the most important marital virtues. As such, it was a merit that was often praised on the tombstones of spouses. But it was also invoked in the context of groups, wherever harmony of its members was required — and especially when there was a perceived risk that it may be broken. In a military context, dedications to *Concordia* were often made when two or more units were garrisoned together, or when large groups of soldiers of different origin were

⁹⁵ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991, pp. 38–39.

⁹⁶ LUNGAROVA 2009, p. 206.

⁹⁷ BALBUZA 2015, pp. 64 and 74–75.

⁹⁸ LOBUR 2008.

⁹⁹ *CIL* III 778 = *CIL* III 7514, found in Tirighina-Bărboși.

¹⁰⁰ DZIURDZIK, MARCINIAK 2023.

present within one unit.¹⁰¹ Such invocations could have been meant to reduce the tensions, or in fact were made when a conflict just happened.¹⁰² In the context of the Novae relief, it is interesting to note the dedications by *beneficarii* to *Concordia duarum stationum*¹⁰³ from 181 AD and *Concordia beneficiorum consularis*¹⁰⁴ from 231 AD, both from Germania Superior, which show that harmony within the group was an idea that appealed also to officials in the service of the governor. But most importantly, *Concordia* was also invoked in the context of associations, as in an inscription from Rome erected for the harmony in the association of gold-foil workers and gilders.¹⁰⁵ Her Greek counterpart, *Homonoia*, was invoked in similar situations: she was the patron deity of an association in Philippiopolis,¹⁰⁶ and the target of a plea for the cooperation of two groups of people working in bread production in Side.¹⁰⁷ The connection of *Concordia* with social order and smooth functioning of groups, including in a funerary context, was also adopted by the Christians.¹⁰⁸

Consacrani Iovianorum were a group of people who were connected by the worship of one, particular god,¹⁰⁹ in this case — Jupiter. In all probability it was a *collegium* — an official religious organisation which could have maintained specific cults, but also functioned as a social group and fulfilled important roles, such as e.g. care for proper burial of its members.¹¹⁰ If so, it was not the only collegium in Novae. In epigraphic material there were attested *dendrophori*,¹¹¹ associated with the cult of Magna Mater (Cybele) and Attis, and also *dumopireti* — mentioned in the same inscription — whose function is not clear (regarding that their presence is attested only in Novae) but probably related to the cult of the same gods.¹¹²

Similar associations of *consacrani* were also present in other places in the Roman Balkans such as Ulmetum in Moesia Inferior,¹¹³ Philippi in Macedonia,¹¹⁴ Scupi in Macedonia¹¹⁵ and Salona in Dalmatia.¹¹⁶ The presence of such an association in Novae shows a high degree of organisation and formalisation of religious life. A number of veterans were members of various religious *collegia* in the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire,¹¹⁷ including also organisations specifically for veterans,¹¹⁸ which perhaps shows that those who finished their military service may have often felt a need for continued participation in communal activities — or maybe fear over lack of heirs who could organise a proper funeral, since this appears to have been one of major functions of many such associations.¹¹⁹

The invocation to *Concordia* may be proof that there was a conflict within the religious association of *consacrani Iovianorum* and that the dedicant set up the monument as a call for consent, or in celebration of an agreement. A comparison of the probable costs of the monument with the rather modest context of a religious association means that we can probably assume that this conflict could have been perceived as a serious danger to the functioning of this organisation. In Alburnus Maior in Dacia the collegium of worshippers of *Iovis Cernenus* had to disband,¹²⁰ but its members did not provide any reason why it happened;¹²¹ it is interesting to

¹⁰¹ TOMLIN, HASSALL 2007, pp. 346–347, n. 6.

¹⁰² BIRLEY 2007, pp. 111–112 discusses the possible animosities between Gauls and Britons at Vindolanda.

¹⁰³ *CIL* XIII 6127.

¹⁰⁴ *CIL* XIII 11771.

¹⁰⁵ *CIL* VI 95.

¹⁰⁶ *IGBulg* V 5434 = *AE* 1999, 1391.

¹⁰⁷ *SEG* 33, no. 1165.

¹⁰⁸ FÉVRIER 1996.

