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Postal address (materials sent for reviewing purposes and other correspondence): *Universitatea “Al. I. Cuza”, Facultatea de Istorie, Bulevardul Carol I, nr. 11, 700506 - Iași, Romania.*

Tel.: (+04) 0232 201 615; Fax: +(4) 0232 201 201, +(4) 0232 201 156;

Website: saa.uaic.ro; blucretiu@yahoo.com.

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Interdisciplinary Insights into Early Holocene Life: Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Khutsubani, Kintrishi Gorge

Guram CHKHATARASHVILI¹, Giorgi TAVAMAISHVILI², Maia CHICHINADZE³,
Eliso KVAVADZE⁴, Nikoloz TSKVITINIDZE⁵

Abstract. *Khutsubani is one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in the Kintrishi Gorge, offering crucial insights into the mobility of people inhabiting Ajara (Western Georgia) during the Early Holocene period. The site provides valuable information on the paleoenvironment, activities, stone processing techniques, and connections with the Middle East. In 2024, an expedition from the Kobuleti Museum conducted extensive archaeological fieldwork at the Khutsubani settlement. Excavations revealed flint and obsidian tools, remnants of tool production, basalt tools, various types of pits, and more. Through interdisciplinary research, absolute dating was achieved, and the ancient paleoclimatic environment was reconstructed. However, the most important discovery was the artifact connected with fishing and organic remains preserved on it, which indicates the existence of fishing and, presumably, an early stage of weaving in the region, along with hunting.*

Rezumat. *Khutsubani este unul dintre cele mai remarcabile situri arheologice din Cheile Kintrishi, oferind perspective cruciale asupra mobilității oamenilor care locuiau în Ajara (Georgia de Vest) în perioada mezolitică. Situl oferă informații valoroase despre paleomedii, activități, tehnicile de prelucrare a pietrei și legăturile cu Orientul Mijlociu. În 2024, o echipă a Muzeului Kobuleti a efectuat ample cercetări arheologice în așezarea Khutsubani. Săpăturile au scos la iveală unelte din silex și obsidian, rămășițe ale producției de unelte, piese din bazalt, diverse tipuri de gropi și multe altele. Prin cercetările interdisciplinare întreprinse s-a putut data absolut situl, fiind obținute și reconstituiri ale paleoclimatului antic. Cu toate acestea, cea mai importantă descoperire a fost cea a artefactului care atestă practicarea pescuitului. Acesta, împreună cu rămășițele organice conservate, indică nu numai existența pescuitului, dar și, probabil, a unei etape timpurii a țesutului în regiune, alături de vânătoare.*

Keywords: Kintrishi, Khutsubani, early holocene, net sinker, flax.

Introduction

The Ajara region is distinguished by its diverse archaeological sites. Among them, Early Holocene open-air sites hold a special place. Geological data indicate the absence of karst formations in the region, and consequently, no caves-grottos have been discovered. Ajara is mostly represented by sites from the post-Pleistocene glacial period, belonging to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. Unfortunately, most of them are damaged and/or lost, which occurred in the second half of the last century due to the development of citrus plantations

¹ Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Rustaveli/Ninoshvili 32/35, 6010, Batumi, Georgia, guramchkhatarashvili@bsu.edu.ge.

² Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Rustaveli/Ninoshvili 32/35, 6010, Batumi, Georgia, gtavamaishvili@yahoo.com.

³ Paleoanthropology and Paleobiology Research Institute, Georgian National Museum, Rustaveli ave. 3, 0105, Tbilisi, Georgia, maizdr001@gmail.com.

⁴ Paleoanthropology and Paleobiology Research Institute, Georgian National Museum, Rustaveli ave. 3, 0105, Tbilisi, Georgia, e.kvavadze001@gmail.com.

⁵ European University, Guramishvili Ave. 76, 0105, Tbilisi, Georgia, ntskvitinidze@gmail.com.

and/or the construction of a road. Topographically, the sites are located on natural hills and terraces in the deep river valley.

