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STUDIOLA IN HONOREM MILOJE VASIĆ

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The Cult of Jupiter in the *Naissus* Area*

Abstract. – In the area of the Roman town of Naissus (nowadays called Niš), a total of 22 monuments dedicated to the cult of Jupiter were noted. Of this number, 20 monuments represent an independent Jupiter cult with the remainder being in cult communities. In these communities, Jupiter is associated with other deities such as Juno, Liber or Hilara. The deity referred to as Hilara is not known; it is assumed that this name is either an abbreviation or deviation of the name Hilaera priestess of Artemis and Castor's wife. Jupiter is, however, mostly praised as a Capitoline Jupiter referred to as Optimus and Maximus, as well as Jupiter Paternus – a Jupiter that protects.

Key words. – Naissus area, Roman period, cult, Jupiter, Jupiter cult communities, Hilara, Hilaera

In the territory of Niš, the Roman *Naissus*, a total of 22 monuments dedicated to Jupiter have been noted so far. Of this number, there are 20 monuments dedicated to an independent Jupiter cult. The remainder of the monuments are dedicated to Jupiter included in a cult community with other deities.

Initially, Jupiter was the God of Heavens who ruled weather conditions¹, yet to become the supreme deity of the Roman Pantheon at a later time. As Jupiter was the god of the skies and light, all the annual full moon days (ides) were dedicated to him. On this holiday each month, a white sheep would have been sacrificed by a priest.

When the grape harvest was about to commence, it was a lamb that was sacrificed. As a deity ruling weather conditions, Jupiter was the God Protector of both vinedressers and of the vine, the latter being the fruit most dependent on weather conditions and generally related to the fertility of the soil. In times of drought, Jupiter was summoned to bring the rain. It is most likely that it was the vine that related Jupiter with the libation and the cult of the dead. He was often related to

¹ Замуровић 1936; Срејовић, Цермановић-Кузмановић 1979.

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Mars and Libera or even Terminus as he was the god of thunder. As such, he was also able to rule borders.

Save from a single case, Jupiter is always referred to as Optimus or Maximus or Jupiter Capitolinus. Dedications to Capitoline Jupiter were considered a powerful protection for the entire country and the community. For this reason, when a town was to be founded, the first task for architects and builders was to build a temple dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus. There is no doubt that the town of Naissus also contained such a temple.

In addition to dedications such as Optimus and Maximus, other attributes were as follows: Capitolinus (Capitoline, Catalogue No. 1, 6), Paternus (paternal – the one protecting the family and protecting, in turn, the community and the state, Cat. No. 9–12) or Depulsor (the one who repels, Cat. No. 7). As Jupiter Depulsor, Jupiter protected the army and the borders by casting enemies away.²

An interesting cult community is that of Jupiter with other deities of the Roman Pantheon together with Juno. It was common for the Jupiter – Juno cult community to be accompanied by Minerva, but such a community has not been found in the Nais area.³ Minerva must have been among the Roman Pantheon deities while Juno was the only one to be presented separately. Juno was one of the most celebrated deities of the Roman Pantheon. She was praised since the earliest times; first as a protectress of women, and the goddess of the Moon and labour and as a protectress of marriage. Her character was formed with all the female Genii (Junos) having been divinised into a single divine character. (Attention should be paid here to the so-called psychofactor, i.e. to “a mental association” as Jupiter is found likewise in relatively frequent cult communities with the Genius; though, he has not been found as such in the *Naissus* area yet). Over time, Juno was transformed from the protectress of women into the protectress of the married women, family and labour, to become the protectress of the entire Roman community and state. With this quality, she was celebrated as The

Queen (Regina), the wife of Jupiter. She was thus respected and celebrated as the goddess multiplying the nation but also as the one to protect cities and the army in times of war. This kind of dedication to Jupiter, deities and to Juno might be considered very rare. This dedication might be considered a reference to all gods and goddesses basically due to the Jupiter – Juno – Minerva Capitoline Triad. However, due to the superior importance of Jupiter in the dedication, the same may refer to other gods that Jupiter was related to in respective specifications. Standing on the ground of the Nais site, we ask the question: How many temples were there at Naissus, apart from the Capitoline one? This is a question that has yet to be answered.