¹⁰⁹ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 375.

¹¹⁰ VERBOVEN 2012, pp. 19–20.

¹¹¹ *IGLNovae* 34 = *AE* 1929, 120 = *AE* 1949, 202 = *AE* 1987, 859

¹¹² KOLENDO 1990b, pp. 241–243.

¹¹³ *AE* 1922, 67; *AE* 1922, 70.

¹¹⁴ PILHOFFER 2000, p. 227.

¹¹⁵ *IMS* 6, 11.

¹¹⁶ *CIL* III 2109 = *CIL* III 8590.

¹¹⁷ KRÓLCZYK 2009, p. 157.

¹¹⁸ *CIL* XI 136 = *CIL* XI 136 add. p. 1228 = *CIL* III 14250¹ = *CIL* III 173e* = *ILS* 7311 – *convibium veteranorum sive Martensium* in an inscription probably from Salona.

¹¹⁹ WOJCIECHOWSKI 2023, p. 4.

¹²⁰ *CIL* III TC 1 = *IDR* I 31.

¹²¹ VARGA 2020, p. 522.

consider another conflict as a possible cause for the dissolution of this organisation. *Immunitas* from contributions for the functioning of an association appears as a reason for the erection of several other monuments, including one from Scupi.¹²² This makes us think that the situation within the group of worshippers was the sole reason for the erection of the monument, and that it was a way of dealing with the matters at hand. The choice of an invocation to *Concordia* in this and other private dedications may have been in some part influenced by the prevalence of this idea in imperial propaganda in the public sphere. However, rather than alluding to the current political situation, it was an internalisation and appropriation at a much more limited, private scale, of an idea of how issues such as discord and possible conflicts should be resolved. In fact, since in the sphere of symbols and self-presentation *collegia* often referred to civic ideals and style of the imperial administration,¹²³ the use of an imperial propaganda trope/public virtue to describe the internal affairs of the association makes perfect sense.

d. Severans and Novae

The legio I Italica stationed in Novae was one of the sixteen legions which supported Septimius Severus during the civil war.¹²⁴ Moreover, the governor of Lower Moesia at that moment was brother of Septimius Severus, P. Septimius Geta.¹²⁵ An important role during the civil war was also played by the legate of the legio I Italica, L. Marius Maximus Perpetuus Aurelianus, who as a *dux* led the troops of the Moesian army against Byzantion.¹²⁶ The support given to Septimius Severus by the governor of the province, as well as the legate and soldiers of the legion, means that they must have been perceived as some of the most loyal supporters of the new emperor.¹²⁷

The importance of the reign of the Severan dynasty can be seen in Novae, among other things, in a relatively large number of epigraphic monuments dated to this period. In general, the apogee of the epigraphic habit on this site is centred on the turn of the second and third centuries AD.¹²⁸ Of all inscriptions from Novae that can be precisely dated, about 43% come from the years 193–244,¹²⁹ with a majority from the reign of the Severan dynasty. In addition, the results of excavations in the headquarters building confirm that some large construction works have been carried out in this period.¹³⁰ Increased building activity in Novae dates back to the reign of Septimius Severus, as evidenced e.g. by marble slabs from rooms A (the *aedes principiorum*) and Cz.¹³¹

While the reign of the Severan dynasty seems to have been an important period in the development of Novae, none of the connections appear particularly striking (especially when compared e.g. to Leptis Magna, where the personal favour of the emperor effectively transformed the city). The amount of evidence points to relative prosperity, especially when compared to the turbulent middle third century, a situation not unheard of also in other regions of the empire. It can, however, be discussed whether the higher number of public, official construction projects and religious acts in Novae which were accompanied by inscriptions which mention the emperors and their family, would also have a similar impact on private religious activities.

¹²² *IMS* 6, 11.

¹²³ WOJCIECHOWSKI 2021, pp. 138–143.

¹²⁴ JANISZEWSKA 2022, pp. 105 and 275.

¹²⁵ BOTEVA 1996, pp. 239–240.

¹²⁶ BARNES 1967, p. 101; GRAHAM 1973, p. 262; KRÓLCZYK 2016, p. 42.

