

GREEK CULT VOTIVE MONUMENTS IN THE TERRITORY OF CENTRAL SERBIA

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***Abstract:** Ten votive monuments dedicated to Greek gods have been identified in the territory of central Serbia so far. The monuments have been identified in the areas of Singidunum (3), Viminacium (2), Naissus (2), Dardania (2) and Romuliana (1). Hecate and Apollo each were dedicated two of the monuments, and Apollo was also present in cult communities with Diana and Silvanus in Viminacium and in the imperial cult in Dardania. Cult symbioses included also Hilara with Jupiter, Juno and Liber, and Artemis as Dea Orcia was in cult symbiosis with the imperial cult. Other monuments are in standalone cults and dedicated to Heros, Hero, Ata and Omphale. All the mentioned municipal centres are tourist centres and also areas of scientific and research work. The main goal of this paper is to show that Romanised Greek settlers lived there.*

***Key words:** greek cult, votive monuments, municipal centers, romanised Greek settlers.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There are ten votive monuments on the territory of Central Serbia dedicated to Grecian gods. These monuments are located on the territory of Singidunum (3), Viminacium (2), Naisus (2), Dardania (2) and Romuliana (1). Two of them are dedicated to Hecate and Apollo whereas Apollo belongs to the same cult congregationas Diana and Silvanus in Viminacium as well as to the imperial cult of Dardania. Hilara is posed in a cult symbiosis with Jupiter, Junon and Libera. Likewise, Artemida (as Dea Orthia) is posed in the same way with the imperial cult. Other monuments belong to individual cults; these are dedicated to Heros, Hero, Ata and Omfala. Further, all aforementioned municipal centres are tourist centres, as well as localities subject to scientific and research works. The target of this paper is to show that these centres were inhabited by romanized Grecian immigrants.

2. GREEK CULT VOTIVE MONUMENTS IN THE TERRITORY OF CENTRAL SERBIA

On the territory of both Singidunum and Romuliana, a votive monument dedicated to the goddess Hecate was respectively noted as follows: an architrave in Singidunum including dedication to the goddess Hecate and an altar in Romuliana. At the same time, these are sole monuments dedicated to this goddess on the territory of Serbia (Fig.1). Presence of the architrave apparently points to the existence of a temple dedicated to Hecate while its size suggests that such temple was minor in size.