The dedication to Jupiter, Juno, Liber and Hilara is a very interesting one as Juno is thereby praised as Regina – the Queen and the wife of Rex – the King. Jupiter and Juno are praised together with Liber. Liber was an old Italgod of the fertility of animals and crops⁴. Romans usually celebrated this deity as the Liber Pater, the Paternal One. They considered it a witty deity, making funny things to cast away all worries, sorrow and grief. He was usually praised together with his female match Libera, but she has not been found here. However, we do find the unknown deity of Hilara instead, unless this is either a vulgarized, abbreviated or deviated name of Hilaeira. Hilaeira was a priestess of Artemis and the wife of Castor, one of the Dioscuri. This dedication is rather intriguing if we accept its reference to Hilaeira as it would mean that Hilaeira was deified. It might have been that the priestess was deified in some regions of ancient Greece and then transferred together with her associated beliefs to the territory of the Roman Empire.⁵ In that case, some Romanized Greeks might have been behind this dedication to Jupiter, Juno, Liber and Hilara. Therefore, it is no wonder that

² Petrović 1979, 75.

³ Comp. for example, M. Mirković 1994, 385, n. 47.

⁴ Замуровић 1936, 264–265.

⁵ Zotović 2018, 101–102.



Figure 1. Ara, limestone, Niš: 1) after *IMS IV*, 73, no. 12; 2) after *IMS IV*, 74, no. 15; 3) after *IMS IV*, 75, n. 18; 4) after *IMS IV*, 76, n. 19; 5) after *IMS IV*, 76–77, no. 20; 6) after *IMS IV*, 71–72, no. 8

the dedication refers only to Jupiter and Juno without Minerva and to Liber without Libera or the deified priestess of the goddess Artemis. This points to an insufficient “inflow” of these deities into the Roman Pantheon and to a relatively insufficient transfer of beliefs from the territory of Greece, from where they originated.

According to dedications to the Capitoline Jupiter for the welfare of certain emperors, there are only four monuments to be reliably dated into the period from the year 220 to 225 A.D. (Jupiter – Pro salute Augusti/Augustorum, Cat. Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5). All other monuments can be dated to a wider chronological span ranging from the early 2nd century until the middle of the 3rd century.

CATALOGUE

1. Ara, limestone, used as a building material.

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) F() M(aximo)/ Capitolino/ ex boto (!) p(osuerunt)/ NicaHerme[s]/ pro salute/ domini no/stri [_ _ _]

Bibliography: *CIL* III, 1677; *IMS* IV, 70, no. 6.

2. Ara, limestone, size: 1.00 × 0.52 × 0.42 m.

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ M. Aur(elius) Po/sidoniusdec(urio) m(unicipii) N(aissi)/ v(otum) p(osuit).

Bibliography: Вулић 1933, 53, n. 168; *IMS* IV, 72, no. 10.

3. Ara, limestone, size: 0.37 × 0.95 × 0.15 m (fig. 1.1).

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ sacrum/ C. Fl(avius) Felix/ vet(eranus) leg(ionis) VII Cl(audiae)/ [- - -]

Bibliography: *IMS* IV, 73, no. 12.

4. Ara, limestone, size: 0.91 × 0.30 × 0.30 m. Monument damaged on both upper and lower sides, script partially erased.

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) [M(aximo)]/ P. Iu[l(ius) Herc]u/lan[us 2 – 3]/ co(n)s(ularis) [v(otum) l(ibens)] m(erito)/ p(osuit) pro [se e]t/ suis

imp(eratore) d(omino)/ n(ostro) et Titi/ano co(n)s(ulibus).

Bibliography: Вулић 1931, 103, n. 246; 1934, 46, n. 37; *IMS* IV, 73–74, no. 13.