Between 2021 and 2024, the Kobuleti Museum Expedition, led by Guram Chkhatarashvili, conducted extensive field excavations in the Kintrishi River gorge, where several significant sites had been identified as early as the 1960s⁶. Through interdisciplinary research and the application of modern methods, the expedition successfully addressed key aspects of the lives of ancient inhabitants of the Kintrishi Gorge, including stone processing techniques⁷, activities⁸, the paleoclimate⁹, raw material procurement strategies for tool production, mobility¹⁰ etc.

This study is based on the analysis of materials obtained from the 2024 archaeological excavations at the Khutsubani site. Through comprehensive research, it presents a typological classification of the stone tools discovered at the site, as well as insights into the ancient residential and subsistence environment, including activities such as hunting, fishing, and weaving. We believe that the results of this interdisciplinary study will significantly enhance our understanding of various aspects of human life in the Kintrishi Gorge during the Early Holocene period.

Geographical location

Khutsubani is situated in the Kobuleti municipality (Ajara region), in the village with the same name. As noted earlier, the site is an open-air type located on a terrace on the right bank of the Kintrishi River, covering approximately one hectare. Currently, the site lies within the homestead of Marine Beridze, where, unfortunately, cultural layers are damaged due to anthropogenic factors. As a result, archaeological material is frequently uncovered on the modern surface.

Geographically, Khutsubani is situated in the Colchis Plain (Figure 1), which extends to the east of the Black Sea. The region is dominated by vegetation characteristic of a subtropical climate. Palynological studies conducted in Khutsubani in 2021 confirmed the widespread presence of heat-loving plants¹¹, which contributed to a favorable living environment. However, it is also important to consider that the Ajara region, particularly the Black Sea coast, experiences high humidity and abundant precipitation. These conditions pose significant challenges for the preservation of faunal and anthropological materials at open-type sites. Consequently, in many cases, the primary surviving evidence of prehistoric human life consists of stone tools, cores, and production waste. Nonetheless, interdisciplinary studies on prehistoric sites in Ajara offered valuable insights into the region's past.

History of archaeological research and exploration

The discovery of Khutsubani is closely linked to the work of archaeologist I. Gdzeliashvili, who, in 1959, conducted archaeological works in the Kobuleti municipality and uncovered 58 flint and obsidian artifacts¹². That same year, several artifacts were also collected in Khutsubani by A. Ramishvili, an employee of the Batumi N. Berdzenishvili Scientific-Research Institute.

⁶ BERDZENISHVILI, NEBIERIDZE 1964; GOGITIDZE 1978; 2008.

⁷ CHKHATARASHVILI, MANKO 2020.

⁸ ESAKIYA *et alii* 2020.

⁹ CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2020.

¹⁰ CHKHATARASHVILI, GLASCOCK 2022; CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2024a,b.

¹¹ CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2024b.

¹² BERDZENISHVILI, NEBIERIDZE 1964, 8.

Between 1960 and 1962, the Georgian Black Sea Archaeological Expedition carried out small-scale reconnaissance in Khutsubani¹³. In 1967-1968, archaeologist Sergo Gogitidze resumed fieldwork at Khutsubani, where he discovered approximately 600 flint and obsidian tool fragments, both on the surface and through excavations¹⁴.

In 2021, with funding from the Kobuleti Municipality City Hall and support from the Kobuleti Museum, archaeological fieldwork continued as part of the Georgian-Ukrainian International Archaeological Expedition. The research findings were published in both Georgian¹⁵ and international scientific journals¹⁶.

The primary objective of the 2024 archaeological expedition was to investigate suspicious sites identified through accidental discoveries across the entire site area. In trench № 3 (Figure 2), an undisturbed cultural layer was observed, revealing the following stratigraphy.

- 0 - 5 cm topsoil
- 5 - 20 cm hummus

A large number of modern metal and glass fragments were found in this layer, as well as fragments of ceramics and tiles from a later period.

- 20 - 35 cm blackish layer

The layer was disturbed, likely due to anthropogenic factors. In addition to several fragments of antic period ceramics, flint and obsidian flakes were also discovered.

- 35 - 55 cm brown layer

The layer is undisturbed; in addition to flint and obsidian artefacts, a significant number of basalt stones were discovered.

