

AKTI VIII. MEĐUNARODNOG KOLOKVIJA O PROBLEMIMA RIMSKOG PROVINCIJALNOG UMJETNIČKOG STVARALAŠTVA

AKTEN DES VIII. INTERNATIONALEN KOLLOQUIUMS ÜBER PROBLEME DES PROVINZIALRÖMISCHEN KUNSTSCHAFFENS

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON PROBLEMS OF ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART

LES ACTES DU VIII<sup>ÈME</sup> 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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# THE ICONOGRAPHY OF INDIGENOUS CULTS IN NORTHERN LIBURNIA

BY ROBERT MATIJAŠIĆ

Indigenous cults in Northern Liburnia are quite well known, because they are quite numerous and well documented since Mommsen's work on the CIL<sup>1</sup>. They have often been subjected to analyses and review.<sup>2</sup> The Northern Liburnia region historically comprises eastern Istria with the boundary on the Raša River (*Arsia flumen*), the Croatian Littoral and the island groups of Krk, Cres, Lošinj and Rab. Inhabited by the Liburni, this land with its islands came under Roman rule at the beginning of the Principate, after numerous wars in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.<sup>3</sup> It was then that Romanisation started, but it grew more intense during the 1<sup>st</sup> century A. D.<sup>4</sup> The whole of Liburnia was already well Romanised by Claudius's rule, and the inhabitants of single oppida got their *Ius Latinum*, *immunitas* or *civitas*, as a reward for their loyalty.<sup>5</sup> However, they maintained their old traditions, particularly in the spiritual sphere, and they worshiped their old deities, all female, under their old names. Only some of them present traces of syncretism; a gradual integration with the cult of its Roman equivalent.

This paper is restricted to the eastern Istrian coast, from the river Raša to Tarsatica (modern Rijeka), because it is in this particular area that indigenous cults are concentrated: in Labin, the Liburnian *Alvona*, and Plomin, the Liburnian *Flanona*. It is the border region towards Histria, which was annexed to the Augustan Italic Tenth region (Regio Decima) in the last decade of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, and was thus part of Italy itself, not of the province.<sup>6</sup> The indigenous Histri, bordering with Liburni, were on a similar level of culture, and contacts between them are also attested by some of the cults which are documented in both areas.<sup>7</sup>

This is a short and simplified list of Liburnian deities, all on altars with the dedicants name, the god's name and a simple votive formula:

SENTONA:

Geminus / Boninus / Hostiducis / Sentonae / v. s. l. m – Labin (CIL 3, 10075)

Sentonae / sacrum / Tullia Fusca / v. s. – Labin (IL-Jug 2910)

<sup>1</sup> Four inscriptions appear already in the first volume of Mommsen's *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* vol. 3, 1, Berlin 1873 (nos. 3026–3033), while three more appear in the first *Supplementum*, vol. 3, Suppl. 1, Berlin 1902. The finds of inscriptions from Liburnia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century are collected in A. et J. ŠAŠEL, *Inscriptiones latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt* (Accedunt corrigenda ad volumen I operis V. Hoffiler et B. Saria, *Atinke Inschriften aus Jugoslawien*, Zagreb 1938, indices, tabulae geographicae duae). Situla 5, 1963. and A. et J. ŠAŠEL, *Inscriptiones latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX repertae et editae sunt* (Accedunt nonnullae ad annos MCMXL – MCMLX pertinentes (precipuae in ephemeride *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* editae). Situla 19, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent comprehensive study is A. Degrassi, *Culti dell'Istria preromana e romana*. *Adriatica praehistorica et antiqua*. *Mischellanea Gregorio Novak dicata* (Zagreb 1970) 615–632. Cf. also V. Girardi Jurkić, *Arte plastica del culto come determinante l'esistenza dei culti romani e sincretici nella regione istriana*. *Atti del Centro di ricerche storiche* 5, 1974, 7–33; V. Jurkić, *La continuità dei culti illirici in Istria durante il periodo romano*. *Atti CRS* 14, 1983–1984, 7–24.