5. Ara, limestone, size: 0.27 × 0.26 m. Part of the inscription field is preserved (fig. 1.2).

Site: Niš

Dating: 245 AD

[I(ovi)]O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ [...]a() Proc/[...]nus mil(es)/ [co]hor(tis) I pr/[aeto]riae [...]/ [- - -]

Bibliography: *CIL* III, 12671, 14560; Премерштајн, Вулић 1900, 26, n. 29; Вулић 1909, 148, n. 74; *IMS* IV, 74, no. 15.

6. Ara, limestone. Inscription field preserved.

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ Capitol/inodeo/ Ulp(ius) Ruf(us) ex/ vo(to) po(suit).

Bibliography: *CIL* III, 1678; *IMS* IV, 74–75, no. 16.

7. Ara, limestone. A part of the inscription field is preserved.

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ Depulsor[i

Bibliography: *CIL* III, 1679; *IMS* IV, 75, no. 17.

8. Ara, limestone. Upper monument part preserved. Capital with two-fold profilation, akroteria in corners, pinea in the middle (fig. 1.3).

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) L()/ Aur(elius) Vitalis/ o(rnatus) o(rnamentis) d(ecurionalibus) pro/ [- - -]

Bibliography: *CIL* III, 8247; *IMS* IV, 75, no. 18.

9. Ara, limestone, size: 0.50 × 0.40 × 0.36 m.

Upper monument part preserved. Capital with three-fold profilation, akroteria in corners, rosette in the middle (fig. 1.4).

Site: Niš

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ Paterno/ [I]ul(ius) [. . .] YR/ [.]VSIX/ [± 3] PS/ [- - -]

Bibliography: *IMS* IV, 76, no. 19.

10. Ara, limestone, size: 0.71 × 0.30 × 0.30 m. No capital. Postament with a simple double moulding (fig. 1.5).

Site: Niš

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ Patern[o]/
M. Ulp[us]/ Herculan[us]/ pos(uit).*

Bibliography: Вулић 1931, 102, n. 245; 1934, 46, n. 36;
IMS IV, 76–77, no. 20.

11. Ara, limestone, size: 0.79 × 0.41 × 0.30 m.
Site: Niš
Dating: 223 AD

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Pa/terno Ae/pilofio
(!)/ Sanc() Oriens/ Cor(nelius) Mide P./ Ael(ius)
Cocaius/ vet(erani) leg(ionis) VII Cl(audiae)
Sev(eriana)/ ex voto posu(erunt)/ Maximo et
Aeli/ano co(n)s(ulibus).*

Bibliography: CIL III, 14565; Премерштајн, Вулић 1900,
26, n. 30; Вулић 1909, 150, n. 78; IMS IV, 77, no. 21.

12. Ara, limestone, size: 0.20 × 0.16 × 0.14 m.
A part of the inscription field is preserved.
Site: Niš

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) [M(aximo)]/ Pat(erno) C[± 3]/
Fl(avius) Sab[inus]/ pro se [± 5]/ [.]VM[± 5].*

Bibliography: IMS IV, 77–78, no. 22.

13. Ara, limestone, size: 0.26 × 0.23 m. A part
of the inscription field is preserved.
Site: Niš

*[I]ovi Pater[no]/ Ael(ius) Hermog[enes]/ ex vot(o)
pos[uit].*

Bibliography: IMS IV, 78, no. 23.
Commentary: Ligature 1: TE, 2: HE.

14. Ara, limestone. Inscription field preserved.
Site: DonjaKamenica

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ Val(erius) Do/metian/
us (!) ex v(oto) s(uscepto) p(osuit).*

Bibliography: CIL III, 8246; IMS IV, 98, no. 63.

Jupiter – Pro salute Augusti/Augustorum

1. Ara, limestone.

Site: Niš

Dating: 221–222 AD (?)

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) pro/ sal(ute)
D(ominorum) n(ostrorum)/ Aug(ustorum
duorum) M. A<u>r(elius)/ Va<l>es mil(es)/
leg(ionis) III<I>str(ator) co(n)s(ularis)/
pos[uit].*

Bibliography: CIL III, 1675; IMS IV, 72–73, no. 11.