- 55 - 95 cm light brown layer

This archaeologically rich layer contained significant artifacts, including a fishing net sinker made of basalt stone. Two oval-shaped pits were also discovered. The layer has been dated (Table 2).

- A yellow clay layer appeared from 95 cm (bedrock)

The layer represents sediment from the Pleistocene period, where no artifact was found.

Research methodology

Archaeological work at the Khutsubani site was conducted using standard methods. Control trenches (2×1 m) were excavated in the study area. A thin layer of soil (5 cm) was removed using a shovel and preparation knife. The excavated soil was sieved and washed in a metal mesh (1×1 mm; 2×2 mm). All artifacts were assigned the appropriate inventory numbers and recorded in a field journal. Artifacts found *in situ* were mapped on a general plan, with their depths indicated.

The stone collection was studied using the typological method developed by J. Tixier¹⁷ and Kh. Amirkhanov¹⁸. It involved the categorization of artifacts according to typological characteristics.

¹³ BERDZENISHVILI, NEBIERIDZE 1964, 9.

¹⁴ GOGITIDZE 1978, 32.

¹⁵ CHKHATARASHVILI 2023.

¹⁶ CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2024b.

¹⁷ TIXIER 1974.

¹⁸ AMIRKHANOV 1985.

Palynological samples collected from a net sinker and from the pits were processed at the palynological laboratory of the Georgian National Museum means of a standard method¹⁹.

The Radiocarbon Analysis (C¹⁴ AMS) was conducted in VILNIUS RADIOCARBON. There were studied the 2 samples of charcoal from pits. Radiocarbon dates were calibrated using the online calibration program OxCal 4.4.4²⁰ using atmospheric data from Paula J. Reimer *et alii*²¹.

Results

Stone complex. In 2024, 506 artifacts were found at the Khutsubani site (Table 1), out of which 47 were tools. The main raw materials used for making tools were flint and obsidian. However, basalt stones were also found in considerable quantities.

Techno-typological analysis of the stone collection reveals that a hand-pressing technique was used to produce blades and microblades. Unfortunately, no cores were found, except for a single conical core fragment. Additionally, only a few flakes and chunks and unprocessed blades were present among the finds, further supporting the previously expressed view that tool production did not take place on-site and that the items were likely brought in as finished products.

The majority of the tools collection consists of burins (Figure 3/1-3), primarily made on blades. Most are simple burins, which likely also functioned as multi-purpose tools, as some exhibit signs of notched and retouching.

Retouched blades and flakes hold a significant place among the tools (Figure 3/11-19), distinguished by their diversity. The retouch is generally subtle, with only occasional traces of deep, penetrating retouch. Notched blades, bladelets and microblades (Figure 3/20-24) should be grouped together, as both were primarily crafted from microblades. The recessing was performed from both the ventral and dorsal sides.

Endscrapers are represented by noteworthy specimens (Figure 3/4-9), primarily distinguished by oval and round forms with retouching on the dorsal side. Most scrapers were crafted using flakes.

The chisels are presented as single pieces (Figure 3/10). They are made using a variety of shapes and sizes of flakes.

The tool collection includes the smallest microblades with abrupt retouches (Figure 3/25-34). These were crafted from the medial parts of microblades, with fine retouching along their entire sides. Similar types of tools were used in hunting as projectile inserts.

The basalt stone collection includes axe fragments, spherical and oval stones, mortars etc. A particularly noteworthy item is a flat oval stone with one notched side (Figure 4). The artifact shows traces of a belt on the middle part of its surface, suggesting frequent practical use. Next, the palynological analysis also revealed interesting findings.

Palynology. Sample 1 was collected from Pit 1. Of arboreal, the palynological spectrum of the sample identified small amounts of pollen of spruce (*Picea*), walnut (*Juglans regia*) and common grape vine (*Vitis vinifera*). Of herbaceous plants, pollen clumps and single pollen grains of goosefoot (*Chenopodiaceae*) were encountered. Besides, pollen of aster (*Aster*), cichorium (*Cichorium*), thistle (*Carduus*) and representatives of cereals for sowing (*Poaceae*) were evidenced (Figure 5-6).