<sup>3</sup> M. Zaninović, *Liburnia militaris*, *Opuscula Arch.* (Zagreb) 13, 1988, 43–67 (also in M. Zaninović, *Od Helena do Hrvata* (Zagreb 1996) 292–307).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Starac, *Rimsko vladanje u Istriji i Liburniji. Društveno i pravno uređenje prema literarnoj, natpisnoj i arheološkoj građi. Liburnija II*. *Monografije i Katalozi* 10/II (Pula 2000) 15–19.. – Also G. Alföldy, *Bevölkerung und Gesellschaft in der römischen Provinz Dalmatien* (Budapest 1965). – J.J. Wilkes, *Dalmatia* (London 1969). – and J.J. Wilkes, *The Illyrians. The Peoples of Europe*. (Oxford 1992). – Also S. Čače, *Rim, Liburnija i istočni Jadran u 2. st. pr. n. e. (Rome, Liburnia and the Eastern Adriatic in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC)*. *Diadora* 13, 1991, 55–76.

<sup>5</sup> A. Alföldy, *Municipes tiberiens et claudiens en Liburnie*. *Epigraphica* 23, 1961, 53–65. – L. Margetić, *Plinio e le comunità della Liburnia*. *Atti CRS* 9, 1978–79, 301–358. – S. Čače, *Broj liburnskih općina i vjerodostojnost Plinija* (*Nat. hist.* 3, 10, 139–141). *Radovi* (Zadar) 32(19), 1993, 1–36.

<sup>6</sup> A. Degrassi, *Il confine nord-orientale dell'Italia romana*. "Dissertationes Bernenses", I, 6, Bern 1954.

<sup>7</sup> Such as Ika, attested in Plomin (CIL III 3031, see the list), and in Pula (ILJug 415).

Sentonae / sacr(um) / C. Vibius Florus / v. s. l. m – Labin (ILJug 2909)

Sentonae / [S]eli[ci]a / [v]. s. l. m – Unknown, probably Plomin (CIL 3, 10076)

Sentone / Sex(tus) Aem(ilius) / v. s. l. m – Plomin harbour (ILJug 2900)

Sentonae / Felix Aug. n / v. s. l. m – Plomin (ILJug 2901)

Sentonae / Eutychus / v. s. l. m – Tarsatica (CIL 3, 3026)

Sentonae / Silicius Rufus / d. d – Katuni near Boljun (ILJug 448)

IRIA (VENUS):

Iriae Aug(ustae) / in memoriam / Vibiae Portiae / matris / Aquilia Q. f. Colatina / d. d. – Plomin (CIL 3, 3032)

Irie Veneri / C. Vale(ri) Optati f(ilia) / Felicula / v. s. l. m – Jesenovik (CIL 3, 3033)

IUTOSSICA:

L. Granus / Voltimes f. / Rufus Iutossicae v/ s. l. m – Labin (CIL 3, 10074)

ICA / IKA:

M. / Vipsanius / M. l / Faustus / Icae / v. s. l. m – Plomin (CIL 3, 3031)

Ikae Aug(ustae) – Pula (ILJug 415)

Apart from this group of 13 inscriptions, there are only two other altars dedicated to Roman gods in north-eastern Istria,<sup>8</sup> which we will not take into consideration here, but it must be stressed that native deities (on the above list) make up an overwhelming majority of them all. Among them, the most represented goddess is Sentona with eight inscriptions, then there are two examples of Iria (Iria Venus in its semi-romanised form), and one each of Iutossica and Ica. The neighbouring Histri in southern Istria also had a group of their traditional deities, mainly grouped in Nesactium and southern Histria (Seixomnia Leucitica<sup>9</sup>, Melosocus<sup>10</sup>, Trita<sup>11</sup>, Boria<sup>12</sup>, Eia<sup>13</sup> and Nebres<sup>14</sup>). They overlap only in the

case of Ica, worshiped in northern Liburnia and southern Histria (one inscription in each region). All these indigenous cults, taking into consideration the whole eastern coast of Istria, reflect the richness of the local Histrian and Liburnian pantheon, which – being partly romanised – shows the characteristic traits of the beginning of Romanisation. They also show the fact that the ethnical and cultural situation in eastern / central Istria and in northern Liburnia was similar, and that the two communities (being first neighbours) were on a comparable level of Romanisation and civilisation.