2. Ara, limestone.

Site: Niš

Dating: 225 AD

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ pro s(alute) d(omini)
n(ostri)/ Aug(usti) M. Ulp(ius)/ Martinus
str(ator)/ co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) VII
C<l>(audiae)/ [Se]v[er]e[rianae) Fusco et Dextro
co(n)s(ulibus).*

Bibliography: CIL III, 1676; IMS IV, 74, no. 14.

3. Ara, limestone, size: 0.50 × 0.44 × 0.34 m.

A part of the inscription field is preserved.

Site: Koprivnica

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ pr(o) s(alute)
Aug(usti)/ Ateli(us)/ CVD desti/navit pos(uit).*

Bibliography: Вулић 1941–48, 11, n. 254; IMS IV, 99,
no. 65.

4. Ara, limestone, size: 0.75 × 0.37 × 0.30 m.

Capitol and postment damaged and empha-
sised with a single profilation (fig. 1.6).

Site: Niš

Dating: 220 AD

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ pro s(alute) d(omini)
n(ostri) Aug(usti)/ M. Aur(elius) Gaius/ mil(es)
leg(ionis) VII Cl(audiae)/ strat(or) co(n)s(ularis)
v(otum) s(olvens) l(ibens) m(erito) p(osuit)/
[I]mp(eratore) [± 6] et Comazon(te) [co(n)s(ulibus)].*

Bibliography: CIL III, 12672, 14561; Премерштајн, Вулић
1900, 26, n. 28; IMS IV, 71–72, no. 8.

5. Ara, limestone.

Site: Niš

Dating: 221–222 AD

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ pro sa[l(ute)]
d(ominorum)/ n(ostrorum) Aug(ustorum
duorum)/ Aur(elius) Gaius/ mil(es) leg(ionis)
VII/ str(ator) co(n)s(ularis)/ pos(uit).*

Bibliography: CIL III, 1674; IMS IV, 72, no. 9.

6. Ara, limestone, size: 0.68 × 0.40 × 0.30 m.

Capital and postament emphasised with
three-fold profilation. Acroteria in corners of
the capital.

Site: Niš

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ pr(o) s(alute)
d(omini) n(ostri)/ Aug(usti) T. Aur(elius) Atta*

*mil(es)/ leg(ionis) III Fl(aviae) str(ator)
co(n)s(ularis)/ posuit.*

Bibliography: CIL III, 8249; Ладек, Премерштајан, Ву-
лић 1903, 73, п. 38; IMS IV, 70–71, no. 7.

**Jupiter – Other Deities – Pro salute
Augusti/Augustorum**

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0.84 × 0.45 × 0.30 m.
Capital and postament damaged.

Site: Niševac

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) ceterisque/ dis
deabusque/ [i]mmortalibus pro sa/lute dominorum
n(ostrorum)/ imperatorum [A]ug(ustorum duorum)
L. Aur(elius) Iusti/nus v(ir) c(larissimus) numini/
[m]aiestatique/ [eo]rum dicat[i]s/simus.*

Bibliography: Вулић 1933, 72, п. 207; IMS IV, 98, no. 62.

Jupiter – Juno

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0.55 × 0.47 × 0.40 m.
Upper part of monument and left part of the
single-profiled postament missing.

Site: Niš

*[I(ovi)] O(ptimo) M(aximo)/ Iun(oni) Reg(inae/
C. Iul(ius) Victo/rinus mil(es) leg(ionis) VII
Cl(audiae)/ b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)
v(otum) s(olvit).*

Bibliography: IMS IV, 78–79, no. 24.

Jupiter – Juno – Liber – Hilara (?)

1. Ara, limestone. Inscription field preserved.

Site: Niš

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Ful()/ et Iun(oni)
Reg(inae)/ et Deo Lib(ero)/ et Hilare (!)/ G.
Kul(ius) Servan/dus vet(eranus) et/ Fl(avii)
Numisius [et]/ [N]umisia[nus] - - .*

Bibliography: CIL III, 1680, 8248; IMS IV, 79, no. 25.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.

IMS IV = P. Petrović, Naissus – Remesiana – Horreum Margi, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure IV*, Beograd 1979.

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