¹²⁷ TOMAS 2013, p. 83.

¹²⁸ MROZEWICZ 2010a, p. 273; KRÓLCZYK 2016, p. 17.

¹²⁹ MROZEWICZ 2010a, p. 273.

¹³⁰ SARNOWSKI 1992, p. 228; 2018, p. 356.

¹³¹ SARNOWSKI 2018, p. 350; *IGL Novae* 58.

e. Severan iconography and the relief

There can be no doubt that the imperial portrait, both on monuments and coins, was intended to serve as a means of communication and the dissemination of imperial propaganda, and that it was consciously used by the Severan dynasty for political reasons. But can the Novae relief, with its provincial style, with simplifications and very few characteristic facial features, be considered as under influence from such representations? This is especially important since the presentation of the emperor as a deity would in this case be the result of the initiative of a private person, and would be set up in an unofficial context.

The depiction of Jupiter on the relief has been proposed by J. Kolendo and B. Sultov¹³² to be identified as Septimius Severus especially considering the four imperial portraits number 30, 33, 37 and 45 representing the so-called The Marcus Aurelius-Severus portrait Type VIII and its three variants.¹³³ This type is characterized by the lack of the individual physiognomy of Septimius Severus, which gives symbolic form to Severus' claims to power in Rome, being part of a propaganda program creating Severus as the only and obvious heir. Probably this type of portrait appears for the first time on coins minted on the occasion of the *Decennalia* in 202 AD. The latest known coins with this type of portrait are known from Caesarea and were minted between 205 and 207 AD.¹³⁴

In the last years of the reign of Septimius Severus, a new type of portrait appears, the so-called late Severus portrait type. This type is compared to some portraits of Greek philosophers of the Hellenistic era. This classicizing style served as a link with both the future and the past. The allusion to Greek philosophers is also interpreted as a further reference to the depictions of Marcus Aurelius, the archetypal philosopher.¹³⁵

The portraits of Lucius Verus, Commodus, Marcus Aurelius, and Septimius Severus indicate similarities in the recreating of traditional and customary features of the portraits of the Antonine dynasty. Particularly pronounced are iconographic and stylistic similarities between the portraits of Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus.¹³⁶ This was probably related to the conscious use of portraits for propaganda purposes and promoting the fictitious adoption of Severus to the Antonine dynasty and creating himself as the direct heir of the dynasty¹³⁷ in a coordinated effort to use images to further the dynastic claims.¹³⁸

Can the Novae relief be considered related to those portraits? The scale of the conjecture that is needed to assume that Jupiter has individual facial features of a particular member of the Severan dynasty, is best illustrated by two things. Firstly, the portraits of the Severan dynasty were purposefully made to resemble those of the Antonine dynasty. The extent of how close the images of various emperors could become because of such manipulations is obvious when looking at the results of applying facial recognition methods based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) model to the identification of portraits, and the mixed results that have been achieved.¹³⁹ Secondly, one must take into account the quality of the Novae relief itself, and the changing interpretations whether it is Septimius Severus or Caracalla who has been the inspiration for the representation of Jupiter. While the father and son obviously looked somewhat similar (and also some types of their portraits shared common elements, including those purposefully modified

¹³² KOLENDO, SULTOV 1991, p. 42, n. 44.

¹³³ MCCANN 1969, pp. 145–146, 148, 153.

¹³⁴ MCCANN 1969, p. 103.

¹³⁵ MCCANN 1969, pp. 122–124.

¹³⁶ BAHARAL 1989, p. 579.

¹³⁷ On the fictitious adoption of Septimius Severus see e.g. HASEBROEK 1921, pp. 86–95; BIRLEY 1999, p. 118 and 122; KRÓLCZYK 2018, pp. 189–190.

¹³⁸ BAHARAL 1992, p. 118.

¹³⁹ RAMESH *et alii* 2022, pp. 6–9; crucially noting the difficulties caused e.g. by closeness of portraits of both Caracalla and Geta to other persons, as well as including cases of mislabelled portraits – including one of Septimius Severus and two of Caracalla.

to resemble those of the Antonine dynasty), this is a reminder how extremely simplified and devoid of personal particularities the facial features on the Novae relief are. Can this even be considered an attempt at presenting a particular look, rather than a very general representation of “Jupiter with a beard”? If anything, the beard on the Novae relief does not resemble the style most common in portraits of Septimius Severus (with long, corkscrew-like strands of hair), but rather the shorter beards of Commodus, Caracalla or some of the third century emperors.