But there are two main features associated with Liburnian deities: the absolute predominance of female gods (there are no autochthonous male gods in northern Liburnia), and the lack of iconographic expression. It is as if Liburnian deities did not have an anthropomorphic character, so that all studies are based on epigraphy. Only on one altar dedicated to Sentona, found in Labin in the sixties and not yet properly published,<sup>15</sup> can one find a snake depicted on a lateral panel, a serpent whose tip of the tail extends over the lower right corner of the central epigraphic panel. Moreover, this is an unusual and interesting inscription, because it bears three names: Sentona, Miliotoc and Nossicae. They are either three gods names or two appellatives of Sentona, and the dedicant is a certain Sextius Patalicus. Both names are common in the northern Histrian and Liburnian onomasticon.<sup>16</sup>

To this apparent lack of anthropomorphic representation of Liburnian female divinities we are now able to add a new element.

In 1963/1964, during excavations for a sewage duct in Rabac, the port of Labin (and today an important tourist resort), a fragment of a stone slab with an inscription and a relief decoration was found. It was deposited in the Museum in Labin in 1967.<sup>17</sup> The monument has never been properly published, although the news of the find was offhandedly reported in papers dealing

<sup>8</sup> Silvanus in Čepić (CIL V 424), Liber in Rabac (CIL III 3046),

<sup>9</sup> CIL V 8184 = Inscr. It., 10, 1, 642, near Rovinjsko selo (Rovinj).

<sup>10</sup> CIL V 8127 = Inscr. It. 10, 1, 661, Inscr. It. 10, 1, 662, near Krnica. A third inscription, in greek, was found near-by recently: R. Matijašić, Un nuovo *Laecanius* dall'Istria meridionale, Una nuova dedica votiva in greco al dio *Melosocus* da Carnizza d'Arsa. In: "Notiziario archeologico", "Aquila Nostra", 72, 2001., 342–348.

<sup>11</sup> Inscr. It. 10, 1, 665, Nesactium.

<sup>12</sup> CIL V 7 = Inscr. It. 10, 1, 2, Pola.

<sup>13</sup> CIL V 8 = Inscr. it. 10, 1, 3, Pola; Inscr. It. 10, 1, 659–660, Nesactium. In all three cases the name of the goddess is Eia Augusta.

<sup>14</sup> CIL V 8133 = Inscr. It. 10, 1, 17, Pola.

<sup>15</sup> [S]ENTONA[ ] / MILIOTOC[ ] / NOSSICAE / SEX · PATALICVS.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. Križman, *Rimska imena u Istri* (Zagreb 1991) but also G. Alföldy, *Die Namengebung der Urbevölkerung in der römischen Provinz Dalmatien*. Beitr. Namenforsch. 15, 1964, 55–104. – D. Rendić Miočević, *Neke karakteristike histarske onomastike (Alcune caratteristiche dell'onomastica histra)*. Histria Historica, 4, 2, Pula 1981, 67–76. – D. Rendić Miočević, *Onomastičke studije s teritorija Liburna (Prilozi ilirskoj onomastici)*. Zbornik Instituta za historijske nauke u Zadru 1, 1955, 125–

<sup>17</sup> We are indebted to Mr. Franko Oreb (Split), who was at the time curator of the Labin Museum, for the information.



with Liburnian female deities.<sup>18</sup> The monument is the central part of a stone slab, 50 cm high, 97 cm long and 20 cm thick. It was broken into four irregular fragments when it was found, but the remaining parts were lost. The lower edge of the slab appears to be intact. The lower part of the slab carries the inscription in two lines, whose beginning and end are both missing. The inscription presents great problems of interpretation:

...A[.]ITICAE                      AVG ...  
 ...APLI ET TITI GAVILLIORUM VOLTIMES ...