According to some, Hecate was a daughter of Perses and Asteria, the Titans. Others claim that she was a daughter of Zeus and Demetra or even Zeus and Hera.¹ It seems that Hecata is a very old deity related to or identified with Thracian bendida. In earlier times, Hecate was praised as a mighty goddess to either reward one with or deprive one of the riches, victory, war fame, wise judgement, successful hunt, prosperity of youth, safe sails, abundancy in livestock and alike. It was later that she was considered a mystical goddess. She was being mistaken for mystical Rea or Kibela for she became the ruler of the entire nature; she was also mistaken for Artemida as a hunter and youth protector and alike proclaimed for the Moon Goddess to be mistaken for mystical Persephone and Artemida. Hecate's relation to the moon is important for its reference with the women's lives, magic and spell binding. Nevertheless, Hecate was mostly praised as Trivia (a night Rambler). That's what was attributed to her on the architrave found in Singidunum. The other - „triformi“ – quality attributed to her refers to her role of both the Moon Goddess and the crossroads protector. Her images containing three bodies (Fig.2) refer to either three lunar changes (new moon, wane or full moon) or crossroads where three roads intersect.² It should also be noted that as a night Rambler she was praised as a Hton deity wandering with souls of the dead over graveyards and crossroads at night and - being a spooky night goddess of magic spells - sending demons, ghosts and spooky creatures to the upper world. A dedication on the architrave marks Hecate as both trivia and triforma. This means that here she was praised as a Hton deity – night Rambler in three forms : with three bodies and three heads. She was usually represented holding keys in one hand - meaning she was the doorkeeper of the lower world – and holding a rope in the other. Above her head there is a moon disc plate. Other figure is holding torchlights in both hands with a sign or image of the semi-moon while the third pair of hands is holding a snake and a knife, with a frigidian cap on her head. The last image indicates her relations with the mystical Rea Kibela cults of Asia Minor. The creator of this dedication is a Valerius Crescentio, a soldier of the IV Flaviae Maximianae Legion. Based on the legion mentioned, the monument may be dated back to the period from 236 – 237 godine.³ It may be assumed that a romanized Greek is behind the dedicator's name. Thus it may also be assumed that Singidunum included a community of romanized Greek immigrants who erected a minor temple dedicated to the goddess Hecate. The territory of Singidunum contained additional communities of Greek immigrants who praised other Grecian cults such as Heros. Grecian heroes are half-deities half-men whose parents are gods or goddesses or ordinary mortals. They are mostly mediators among humans and gods and thus very respected. They can be founders of cities or states or protectors of their own tribes. In addition, they can be representatives of all people.⁴ The third dedication was made for the glory of Hero, the priestess of the goddess Afrodita. It is interesting that this dedication deified her and that such deification used a faulty morphology of the word Deus ("God"), that sometimes can mean "goddess" as well. Anyway, Hero was a pretty priestess of the goddess Afrodita; young hero Leandar from the city of Abida in Asia Minor fell in love with her. As Hero lived and did her service in Sesta, Europe, young Leandar had to swim over the Helespont Sea to embrace his beloved one (Замуровић 1936; Срејовић, Цермановић – Кузмановић 1979).⁵ Their love story ended in a tragic way. One night, a tempest put out the torch that Hera had lit every night and the sea threw Leandar's body to the shore and not to her arms. In despair, Hero climbed on the top of the tower and jumped into the abyss. The creator of this dedication is a veteran IV Flaviae Antoniniane, Aurelius Gaius. According to the 2-member onomastic formula, it is possible to date this monument back to the time of Marcus Aurelius. It's no wonder that the dedication was made by an ex-soldier for these were often separated from their loved ones. It is also possible that this name "hides" a romanized Greek and that Hero was praised as goddess in some parts of Greece or Asia Minor.⁶ Her name appears in this dedication in its vulgarized and incomplete form - Eroni or Ero. A rare monument uncommon for our area is a votive ara dedicated to the goddess Ata on the territory of Naisus. Ata was a daughter of Zeus and Erida, an evil goddess pursuing humans into reckless enterprise and following them as an evil spirit to cast them into sins and even bring them sometimes to doom. At first, Ata stayed on Olympus but Zeus casted her from Olympus to the ground after she had talked him into a reckless decision upon the fate of Heracles. Eversince she has silently paced over heads of humans talking them into various reckless and unfortunate deeds. It's no wonder she has got these features as she is a daughter of Erida, the goddess of all woes and discord. The dedicator from

¹Замуровић 1936, 427.

Срејовић – Цермановић Кузмановић 1979, 449.

²Замуровић 1936, 428.

³Mirković 1976, 44.

⁴Замуровић 1936, 467.

⁵Замуровић 1936; Срејовић / Кузмановић Цермановић 1979.

⁶Zotović 2018, 102

Naisus is shown in a single-member formula therefore giving way to thoughts that the dedicator was set free from some imprisonment. This because the Ata cult is related to the Heracles cult and Heracles was the protector of the exempted, for he himself was enslaved by Omfala to pay off his sins. It is possible that an exempted one made this dedication to Ata asking for mercy due to evil fate of having been enslaved and in order to lead a merciful life everafter. The monument can be dated back to a wider chronological period from the 2nd until the end of the 3rd century.⁷ There are not much data on Ofala apart from the notes that she was a queen of Lidia, where Heracles served to pay for his sins of having murdered Itif and having stolen the tripod from Delfi. Heracles did his service there for three years and it may be assumed that this votive monument is a dedication of a former slave set free. The goddess Artemida was also praised under the name Dea Orthia whereas the attribute Ora (Orthia) was added. She was praised as such in Sparta where human sacrifices were to please her at first. This practice was later substituted by whipping exercised over boys whose blood was dedicated to the goddess. In particular, Artemida was praised as a goddess of hunting for she was a daughter of Zeus and Leta and a sister of Apollo. She is found here in cult symbiosis with the Roman imperial cult to confirm that there were romanized Greek immigrants on the territory of Singidunum. Two monuments are classified into the Roman-Greek syncretic type of monuments. One of them is dedicated to Diana – Silvan and Apollo – and the other to the imperial cult and Apollo. Both monuments may only be conditionally classified into the Roman-Greek syncretic type as the cult of Apollo was transferred to Rome already during the time of the kingdom. The cult is considered to have been transferred by colonialists and merchants. At first, there was an Apollo sanctuary in front of city walls of Rome together with the Diana's one. At later times, during the reign of Augustus, the Apollo sanctuary was located within the city walls and Apollo started to be considered the father of Augustus and other Roman emperors. Therefore it is not strange that Apollo is found in syncretic cults with Diana and the emperor.

