

AKTI VIII. MEĐUNARODNOG KOLOKVIJA O PROBLEMIMA RIMSKOG PROVINCIJALNOG UMJETNIČKOG STVARALAŠTVA

AKTEN DES VIII. INTERNATIONALEN KOLLOQUIUMS ÜBER PROBLEME DES PROVINZIALRÖMISCHEN KUNSTSCHAFFENS

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON PROBLEMS OF ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART

LES ACTES DU VIII^{ÈME} COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL SUR LES PROBLÈMES DE L'ART PROVINCIAL ROMAIN

ZAGREB 5.-8. V. 2003.

RELIGIJA I MIT KAO POTICAJ RIMSKOJ PROVINCIJALNOJ PLASTICI

RELIGION UND MYTHOS ALS ANREGUNG FÜR DIE PROVINZIALRÖMISCHE PLASTIK

RELIGION AND MYTH AS AN IMPETUS FOR THE ROMAN PROVINCIAL SCULPTURE

LA RELIGION ET LE MYTHE COMME INSPIRATION POUR LA SCULPTURE ROMAINE PROVINCIALE

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PROVINCIALE

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HVCVSOVE – “THIS IS WHERE SACRIFICES WERE OFFERED” – ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN THE SUBSTRUCTIONS OF DIOCLETIAN’S PALACE IN SPLIT

BY TAJMA RISMONDO

SPACE AND TIME

Archaeological finds on the peninsula of Split, dated from the 1st – 3rd century AD, lead to the conclusion that during the first centuries afterwards Christ the peninsula of Split, mentioned under the name of Spalatum at that time – which was probably a settlement in the period of Roman administration and built before the building of Diocletian’s palace – had a significant role in the life of the urban area of the metropolis of Salona and its surroundings.

Therefore, in order to talk about archaeological finds in the south-eastern substructions of Diocletian’s palace that date before Diocletian’s time in the period of the 1st – 3rd century AD, it is necessary to mention in short the antique topography of the surrounding area of Diocletian’s palace at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century.

Funeral *stelae* with inscriptions were registered in the Split areas of *Manuš*, *Visoka*, *Dragovode*, *Dobri* and in Diocletian’s palace.¹

Finds of antique sculpture were registered in the areas of *Kman/Kocunar*² and *Lučac*³, and ceramic, glass and numismatic finds were registered in *Manuš*⁴, *Pojišan*⁵ and *Škrapč*⁶.

Funeral *stelae* with inscriptions were registered in *Varoš*, Diocletian’s palace and in the areas of *Visoka*⁷, *Dragovode*⁸ and *Dobri*⁹.

The find of the only *cipus* excavated on the peninsula of Split is from the area of *Trstenik*. Finds of necropolises and single tombs with both incineration and inhumation types of burial were registered in the areas of *Gripe*, *Manuš*, *Lora*, *Pojišan*, *Trstenik*, *Dragovode*, *Kman/Kocunar* and *Žnjan*¹⁰.

All the above mentioned archaeological localities on the area of the peninsula of Split (a total of 35) date from the 1st – 3rd century AD.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN THE SUBSTRUCTIONS OF DIOCLETIAN’S PALACE

In the 1950s, in the substructions of the crypto-porctic of Diocletian’s palace, an archaeological find of a water-well (?), tomb- *epitymbia* (?) or an altar (?), incorporated within the later perimetric southern wall of the western substructions of the Palace, was found. There is scientific dilemma regarding this find – whether it is a well or a tomb. Ivo Marović published an article on this in 1959.¹¹ He questioned whether it was a tomb-epitymbia, which he compared to Hellenistic tombs found in southern Italy and the city of Budva, or a bases for monuments or altars.

¹ T. Rismondo, *Antička groblja na splitskom poluotoku*. *Histria antiqua* 8, 2002, 257–267.

² T. Marasović/F. Oreb, *Obrada graditeljskog nasljeđa u okviru projekta «Splitski poluotok»*. *Godišnjak zaštite spomenika kulture*, 1976/1977, 96.

