

Chronology of the Corinthian Capitals with all Details from Moesia Inferior during the Roman Period

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The Roman province of Moesia Inferior provides a big number of Corinthian capitals with all details. Their development starts in the early 2nd century and can be traced until the time of the early Severs.

The main decorative detail which indicates the chronology of the different groups of details is the so-called inner volutes - the helices of the Corinthian capital. They were made according to the existing standards and had the typical spirals until the mid 2nd century. Since then their gradual reduction begins. There are capitals from the second half of the 2nd century having not only the standard helices but three simplified versions as well. They are as follows:

- helices which have stems but do not have the volute curve at the end;
- helices which are shortened very much and are turned into hardly visible knobs being continuation of the outmost leaf of the ornament;
- „palmette“ helices - the motif is replaced by palmette leaves, capping the stems.

The capitals from Moesia Inferior provide ground for discerning three very distinctive chronological groups.

Group A - it develops in the period between the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. Its main representatives are the Corinthian capitals from the temple of Jupiter (Fig. 1) in Oescus and a capital from Tomi (Fig. 2). The acanthus leaves of these examples are densely arranged on the kalathos, and the all the

helices have not only the standard shape but are also big in size, almost the size of the volutes.

Group B - it develops about the mid 2nd century, at the time of the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161). The main representatives are the Corinthian capitals of the propylaea in Nicopolis ad Istrum (Figs. 3, 4). It is the first time when the early forms of the helices reduction appear in Moesia Inferior (Fig. 5).

Group C - it is fully developed in the late Antoninian period but its first appearance dates in the time of the early Severs. It exists in the period between the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus as well as the first years of the Severs' reign. The capitals from this group are most numerous. They come from Odessos (Figs. 6-9), Martianopolis (Fig. 10), Tomi (Figs. 11-12), Messambria (Fig. 13), Nicopolis ad Istrum (Fig. 14), Novae (Fig. 15). They all have reduced helices. In the Roman thermae of Odessos capitals with helices of the standard „old“ versions exist together with the newer version - the „palmette“ ones.

As stated by G. Perkins, the so-called „palmette“ helices are product of the Asia Minor decorative schemes. The capitals from Tomi are even made by craftsmen from Asia Minor. Their work was copied by the local ateliers as it is evidenced by the numerous replicas of the „palmette“ helices on many other capitals in the various region of Moesia Inferior. Archaeological evidence comes from Nicopolis ad Istrum, Storgosia, Durostorum, Odessos.