Similar arguments can be raised concerning the second part of the interpretation, that the representation of Juno was alluding to Julia Domna. This was considered to be conveyed mostly through the hairstyle. While the parted hair that can be seen on the relief does bear some resemblance to that of the empress’s hairstyle, it must be underlined that the simplicity of the features does not allow for a definite answer whether that was a conscious action on the part of the sculptor, or whether what they were attempting to show was long hair. The evaluation is also made difficult by some damage to the face of this figure, but the facial features do not appear to include any individuality. Julia Domna was often assimilated with various goddesses; in fact, she was connected with the most numerous group of divinities out of all Roman empresses.¹⁴⁰ She was indeed sometimes associated with Juno, especially in the coinage, but so were nearly all Roman empresses.¹⁴¹ The imagery chosen for coins bearing her image, as well as her profile, are often very similar to those on the coins of the Antonine dynasty, again in order to underline the continuity. In addition, her official portraits from the reign of Septimius Severus are extremely close to those of Faustina the Younger, especially considering the hairstyle.¹⁴² This means that the hairstyle represented on the Novae relief, if it was indeed meant to represent a particular coiffure, could have been modelled on either of them — or on the general fashion of the period.

The most interesting case is presented by the proposed assimilation of Caracalla and Minerva,¹⁴³ which would represent a far-reaching religious innovation. There is however a major difference between the addition of some attributes of a goddess to a portrait of an emperor,¹⁴⁴ an indirect way of sacralisation by association or by suggesting divine favour, and the extremely rare direct assimilation with a female deity. The number of further monuments which possibly show similar iconography of Caracalla as Minerva is very low,¹⁴⁵ and are disputable due to their state of preservation, crucially missing some of the most important elements. Given the scarcity of such representations, one can wonder whether the identification of an emperor with a goddess, which constituted a major religious innovation, could even possibly be made in a provincial setting by a veteran, considering the fact that military attitudes towards men dressing in female clothing were almost universally negative.¹⁴⁶ It seems little likely that this would happen as a private innovation within the military-related milieu of Novae. In such context the subtle theological implications of assimilating an emperor with a goddess could easily be overlooked because of the ridicule with which the cross-dressing aspect of such an identification would be met.

All in all, we believe that the Novae relief does not contain any direct reference to the portraits of the Severan dynasty, nor to any other emperor or empress. The significance of some similarities of elements should not be overestimated, but rather understood as probable results of long-term influence of Antonine and Severan imperial styles on the provincial fashions (both in terms of what would be worn in real life as well as what was imitated by artists). Together with the lack of any reference to the imperial family in the text of the inscription, this means that the interpretation of the monument as related to the imperial cult must be rejected.

¹⁴⁰ MIKOCKI 1995, pp. 69–77; LUNDGREEN 2004, p. 80.

¹⁴¹ ROWAN 2011, pp. 251–252.

¹⁴² BAHARAL 1992, pp. 114–115.

¹⁴³ MIKOCKI 1988, p. 338, no. 389; MIKOCKI 1995, pp. 72–73 and 212, no. 424; LUNDGREEN 2004, p. 86.

¹⁴⁴ LUNDGREEN 2004, p. 84.

¹⁴⁵ LUNDGREEN 2004, pp. 84–87 lists just two other monuments.

¹⁴⁶ DZIURDZIK 2016.