³ (Maršić, 1996/1997: 103–124)

⁴ F. Buškariol, *Prilozi arheološkoj topografiji Manuša*. *Kulturna baština* 15, god. XI, broj 16, 1984, 75–86.

⁵ *Bull. Arch. et Hist. Dalmates* 20, 1897, 36. – L. Jelić, *Crtime o najstarijoj povjesti Spljeta*. *Vjesnik Hrvatskog Arh. Društva* 1897, 38.

⁶ Jelić (note 5) 40.

⁷ Jelić (note 5) 33–34.

⁸ Jelić (note 5) 38.

⁹ N. Cambi, *Studije o antičkim spomenicima i zgradama u Splitu i okolici (II). Reljef u južnom zidu sv. Duha*. *Kulturna baština* 12, broj 17, 1987, 15; 16.

¹⁰ Rismondo (note 1) 257–267.

¹¹ I. Marović, *Bilješka o jednom nalazu u kriptomortiku Dioklecijanove palače*. *Vjesnik Arh. i Hist. Dalmatinsku* 61, 1959, 119–121)

Taking into consideration the opinion of professor Marović and other facts (such as the existence of innumerable water springs in the surroundings of the Palace, the rising of the sea level which is now approximately 1.5 m higher than in antiquity, the insignificant percentage of salt in the water flowing into the building structure and the absence of excavated human bones), we can conclude that it is, after all, either a water –well or a base of an altar.

In the 1960's, in the pavement of the most eastern part of the eastern substructions, fragments of a curved antique cornice with contoured profiles and a radius of approximately 20m were excavated. According to the circumstances of the find, it was underneath the pavement of the substructions of the Palace and according to style characteristics it is possible to date the fragments to the 1st/2nd century AD.¹²

In the 1970's, during American-Yugoslav excavations on the SE quadrant of the palace, ceramic fragments and three stone fragments which could be dated from the 1st – 3rd Century AD were found.¹³

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND IN THE EASTERN SUBSTRUCTIONS OF DIOCLETIAN'S PALACE

Mosaic pavement of a building and inscriptions HVCVSOVE

In archaeological excavations in the 1990's, the following archaeological finds that can be dated to the period before the building of Diocletian's palace were excavated (Pl. 1): the architrave with a contoured profile, fragments of a round shaped decorated gable, six stairs (or benches as J. Marasović calls them), mosaic pavement of a building (?) found in the north-western courtyard and at the far east, next to the perimetric eastern wall of the Palace, a monumental ancient wall and a wall built in stone-masonry.¹⁴

The following find deserves special attention – the mosaic pavement in the north-western courtyard of the eastern substructions (Pl. 1).

At the end of February 1996, in the north-western courtyard of the eastern substructions, while trenching a mortar base about 60 cm thick, a rustic mosaic pavement (Pl. 1, 6; fig. 1) made in *opus signinum* was found.