¹⁹ MOORE *et alii* 1991; GRICHUK, ZAKLINSKAYA 1948; GRIMM 2004.

²⁰ BRONK RAMSEY, LEE 2013.

²¹ REIMER *et alii* 2020.

Of non-pollen palynomorphs, abundance of residues of tracheal cells of wood, starch grains and phytoliths of plants was defined. Great amounts of crystals of salt and bone salt were identified as well. Volcanic ashes were evidenced in the sample collected from the pit (Figs. 5, 7). Of zoo material, remains of insects and eggs, belonging to a parasite worm *Ascaris* were found. In the same sample, fibers of flax and hemp were also identified (Figure 6, 8).

Palynology. **Sample 2** was collected from pit 2. Of arboreals, pollen of alder (*Alnus*) and hazel (*Corylus*) were defined. Small amounts of pollen, belonging to cereals for sowing, and spores of fern were also found (Figure 5, 9).

Of non-pollen palynomorphs, plenty of tracheal cells of wood, residues of plant phytoliths and starch grains were encountered. Along with spores of unidentified fungi, spore of fungus *Ustilina* (*Ustilina*) was evidenced in the same sample (Figs 5, 10). The identification was performed on the basis of work of van Geel B.²² Plenty of remains of fibers of linen fabric were found in pit 2 (Figure 5, 11).

Palynology. **Sample 3** was collected from the net sinker with organic residues attached to it, being found in the same cultural layer. The net sinker was examined under a scanning microscope. A sample was taken from the material attached to it. Later the sample was studied under the light microscope. Identification of flax fabric fiber in the spectrum of the material in question proved existence of flax thread (Figure 5, 12-13).

Radiocarbon. The age of the Khutsubani site was determined to be Early Holocene using relative²³ and absolute²⁴ dating methods. The new absolute dates (table 2) obtained as a result of the 2024 research, precisely determined the chronological framework of Khutsubani site.

Discussion and Conclusion.

Archaeological and laboratory work conducted at the Khutsubani site in 2024 provided us with important information that can confirm some of the previously expressed opinions.

First of all, the oval-shaped pits discovered in the ditch are noteworthy, as they are frequently observed at the Kobuleti site. These are considered to be supporting pits for the pillars of a residential house²⁵. In contrast to the Kobuleti, the study of the pit structure found in Khutsubani (oval, conical depth) and the detailed analysis of the material within it provide a basis for the assumption that we are dealing with the so-called "agricultural pit". This hypothesis is further supported by palynological research.

Relying upon the existence of crystals of salt and bone salt in the first pit, it was supposed that along with plants salted meat was kept in this pit. The identification of an egg of the parasite worm *Ascaris* proved existence of intestinal infections for the period in question. As a rule, the *Ascaris* lives in intestines of vertebrate animals. Humans, consuming meat of such animals, become infected. These data serve as additional evidence, proving that meat was included into the diet of the Khutsubani population during the period in question.

According to the techno-typological analysis of the stone industry, we conclude that the ancient inhabitants of Khutsubani used a hand-pressing technique to obtain blades and microblades. This is confirmed by both the core tablets and the narrow, thin shapes of the blades and microblades.

²² VAN HOEVE, HENDRIKSE 1998.

²³ BERDZENISHVILI, NEBIERIDZE 1964; GOGITIDZE 1978.

²⁴ CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2024b.

²⁵ CHKHATARASHVILI, MANKO 2020.

Among the tools, chisels, retouched and notched blades, and microblades with abrupt retouched occupy a leading position. All of these tools (throwing tools, spearheads) are associated with the manufacture of hunting tools, which closely mirrors the typology of the stone industry found at the neighbouring archaeological site of the Kobuleti. Furthermore, a use-wear-analysis of the tools from the Kobuleti²⁶ reveals that the tools, which are predominantly meat-processing knives show no signs of long-term use. In our opinion, a similar situation likely existed in Khutsubani, which, like the Kobuleti, was a temporary site (camp?) of Early Holocene hunters.