The first line contains the name of a goddess with the appellative Augusta, but the name itself is unclear. The group of letters ITICAE is legible, but the preceding letter is destroyed, and the one before that is an A. One is tempted to recognise an M or a V between A and I, so it would be AMITICAE (or AVITICAE), but the surface of the stone before the initial A is also destroyed beyond recognition.<sup>19</sup>

The second line carries a group of personal and family names. The formula is not in the expected nominative case, but in the genitive case, so that the persons mentioned are not the dedicants. We read: ... APLI ET TITI GAVILLIORUM VOLTIMES ... The structure is not easy to interpret, and the fact that the beginning of the line is lost certainly does not make things easier. The names *Aplus*, *Titus* and *Voltimes(is)* are attested in the region as belonging to the Histrian and Liburnian onomasticon,<sup>20</sup> while members of the gens *Gavillia* (of italic origin) are also fairly well attested in *Alvona* on funeral and votive inscriptions<sup>21</sup>. The autochthonous Histrian onomastic formula often places the patronymic at the end, so that *Voltimes(is) f.* could be one.<sup>22</sup>

It seems to us there are two persons mentioned in the inscription, and they could have been brothers, *Aplus* and *Titus*, whose father was *Voltimes(is)*. As they received Roman citizenship, they added their new gens, *Gavillius*, but they epigraphically condensed the order of the elements. So instead of what would be the normal and extended phrase:

*Aplus Gavillius Voltimesis f(i)lius) et Titus Gavillius Voltimesis f(i)lius)*

we have:

*Aplus et Titus Gavillii Voltimesis f(i)lii)*

or in the genitive case:

*Apli et Titi Gavilliorum Voltimesis f(i)liorum).*

Even more interesting is the partly preserved relief in the superior part of the stone slab, on which we recognise a seated female figure whose one side and head are destroyed. In her left hand she holds a pole which crosses the lateral part of her body diagonally. It may not have been a very fine work, but the sculptor was quite competent in executing details of the dress, as well as in the accomplishment of a quarter-profile of the figure. The lady wears the classical *stola* which covers the legs to the ankles and feet, and the *palla* which covers it in horizontal furrows.

In front of the seated female, obviously the goddess, to whom the monument is consecrated, stands the altar, *ara*, of the typical form present in Liburnia in many examples, a cube with a larger stand and adorned with a festoon on the front. The lateral edges of the top surface are shaped in the form we know from real altars. An object is clearly visible on the altar, but it is impossible to identify it with certainty, it could be a statuette of a god, or an item ready for sacrificing. If the altar is symmetrically placed, probably in the middle of the scene, we may suppose that there was a third element more to the left; maybe another figure, that of the dedicant or another god?

Unfortunately, the attributes of the seated goddess are missing, but her posture is clear enough. It is also clear that she holds a spear, rod or sceptre in her left hand. The type of seated female figure is common in Roman imperial coins, and it usually represents a goddess. This iconographic type was first sporadically minted by emperors between the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The goddess often holds a cornucopia, not a sceptre. Most common are **Roma**, depicted seated on a round shield, and holding a pallasium and a vertical spear or sceptre; **Fortuna**, **Fecunditas** and **Concordia** holding a cornucopia in their hand; **Concordia** sometimes also holds a vertical spear; while **Ops** holds two corn-ears in her right hand. On the coins of Iulia Titi, daughter of Titus Flavius Vespasianus, the type with a sceptre appears representing **Vesta** on one

<sup>18</sup> Notably in V. Jurkic's papers, cf. note 2.