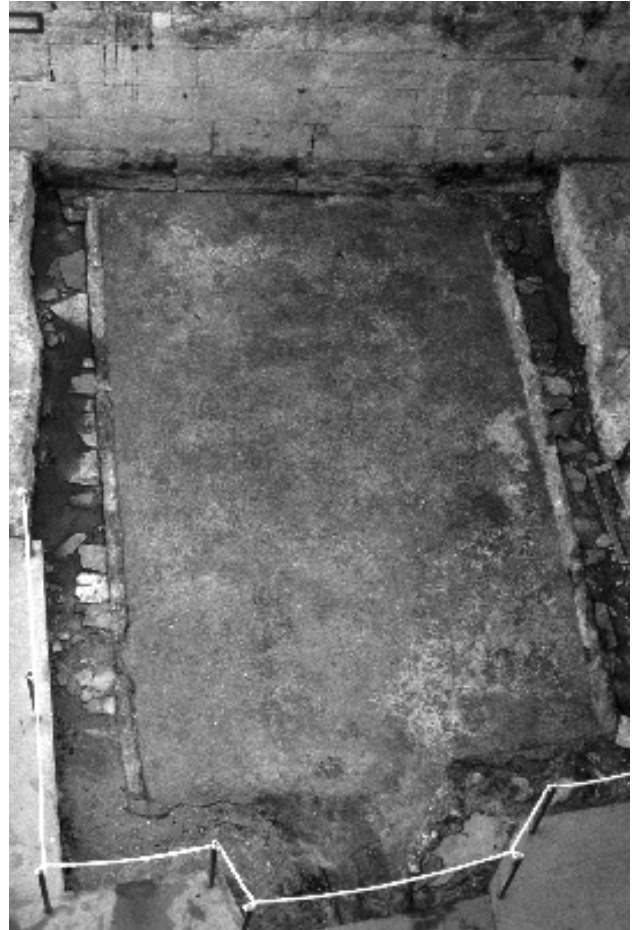


FIG. 1 SUBSTRUCTURES OF DIOCLETIAN'S PALACE, MOSAIC.

The dimensions of the excavated mosaic pavement are 5.56 to 7.70 m, covering a total area of approximately 50 square meters. During the same investigation, a small fragment of a black and white mosaic, remnant of what once was an edging, was identified *in situ* (fig. 2).

The fact that the mosaic floor leads to the north, underneath the later southern wall of the northern hall, while the ancient building is on the northern, eastern and western side (defined by live rock) whose upper level at Diocletian's time became the level of the pavement of the north-western courtyard, is evidence that this mosaic comes from a building older than Diocletian's palace. The existence of spring waters has been

¹² J. Marasović/T. Marasović, *Pregled radova Urbanističkog biroa na istraživanju, zaštiti i uređenju Dioklecijanove palače od 1955–1965*. URBS 4, Split 1961/1962, 24, b, note 5; 30.

¹³ I. Mirnik, *Roman Architectural fragments. American-Yugoslav excavations vol. VI*, 1989, 1–57&9–10&31, Pl.9).

¹⁴ *Obnova povijesne jezgre 1*, Split 1996, 11–13.



FIG. 2 SUBSTRUCTURES OF
DIOCLETIAN'S PALACE, REST OF
BLACK AND WHITE MOSAIC.



FIG. 3
INSCRIPTION HVCVSOVE.

identified near the western side of the mosaic base. In the south, the mosaic base of the investigated building becomes funnel-shaped and it spreads underneath the north-eastern wall of the substructures- a small, cross-shaped room, *triclinium*- where it ends pouring into a square shaped stone vessel (dimensions 34.5 to 34.59). Because of the existence of spring waters and the mosaic on a waterproof mortar base, we can assume there was a pool/*piscina* or *nymphaeum*.

Underneath the layer of mortar base, in the middle of the mosaic pavement, a bronze coin belonging to the time of the emperor *Constantine*, forged in an Alexandrian mint in around 301, was found *in situ* (Pl. 1 6A). *Avers* of the coin shows the figure of Emperor *Constantine* and the inscription "FI Val Constantinus Nob

Caes". The *revers* shows *Genius* of the Roman people with *pater* and cornucopia in his hand and the inscription "GENIO POPULI ROMANI".

The find of the *Constantine* coin gives evidence of the approximate time when the mosaic pavement of the ancient building was buried. In identifying the function of the ancient building, the three identical inscriptions found on the three walls of Diocletian's palace are of great help.

In 1993, the following identical inscriptions were registered on the northern, western and southern wall of the courtyard:

- On the northern wall, the whole inscription has been preserved (Pl1, fig. 3):
 - 1) HVCVOVE

- On the eastern wall, the inscription has been partly preserved (Pl. 1,,):
2) - - -VSOVE
 - On the northern side of the passage, in the eastern wall, the inscription is rather damaged and partly preserved (Pl. 1, f)
3) HVCVSO- -
- The inscription marked as number 1 is best preserved and engraved most carefully. The surface on which it has been engraved was smoothed first. It is also important to observe that the inscriptions were engraved by the same person.*

Suggested transcription of the inscription is:

HVC V(otum) SO(I) VE (runt)

This is where vows were taken or

This is where sacrifices were offered by a vow or

This is where sacrifices were offered!