Among the stone materials, special attention should be given to the net sinker with one notched side. An interdisciplinary study of the organic remains preserved on the base confirms that local fishermen used flax thread to weave the nets. Flax (and also hemp) fabric fibres have previously been identified at sites in the Kintrishi Gorge²⁷ and, according to palynologists, these fibres were likely used to make clothing²⁸. The latest discoveries suggest that the people living along the Kintrishi River actively utilized its resources and were engaged in both fishing and hunting.

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Illustration list

Figure 1. Map showing the location of Khutsubani site (Photo by G. Chkhatarashvili).

Figure 2. Trench № 3 of Khutsubani site excavated in 2024 (Photo by G. Chkhatarashvili).

Figure 3. Graphical illustration of stone complexes (illustrated by N. Tskvitinidze).

Figure 4. Photo and Graphical illustration of Net sinker (illustrated by G. Chkhatarashvili).

Figure 5. The quantitative diagram of the palynological and non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) at Khutsubani.

Figure 6. Pollen grains of plants discovered in pit № 1: 1 - spruce (*Picea*); 2, 5 - walnut (*Juglans regia*); 3-4 - grapes (*Vitis vinifera*); 6 - undiff. pollen (*Undiff. pollen*); 7 - common chicory (*Cichorium*); 8 - thistle (*Carduus*); 9-10 - cereals for sowing (*Cereal*); 11-13 - representatives of the family of goosefoot (*Chenopodiaceae*) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

Figure 7. Non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) discovered in pit № 1: 1-3 - tracheal cells of wood; 4 - egg of the parasite worm ascaris (*Ascaris*); 5-7 - residues of volcanic ashes (tephra); 8-9 - salt crystal; 10 - bone salt crystal (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

Figure 8. Fabric fibers discovered in pit № 1: 1-2 - flax (*Linum*); 3 - hemp (*Cannabis*) (Photo by M. Chichinadze)

Figure 9. Pollen grains and spores of plants discovered in pit 2 of trench 3: 1- hazel (*Corylus*); 2-3 - alder (*Alnus*); 4 - fern (*Polypodiaceae*); 5 - cereals for sowing (*Cereal*) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

²⁶ CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2020.

²⁷ CHKHATARASHVILI 2023; CHKHATARASHVILI *et alii* 2023.

²⁸ KVAVADZE *et alii* 2009; 2010; KVAVADZE 2016.

Figure 10. Non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) discovered in pit № 2: 1-2 - plant phytoliths; 3-4 - undiff. ascospores; 5-7 - tracheal cells of wood; 6 - spore of *Ustilina* together with cells of charred wood (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

Figure 11. Textile fibers discovered in pit № 2: 1-3 - flax fibers (*Linum*); 4 - hemp (*Cannabis*) fiber (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

Figure 12-13. Fibers of linen fabric (*Flax*) discovered in the sample of net sinker (1-7) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

Table 1. Stone tools and remnant of production.

Table 2. Absolute dates of Khutsubani site.

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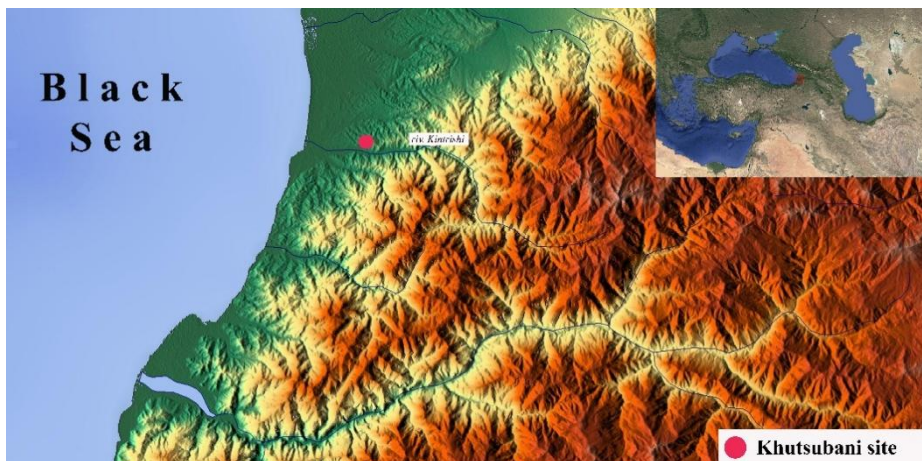


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Khutsubani site (Photo by G. Chkhatarashvili).



