

Doctoral (PhD) thesis

*Public Sculpture in Pannonia in the principate – Statues
from Aquincum in a regional context*

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Debrecen, 2024

The aim of the dissertation, delimitation of the topic

Public sculpture is one of the most characteristic, spectacular and archaeologically rich heritage of Roman culture in Pannonia. The aim of the dissertation is to give an in depth study of the sculptural monuments and the local statue practice in the city of Aquincum, the provincial seat of Pannonia Inferior. Study of those sculptures makes important data about the religious life of the inhabitants of the city, about their economic status, and also about the activity of the local workshops, etc. There are closely 200 stone sculptures from Aquincum, that were set up mainly on urban public spaces. From this rich material, only the figural statues – Attis and Icarus statues, etc. – of the architectonic funerary monuments (*aedicula*, *area maceria cincta*) were published in a comprehensive manner by Christine Ertel.

The primary aim of the dissertation was to compile a systematic corpus, including not only the sculptural finds but also the pedestals from Aquincum. This was long overdue for research into Pannonian art and could be a basis for the missing *CSIR* volume of Aquincum. The main focus of the dissertation is on public sculpture from Aquincum, but monuments from private context have also been included in the catalogue, as they are outstanding pieces of the local material. The main purpose of the dissertation is to define, present and analyse the full range of the surviving statuary from Aquincum in its local setting. The emphasis is on local history, but also on the interpretation of the statue practice and the material in a broader, regional context

Outline of the research methods

The dissertation examines the statue practice in Aquincum through sculptures in the round and inscribed statuebases. It is relatively rare for these two material groups to be studied together, despite the fact that a historical, sociohistorical and arthistorical evaluation of a local material is only possible by analysing the two types of artefacts together. Therefore, the methodological premise of the work is that statue practice can only be fully examined with the formal and structural characteristics of the statue bases, and the content of their inscriptions. The dissertation consists of two large parts, a catalogue of the sculptures and the pedestals (**Chapter XV**), and the analytical chapters based on them (**Chapters VI-XIII**). The chronological limit of the work is the era of the principate.

The catalogue includes the sculpture in the round (149 pieces) and the various statuebases (49 pieces), that were set up mainly on urban public spaces. The study covered the precise description based on autopsy and the (new or modified) identification of the individual pieces, thus redefining their contextual and chronological issues. The description of the sculptures follows the *AIAC* guidelines for the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani* series, but is supplemented by more extensive iconographic commentary. The following aspects are taken into account when examining each catalogue entry: the findspot of the carving and its position in the topography of Aquincum; inventory number; dimensions; material; date; a comprehensive bibliography; iconographic commentary; identification; polychromy; features of carving, etc. Also, if identifiable, the name of the person depicted. The material in the catalogue is divided by subject: statues of emperors in public spaces / military camps, private portraits of municipal individuals in public spaces/cemeteries and, most notably, statues of gods and heroes (*Idealplastik*). Photographs of the objects are included on separate plates at the end of the catalogue.

In the thematic chapters, a complex contextual assessment of the material is given; the original setting and display of the statues, the legal status of the pieces, the identity of the person(s) who erected it, reason and circumstances of dedication, and the subsequent fate of the sculpture. The work also applies juridical aspects, in particular regarding the legal status of the sculptures.

Results, discussions

In **Chapter V**. I have outlined the characteristics and types of roman public space (*locus publicus*) and the theoretical background to the classification of the sculptural works. I attempted to determine the legal status of the sculptures and the inscribed pedestals from Aquincum and also the relevant examples from Pannonia. The chapter also presented the cases and the legal acts by which a sculpture could become *res publica* (various acts of generosity; *donatio; munera; promises / pollicitationes; fideicommissum* etc.) as well as examples of these in Aquincum and some relevant cases from Pannonia.

To outline the sculptural scene of Aquincum, I have placed the pieces within the known topographical structures of the city (**Chapter VI**). The contextualisation of the sculptures is complicated by the fact that most of the statues were not found in their original context of display, but built into Late Roman objects and walls etc. or their finding location is not known at all. The three major units (*municipium – canabae – legionary camp*) are presented separately, complemented by buildings such as the The Governor's Palace or the sanctuary of Nemesis by the civil town *amphitheatre*.

The material examined can be divided into several categories according to function, public status and subject. In terms of subject matter, the material includes statues of emperors in public spaces / military camps, private portraits of municipal individuals in public spaces/cemeteries and, most notably, statues of gods and heroes (*Idealplastik*).

In **Chapter VII**. the portraits of the *domus Augusta* and the private portraits of the municipal individuals were presented. I tried to explore the possibility and limits of separating the private portraits by function (honorary or funerary) on iconographic basis, and to highlight the aesthetic and technical preferences of the private portraits. The vast majority of the statues of deities stood in sanctuaries or as independent cultplaces (*locus sacer*). For the first time, the dissertation fully discusses the statues of deities from Aquincum and their iconographic features (**Chapter VIII**).

Following the formal and structural examination of the statue pedestals from Aquincum, I distinguished five main types and additional subtypes, which provides a suitable starting point for the classification of the pannonian material as well (**Chapter XI**). One of the cornerstones of the structural analysis of the pedestals was the observation of the different fixing technologies, which had not been systematically studied before (**Chapter XI.IV**).

The so-called 'statue habit' was discussed on the basis of the inscriptions as well (**Chapter XII**). The chapter presents the various individuals and communities active in statue practice shaping the city's sculptural scene.