A corrected dating of the monument

The very narrow dating proposed by the original publishers of the monument must be rejected. In fact, the monument provides only indirect premises as to the time of its creation. The shape of the monument has been described as unusual for the region, and an analogy to reliefs from Odessos (including one dated to 221 AD) has been suggested.¹⁴⁷ As discussed above, the stylistic features of the relief do not allow a dating more precise than late second – third century, and the mentioning of *Concordia* is also by no means a dating factor, since in this case it is unrelated to imperial propaganda. The paleography of the inscription has been classified by Pepa Lungarova as third – fourth century,¹⁴⁸ as was also the shape of letter G inspired by cursive writing,¹⁴⁹ and the overall quality of the workmanship of the inscription. However, a comparison with other inscriptions from Novae suggests that the later part of such dating is not very probable, and that a date earlier than third century cannot be excluded. In fact, the inscriptions from the site present wide variation in terms of the regularity and carefulness of the inscribing, and should not be treated as a strong premise for the dating of the monument.¹⁵⁰ The characteristic shapes of the letters G and L, probably the most interesting of palaeographic chronological markers present on the monument, are also to be dated slightly differently, as their shapes have parallels in hand-written texts already from the second century.

The dedicant bears *tria nomina*, which in itself is a rather weak factor for dating, but is yet another clue suggesting that the monument should probably not be later than the third century, as *Constitutio Antoniniana* and then the Late Roman use of certain *nomina* as status markers amplified the gradual changes in naming practices. The *cognomen* (H)oratius can also be viewed as supporting such a date. Among legionaries, *cognomina* ending in -ius appear to be especially popular in the later part of the Principate.¹⁵¹ In general, such names became very popular in the third century,¹⁵² often being carried by relatively “new” Roman citizens, also being part of the changing naming practices.

As such, the monument can only be dated quite widely, to the second half of second century or first half of third century. Some possible Severan inspirations in the depictions of the deities on the relief (e.g. the hairstyles) suggest that the later part of this period seems most probable. A date in the late third century can be considered less probable because of the unstable situation in the region of Novae, which is also reflected by a rather limited number of inscriptions that were being erected at that time.

Conclusions

The Novae relief should not be understood as proof that imperial ideology penetrated deep into the individual religiousness,¹⁵³ but rather as evidence of entirely different religious interactions and agency. The dedication of the monument appears to be the result of some disturbances in the functioning of an association, and the choice of an invocation of *Concordia* while dedicating the relief to the Capitoline Triad appears to have been very conscious. On one hand, it allowed the dedicant to match his offering to the patron deity of the association, and the relief must have formed an important part in the decoration of the seat of the association. The religious choices of *beneficarii legati* are nowhere near as well known (and repeatable) as those

¹⁴⁷ OPPERMAN 2012, p. 235.

¹⁴⁸ LUNGAROVA 2009, p. 205.

¹⁴⁹ KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 373.

¹⁵⁰ MROZEWICZ 2010b, p. 52.

¹⁵¹ DEAN 1916, pp. 87–89.

¹⁵² SALWAY 1994, pp. 136–137.

¹⁵³ As believed by KOLENDO, SULTOV 1987, p. 39.

of *beneficarii consularis* due to lack of similarly regular customs.¹⁵⁴ They seem to follow no patterns, as they did not constitute a series informed by previous dedications.

The religious choices of former *beneficarii* often appear to be influenced by their past participation in official military cult, centred on the main deities of the state. While the dedications to the Capitoline Triad by veterans in the Danubian provinces are not numerous (especially in comparison to the large number of dedications they made to Jupiter), around half of them are related to former *beneficarii*.¹⁵⁵ In Apulum (Dacia), soldiers discharged from the legio XIII Gemina funded an altar for Capitoline Triad to celebrate their *honesta missio* in ca. 160 AD.¹⁵⁶ Another was dedicated by L. Marcinius Celer, who was a former *beneficiarius tribuni legionis I Adiutricis*. It was discovered near Brigetio and dated to the second half of the second century.¹⁵⁷ From Brigetio comes a dedication to the Capitoline Triad funded by a veteran of legio I Adiutrix and dated to the reign of Severus Alexander.¹⁵⁸ In Augusta Vindelicorum, an altar dedicated on December 13, 194 AD by M. Montanius Celer, *ex beneficiario consularis* was discovered. In Novae, an altar dedicated to the Capitoline Triad founded by C. Iulius Super, *ex signifer*, was discovered in 2022.¹⁵⁹ Importantly for our arguments, some of such dedications predate the Severans, further underlining the weakness of the conjectural connection between the private worship by a veteran and the dynastic policies. In his act, C. Stab(---) (H)oratus appears to follow the same pattern of religious choices as generations of Roman veterans before him.