If we accept such a transcription, we should connect the inscriptions in the north-western courtyard of the eastern substructions with the building that had existed there before the Palace was built and whose function was obviously a cultic one. It is obvious that the inscriptions were engraved by a person to whom it was important to mark the place as cultic.

The following facts help us to define when the building with the mosaic pavement was built:

1. The building is underneath the northern section of Diocletian's wall
2. The mosaic pavement was covered with mortar in around 301 – the find of the Constantine coin proves this since Constantine was the Roman Emperor in the period of 305 to 306
3. The three identical inscriptions HVCV(otum) SO(I)VE(runt) lead to the conclusion that the building held a cultic function

It is not possible to define the precise function of the building on this locality. On the basis of the existing archaeological arguments, we can assume a cultic function of the building (or a complex) that belonged to the settlement of *Spalatum* probably from the 1st century.

Supporting the thesis that the building with the mosaic pavement was cultic in nature is the existence of nearby water and sulphur springs, as well as the closeness of the sea. All these facts lead to the assumption that *sanatorium*/sanctuary devoted to Esculap, Hygeia, Minerva or Nymphae could have existed on this local-

ity...? Therefore, a question rises – is it possible that *votum solverunt* refers to a sanatorium complex that could have existed on this locality?

On the basis of analogies with the acknowledged examples we can also assume that the building with the mosaic pavement in the substructions of Diocletian's palace was *nymphaeum*.

Nymphaeum from Fagutal (*Ninfeo degli Annibaldi*) in Rome is an example of a *nymphaeum* most similar to the building in the substructions of Diocletian's palace. It was built at the end of the period of the Republic and at the beginning of the period of the emperor *August* (BC 1st century). Originally it had a half-elliptic form and a ground plan with *piscina* surrounded by niches in the middle and a rustic mosaic in the *piscina* (very similar to the mosaic excavated in the substructions of Diocletian's palace).

Other examples of such *nymphae* in Rome are: *Nymphaeum* at Oppia –*Domus Aurea*, dating from the period of the emperor *Trajan* (1st/2nd century); *nymphaeum* at Palatin, situated in a summer *triclinium* (the age of Domitian 81–96); *nymphaeum* at Baia (*nymphaeum* of the emperor Claudius, with baths existing from the 1st to the end of the 3rd century); and *nymphaeum* at Cassina, with a rustic mosaic from the first period of the 1st century BC.

A Complex older than Diocletian's palace was situated at the most favourable place in *Split* harbour, which was sheltered from winds *bura* (north wind) and *jugo* (south wind), but not from *lebić* and *maestral*. That was the same location where Diocletian built his later palace. Therefore, today's *Split* harbour is not the antique harbour because it has never been a safe one. Most probably, the antique harbour of the settlement of *Spalatum* was in the area *Špinut* which has been proved by hydroarchaeological locality in *Špinut* bay dating from the 1st century onwards.

To sum up, the most favourable position in *Split* harbour, the existence of water and sulphur springs, a mosaic pavement and three identical inscriptions HVCV(otum) SO(I)VE(runt) in the substructions of Diocletian's palace, all lends favour to the thesis that the archaeological finds on that locality probably belonged to a building that had a cultic function?

1. Water –well/altar or a tomb/monument
2. Fragments of the antique cornice with contoured profiles and bent ground –plan
3. Architrave with contoured profiles

* In 1996 when I discovered the mosaic I asked professor Cambi for help in reading the inscription. For his most generous help I thank him once again.

4. Fragment of a bent decorated gable
5. Six stairs or benches according to J. Marasović
6. Monumental wall whose dimensions are 14.5 to 1.27 meters situated underneath the perimetric eastern wall of the Palace
7. Wall built in stone –masonry

All the above mentioned archaeological finds point to the conclusion that the building found in the substructions of the Palace was monumental. Could we also assume that the existence of the six stairs or benches with a radius of c. 20 meters points out that the same building could have been a theatre?