<sup>19</sup> One could also presume the M to be the final letter of the word ARAM, so the first line would read Aram Iticae Aug(ustae), as in Ara(m) / Dian(ac) / posui(t) / ... AE 1947, 0105. RIB 1126. Britania, Corbridge; Aram / deo / Marti / Septimi/nus ... CIL 02, 01472, Baetica; Ara(m) / Iovi / Co(ho)rtali s(acrum) / po(suit) ... AE 1960, 0360b, Dacia, Turmu Severin; Aram Volcano / P(ublius) Pacilius ... AE 1975, 0145, Latium, Mentana; Aram Nymphis / sanctis Amniom / Augg. nn. ser(vus) ... AE 1921, 0078, Latium, Ostia.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. note 16. Voltimes appears also on the altar dedicated to Iutossica (cf. above), in patronimic position.

<sup>21</sup> CIL III 3047; CIL III 3054 (+10067); CIL III 3055; CIL 30, 3061,

<sup>22</sup> As in Vescevesi Petronio Triti f. (CIL III 3058 + 10069), Geminus Boninus Hostiducis (f.) (CIL III 10075)



FIG. 1

coin,<sup>23</sup> while on Domitian's coin there is and **Pietas Augusta** in the same posture.<sup>24</sup> We find a similar posture on Hadrian's coins representing **Indulgentia Augusta**<sup>25</sup> and **Patientia Augusta**,<sup>26</sup> while the characteristic transverse spear or sceptre also appears on coins issued by Domitilla (**Pietas Aug.**), Traian (**Vesta**)<sup>27</sup> and Plotina (**Vesta**).<sup>28</sup>

But the most striking analogy of our relief is to be found in a series of coins with **Pudicitia Augusta** on coins issued by Julia Maesa,<sup>29</sup> Otacilia Severa,<sup>30</sup> Herennia Etruscilla<sup>31</sup> and of Traian Decius<sup>32</sup>, and with **Iuno Aug(usta)** and **Iuno Martialis** on coins of Trebonianus Gallus<sup>33</sup> and Cornelia Supera, wife of Aemilian.<sup>34</sup> We see that Vesta and Pudicitia hold the sceptre in a similar way, diagonally across the coin. The difference between them consists in the fact that Pudicitia raises her veil with the right hand, while Vesta holds a small figure in her hand. Both symbolise the idea of chastity. Apart

from them, only Iuno appears on coins with the sceptre positioned in the same way, and in a specific context she can also be interpreted as a protectress of familiar chastity. With the exception of Julia Maesa, whose coins were minted around 222, all other above mentioned emperors and their wives reigned and minted coins around the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A. D. But the same type appears also earlier, as we have seen, not only on Plautilla's coins, but even earlier, on coins of the Flavian dynasty.

The head of our figure on the relief from Rabac is missing, and so is her right hand. A Liburnian, non-roman god-name on a monument with so many classical roman characteristics, means that **A.itica** had already been identified with the substance of a Roman cult, of a roman goddess. But although Pudicitia might be a likely candidate, we have only clues, and we will not know who she was, until maybe another unexpected find turns up.

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<sup>23</sup> R. I. C. (Tit.) 180.

<sup>24</sup> R. I. C. (Domit.) 214.

<sup>25</sup> R. I. C. (Hadr.) 213.

<sup>26</sup> R. I. C. (Hadr.) 365.

<sup>27</sup> R. I. C. (Tit.) 73, (Tr.) 107.

<sup>28</sup> R. I. C. (Tr.) 731.

<sup>29</sup> R. I. C. 417. She was grandmother of Elagabalus (218–222) and Severus Alexander, and died in 225.

<sup>30</sup> R. I. C. (Phil.) 123, 128A, 209. She was wife of Philip I (244–249).

<sup>31</sup> R. I. C. (Tr. Dec.) 59. She was wife of Traian Decius (249–251).

<sup>32</sup> R. I. C. (Tr. Dec.) 46.

<sup>33</sup> R. I. C. (Treb. Gall.) 83.

<sup>34</sup> R. I. C. (Aemil.) 31. She was wife of Aemilian (253)