On the other hand, the harmony of the members of the religious association was additionally invoked, in a slightly ambiguous way. It is interesting to consider whether *Concordia* was meant as a deity personifying the idea, or whether the offering was meant to ensure this state among the members of the *collegium*. The dedication of the monument was directly connected to the fact that C. Stab(---) (H)oratus was given the privilege of not having to fulfil some obligations that were compulsory for the members of the association. It remains open to question what this obligation was, as the probable cost of the relief commemorating this fact appears to be relatively high in comparison to contributions that would be expected in an association. Perhaps the financing of dedication was more of an exchange than a gift, the *immunitas* being in fact given for the one-time investment in embellishing the meeting place of the association. On the other hand, maybe the obligation that was lifted was not financial, but rather some sort of a duty that normally was fulfilled personally, and the erection of the relief allowed (H)oratus to avoid it.

Perhaps it was this very fact that was the source of discord or the perceived risk of it, and the invocation to harmony was a way to counteract it through religious agency. In this context, the division of the inscription into two parts can offer a way of interpreting the circumstances: perhaps the preparation of the monument was not a single action, and the first line was added after the controversy created by the wavering of the obligation was solved (or prevented) and an agreement was reached. This would make the *consacrani Iovianorum* — and especially (H)oratus — quite proficient at solving a crisis with appropriation of religious ideas from outside of what we may assume to be standard practice within this association. All in all, the relief is a fascinating snapshot of the religious life of Novae, providing a plethora of information on private and corporate religious activities, on the integration of veterans into the local population, and on the dynamics of individuals' religious agency — and even without any connections to the Severans it remains crucially important for our understanding of those phenomena.

¹⁵⁴ For the continuation of established cult practices in the military milieu, see SCHÄFER 2014, p. 408; about local “conditioning environment” for further acts, see ALBRECHT *et alii* 2018, pp. 573–574.

¹⁵⁵ KRÓLCZYK 2009, pp. 160–163.

¹⁵⁶ *CIL* III 1078.

¹⁵⁷ *RIU* III 656.

¹⁵⁸ *CIL* III 14335.

¹⁵⁹ NARLOCH, ŻELAZOWSKI 2023, pp. 290–292.

Abbreviations

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> , Paris.
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , ed. Th. MOMMSEN <i>et alii</i> , Berlin 1863–.
<i>IDR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae</i> , ed. I. I. RUSSO <i>et alii</i> , Bucarest 1975–
<i>IGBulg V</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgaria repertae</i> , ed. G. MIHAÏLOV, 5 vols. Sofia 1958–1970, 1997. Vol. 5. <i>Inscriptiones novae, addenda et corrigenda</i> (1997).
<i>IGLNovae</i>	J. KOLENDO, V. BOŽILOVA, <i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de Novae (Mésie Inférieure)</i> (= <i>Ausonium – Publications. Mémoires</i> 1), Bordeaux 1997.
<i>ILBulg</i>	B. GEROV, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae</i> , Serdicae 1989.
<i>ILJug</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia ... repertae et editae sunt</i> , eds. A. and J. ŠAŠEL, 3 vols., Ljubljana 1963–86.
<i>ILNovae</i>	V. BOŽILOVA, J. KOLENDO, L. MROZEWICZ, <i>Inscriptions latines de Novae</i> , Poznań 1992.
<i>IMS</i>	<i>Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure</i> , Beograd 1976–.
<i>IMT Kyz Kapu Dağ</i>	<i>Inscripfen Mysia & Troas [IMT]. Mysia, «Kyzikene, Kapu Dağ», nos. 1401-1856</i> , eds. M. BARTH, J. STAUBER, [after:] The Packard Humanities Institute Online Searchable Greek Inscriptions: https://epigraphy.packhum.org/book/709?location=1656 (accessed on 16.06.2023).
<i>OPEL</i>	<i>Onomasticon provinciarum Europae latinarum</i> , ed. B. LŐRINCZ, Wien 1994–2002.
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum graecum</i> , Leiden 1923–.

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