Baths of Sosandra in Baia, with *exedra* whose *piscina* was directly supplied with water from the sulphur springs, leads us to an interesting position. It has been variously interpreted:

- 1) Mauri believes that this *exedra* served as theatre – *nymphaeum* depending of the life style in Baia¹⁵
- 2) De Angelis d' Ossat believes that the ground-plan of the building in Baia is too complex to be interpreted as palace or *villa*¹⁶

Taking all the above mentioned into consideration, architectural elements and remains of the building in the eastern substructions of the Palace, leads to the assumption that the building in Baia and the one in the Palace could have had a similar function. However, on the basis of existing archaeological finds and documentation, and without further archaeological excavation, we cannot define when exactly the complex excavated in the substructions of the Palace was built, or the phases of its building.

Contribution to the hypothesis that the building in the substructions of the Palace had a medicinal character (other than the existence of *piscina* with votive inscriptions, remains of a monumental building, the great number of water and sulphur springs, vicinity to the sea) are its similarities with other famous places in Roman history – (according to Svetonius, Plinius and Casio Dio, August had his baths in a heated sea and with sulphur water to ease the pain caused by progressing arthritis¹⁷; Neron's *Domus Aurea* had *balneum* supplied

with sea and mineral water¹⁸; Polk Felix at Sorrento had *balneum* supplied with sea and mineral water¹⁹).

Enclosing view

Anthropological analysis of the dead found in the archaeological locality *Ad basilicas pictas* (near Diocletian's palace) also leads to an interesting conclusion.

The locality *Ad basilicas pictas* is situated in *Manuš*, an area in Split about 500 meters north of Diocletian's palace. During investigation and research of the dead excavated in this locality and dated to the 5th/6th century, Šlaus noted interesting observations²⁰ that should be brought into relation with the existence of sulphur springs.

He registered the existence of an atypical demographic community (9 men, 4 children and 1 woman) who underwent long and professional medical treatment. They had all been cured from *traumas* and *osteomyelitis*. Šlaus also assumed that the analysed sample had belonged to some sort of special community in a monastery or sanatorium, which could be proved by future archaeological investigation.

On the basis of the above mentioned archaeological facts, a cultic building excavated in the substructions of Diocletian's palace was probably a place devoted to *nymphae* (water springs; sulphur springs). Dimensions of the building have been documented with monumental remains which points out that the building was probably a sanatorium devoted to many gods and with various contents usually found in such places in Roman world. But what gods and to whom were the sacrifices offered? In the example of archaeological finds in Split, it is still difficult to provide an answer to this question.

Future archaeological investigations are being planned next to the eastern perimetric wall of Diocletian's palace and they would explain or at least give more data about the building that existed there before 295 AD.

Also, the analysis of the dead buried in the locality *Ad basilicas pictas* in the 5th/6th century has shown that the deceased, mostly men, were professionally cured

¹⁵ A. Maiuri, Terme di Baia, scavi, restauri e lavori di sistemazione BdA, XXXVI, 1951, 359–360. – A. Maiuri, *Phlegraean Fields* (Rome 1969) 72.

¹⁶ G. De Angelis d'Ossat, *Terme di Baia, L'Architettura delle „terme“ di Baia, I Campi flegrei nell' archeologia e nella storia*. Atti dei Convegni Lincei, XXXIII, Rome 1977, 242–243.

¹⁷ F. Yegül, *Baths and bathing in Classical antiquity*, The Architectural History Foundation, New York, The Mit Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1992. 93, note 4,5,6)