CONCLUSION

The most important conclusion is about the dating of the monuments and existing Greek romanised settlers on the territory of the roman Serbia in the period of the Roman rule. All the monuments can be dated in the period from the second half of II century to the period of the end of III century. The fact that were romanized Greek settlers on the territory of roman Serbia is important for further understanding of tourism of the roman period in Serbia.

CATALOGUE

Singidunum

Hecate

1. Architrave, white limestone, size: 0,35 x 1,39 x 0,26 m.
Location.: Belgrade, GospodarJevremova Street

Dea[m ?] Hecatentri/ae t[r]iformi Val(erius) Cr/escensio mil(es) leg(ionis) IIII Fl(aviae) Ma/x(iminiana) [pro s]e et suis v(otum) p(osuit) l(ibens) m(erito).

Lit.: IMS I, 43, n. 1

Heros

1. Ara, limestone, size: 1,00 x 0,51 x 0,44 m. Capitol damaged, acroteria remnants visible in corners. Text on front side divided into two by a vertical line.

DeaOrthia – Imperial cult

⁷Zotović 2018, 103.

2. Ara, limestone, size; 1,00 x 0,51 x 0,44 m. Capitol damaged, acroteria remnants visible in corners. Text on front side divided into two by a vertical line.
Location.: Avala.

Deae Orciae Sacrum / pro salute d(ominorum) n(ostorum duorum) Diocletiani et / Maximiani Aug(ustorum duorum) / ordo am(plissimus ?) splendisimae col(oniae) Sing(iduni) per / M(arcos) Aur(elios) Cutiam et Sosonem / II viros curante Sim plicio v(iro) e(gregio) d(ominis)n(ostris) / Deiocletiano (!) III et Ma[x]imi/ano Aug(ustis) co(n)s(ulibus).

Lit.: IMS I, 54 – 55, n. 20.

Dat.: 287. g.

Viminacium

Diana – Silvan – Apollo(?)

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0,56 x 0,25 x 0,25 m. Capitol damaged, acroteria visible in corners
Location: Kalište

IDAVNI ? / Apollin(i) / Q ? S Dian/a(e) Silvano / Ael(ius) Vale/ntinus / II vir col(oniae) / v(otum) l(ibens) p(osuit).

Lit.: IMS II, 196-197, n. 297.

Hero

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0,35 x 0,16 x 0,15 m. Monument capitol and postament damaged. Capitol and postment defined by hardly distinctive onefold profilation.

Location: Kostolac

Dio (!) / Eroni (!) / Aur(elius) Gai'us vet(er)a'nus l(e)g(ionis) / III Fl(aviae) An(toniniana) / vot(um) s(ol)v(it).

Lit.: IMS II, 68-69, n. 16.

Naissus

Jupiter – Junona – Liber – Hilara (?)

1. Ara, limestone. Inscription field preserved.
Location: 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] - - -

Lit.: CIL III, 1680, 8248; IMS IV, 79, n. 25.

Ata

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0,62 x 0,24 x 0,17 m. Capitol and postment with onefold simple profilation.
Damaged to the right side.
Location: Niš

Attae / sac(rum) / Melio/ris / v(otum) s(olvit).

Lit.: IMS IV, 57, n. 1.

Dardania Apollo – Imperial cult

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0,80 x 0,40 x 0,15 m.
Location.: Brus

Deo Apo[l]lino (!) pro [s(alute)]/ d(omini) n(ostri) Gor[d(iani)]/ Pi(i) Fel(icis)/ Aug(usti).

Lit.: IMS IV, 119 – 120, n. 106.

Omfala

1. Ara, limestone, size: 0,80 x 0,28 x 0,25 m. Monument broken into two fitting parts.
Location.: Lece

Om/pha/lae/ Ael(ius)/ Satu/rninus/ d(onum) d(edit).

Lit.: IMS IV, 121 – 122, n. 110.

Romuliana Hecate

1. Votive relief, marble, size: 0,32 x 0,21 x 0,3 m. Left side of the relief with presentation of Hecate preserved.
Inscription in the lower part.

Location: Rgotina *Aurelius Batao/ pro se e<▷> suos (!) votu (!)/ posuit.* Lit.: IMS III/2, 141 – 142, n. 128.

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