Chapter IX. and **Chapter X**. deals with the materials used for local stonecarving, the practice of the local workshops, the features of the locally carved artefacts and the trade of import marble sculptures and as well. **Chapter X.III**. presents the results of the microscopic and chemical analysis of polychrome sculptures from Aquincum. The dual function of polychromy can be

clearly observed in the sculptures from Aquincum: painting on statues was not only used to highlight the carved elements, or perhaps for cultic purposes, but also to replace the fine carving itself on the smooth surfaces. On one piece, gilding – a mark of the divine status – can also be observed, which is quite exceptional in the stone material from Pannonia.

The full range survey of the sculptural artefacts of Aquincum and the presentation of local statue practices will contribute to a more complex picture of the social, economic, religious and artistic life of the settlement and, in turn, of the artistic life of the province and the factors that influenced it.



Registry number: DEENK/231/2024.PL
Subject: PhD Publication List

Candidate: Boglárka Fábán
Doctoral School: Doctoral School of History and Ethnology
MTMT ID: 10094980

List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (3)

- Fábán, B.:** Megjegyzések két 3. századi aquincumi portréhoz.
In: Az Alföldy Géza emlékülés előadásaiából és egyéb közlemények 2021-ből. Szerk.: Kovács Péter; Szabó Ádám, Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum III.2. pannoniai kötetét előkészítő bizottság Magyarországi Munkacsoportja, Budapest, 11-24, 2022, (Studia Epigraphica Pannonica, ISSN 2559-8805 ; 13) ISBN: 9786156448057
- Fábán, B.:** Szobormű-típusok pannoniai feliratszövegekben.
In: Felirattani közlemények és tanulmányok 2020-ból. Szerk.: Kovács Péter; Szabó Ádám, MTA, Budapest, 7-38, 2021, (Studia epigraphica Pannonica, ISSN 2559-8805 ; 12) ISBN: 9789635089673
- Fábán, B.:** Az aquincumi szobortalapzatok főbb típusai.
In: Felirattani közlemények és tanulmányok 2019-ből. Szerk.: Kovács Péter; Szabó Ádám, Történelmi Ismeretterjesztő Társulat Egyesület, Budapest, 7-46, 2020, (Studia epigraphica Pannonica, ISSN 2559-8805 ; 11) ISBN: 9789635089406

Foreign language Hungarian book chapters (1)

- Fábán, B.:** Seated Hercules statue from the Collection of the Hungarian National Museum.
In: Visy 75 : artificem commendat opus : studia in honorem Zsolt Visy. Eds.: Farkas István Gergő; Neményi Réka; Szabó Máté, CLIR Research Center, Pécs, 146-157, 2019. ISBN: 9789634294818





List of other publications

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5. **Fábián, B.**, Fodor, F., Visy, Z.: Az énlaki temető régi sírkövei.
In: Énlaka kulturális öröksége / Visy Zsolt; Balassa M. Iván; Dancs Lajos; Fábián Boglárka; Filep Antal; Fodor Fanni; Kondor Tamás; Szávai Márton; Rétfalvi Donát; Zsonda Márk, Nemzetstratégiai Kutatóintézet, Budapest, 105-120, 2019. ISBN: 9786155700699
6. **Fábián, B.**, Fodor, F., Visy, Z.: Sírkőkatalógus.
In: Énlaka kulturális öröksége / Visy Zsolt; Balassa M. Iván; Dancs Lajos; Fábián Boglárka; Filep Antal; Fodor Fanni; Kondor Tamás; Szávai Márton; Rétfalvi Donát; Zsonda Márk, Nemzetstratégiai Kutatóintézet, Budapest, 121-271, 2019. ISBN: 9786155700699

Foreign language Hungarian book chapters (1)

7. Szabó, M., **Fábián, B.**, Fodor, F.: Research on Roman temporary camps near Brigetio (Komárom-Szőny) Results of the excavations conducted on the BRI V, VI(-VII), X-XI, XIII-XIV, XIX, XXII-XXIII, XXX and XXXII archaeological sites.
In: The Danube Limes in Hungary : Archaeological Research Conducted in 2015-2020. Ed.: Farkas István Gergő; Neményi Réka; Szabó Máté, CLIR Research Center, Pécs, 77-110, 2020. ISBN: 9789634295976

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)

8. Vámos, P., **Fábián, B.**: Gyermektemetkezések az aquincumi katonaváros déli zónájából = Infant Graves in the South Zone of Aquincum MilitaryTown.
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9. Vámos, P., **Fábián, B.**: Két megelőző feltárás az aquincumi katonaváros délnyugati részében = Two Excavations Preceding Construction Works in the Southwestern Part of Aquincum Military Town.
Aquincumi Füzetek. 24, 196-214, 2020. ISSN: 1219-9419.

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10. **Fábián, B.**, Szabó, Á.: Painted dedication to Genius and a relief depicting aquila from a sanctuary in Sopianae.
Acta Archaeol. Acad. Sci. Hung. 69 (1), 131-141, 2018. ISSN: 0001-5210.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1556/072.2018.69.1.5>





Foreign language conference proceedings (1)

11. **Fábián, B.**, Tamási, A.: Preliminary research on Polychrome Roman Sculpture from Aquincum (Pannonia Inferior).

In: Proceedings of the Conference for Young Researchers of Roman Age, -, [Közlésre elfogadva], [1-10], 2024.

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) database.

09 May, 2024