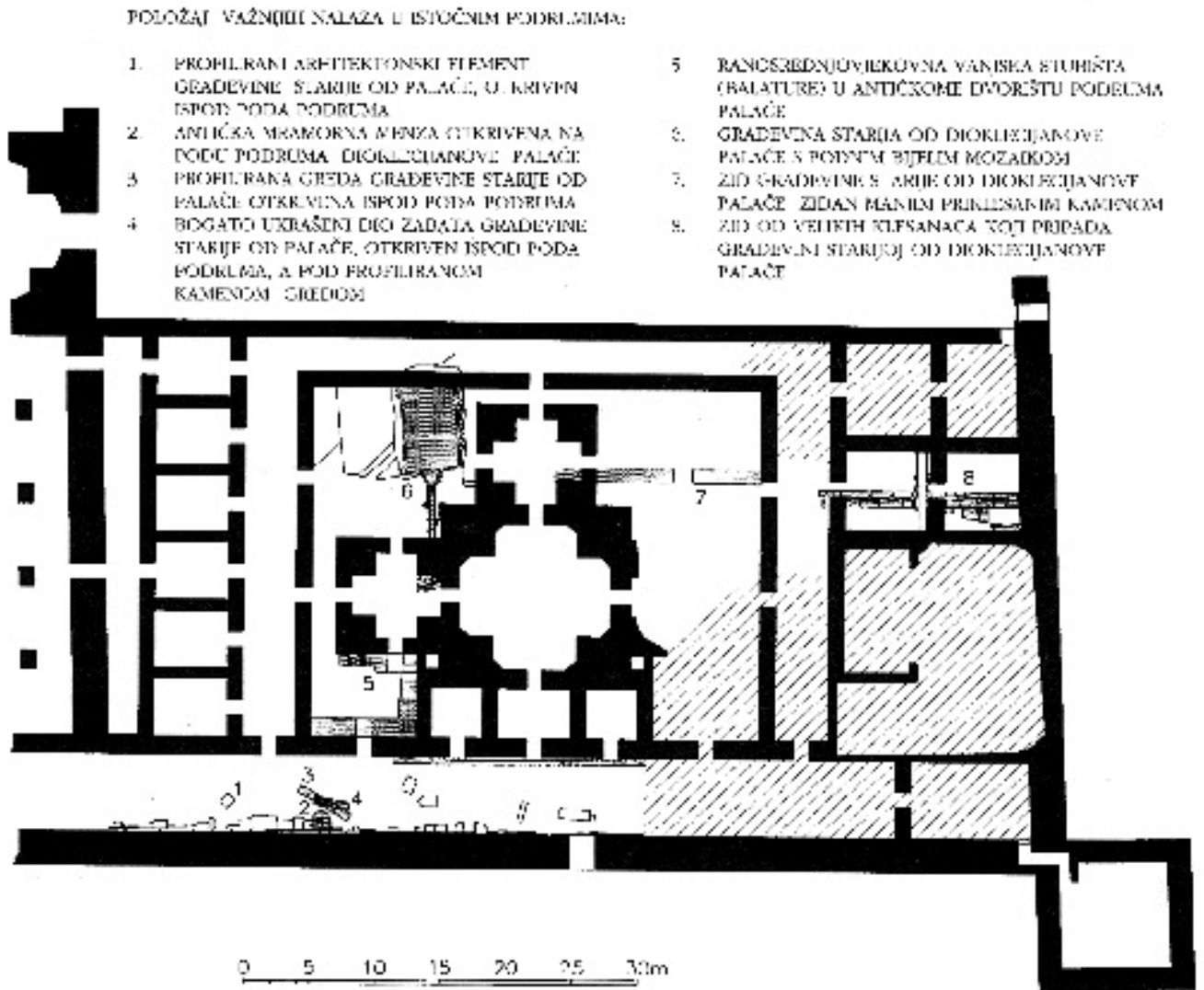
¹⁸ E. Fabbricotti, *I bagni nelle prime ville Romane*. Cronache Pompeiane 2, 1976, 29–41; 103–109.

¹⁹ Yegül (note 17) 93 note 8.

²⁰ M. Šlaus, *Antropološka analiza kasnoantičke populacije s nalazišta Ad basilicas pictas*. Katalog izložbe Split 1999/ Appendix in english in AnTard 6, Paris 1998, 60–65.

from traumas. Hypothetically, this brings into close relation a cultic locality in the substructions of the Palace

from the 1st-3rd century and today's sulphur thermal springs (spas) in Split.



PL. 1 SE SUBSTRUKCIJE DIKLECIJANOVE PALAČE - GROUND PLAN AFTER EXCAVATIONS 1990'S (TOWARD OBNOVA I).

CAESAR CONSTANTIUS MONETE, ALEXANDRIA 301. AD
 AV CONSTANTIUS NOB RV GENIO POPULI ROMANI

THREE SAMENESS INSCRIPTIONS