Figure 2. Trench № 3 of Khutsubani site excavated in 2024 (Photo by G. Chkhatarashvili).

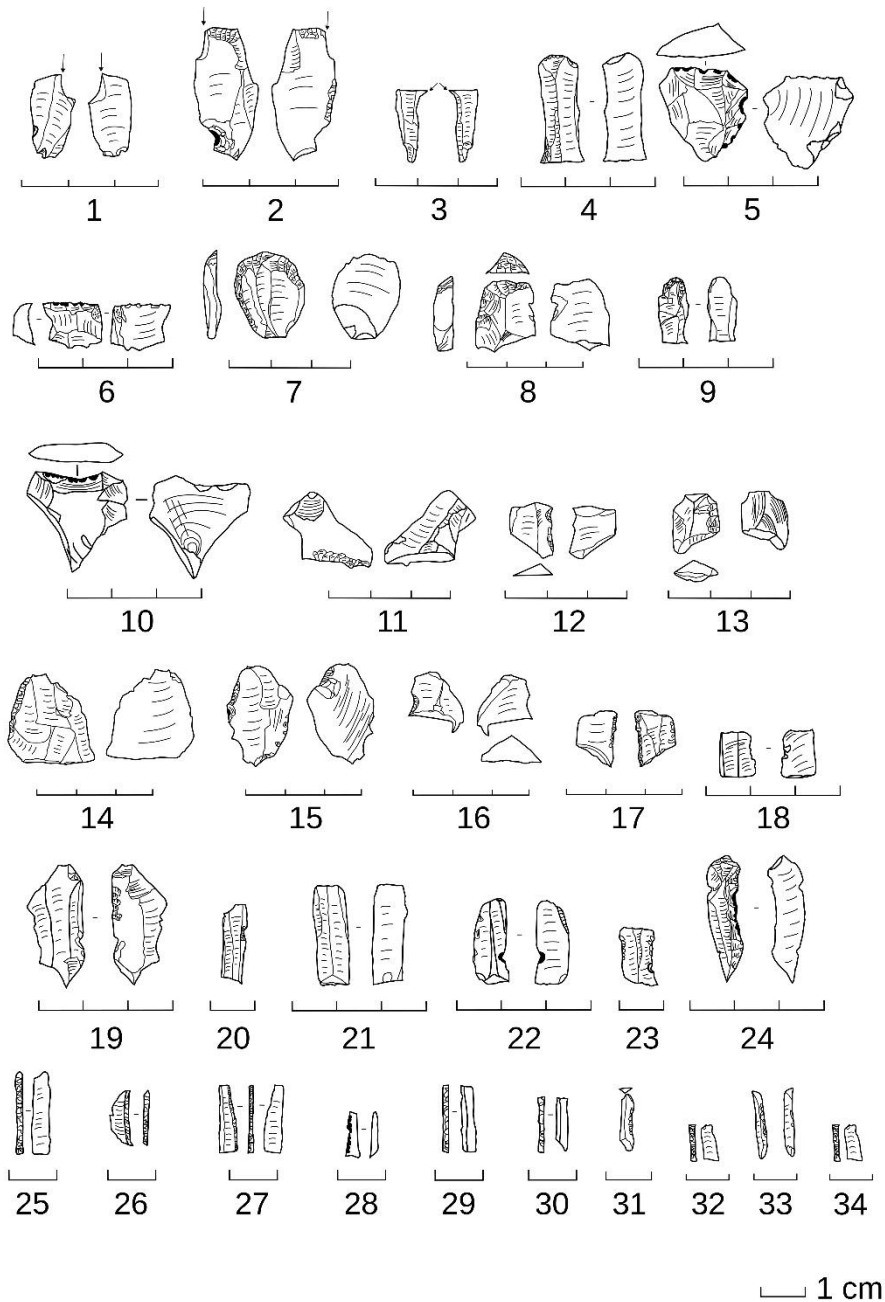


Figure 3. Graphical illustration of stone complexes (illustrated by N. Tskvitinidze).

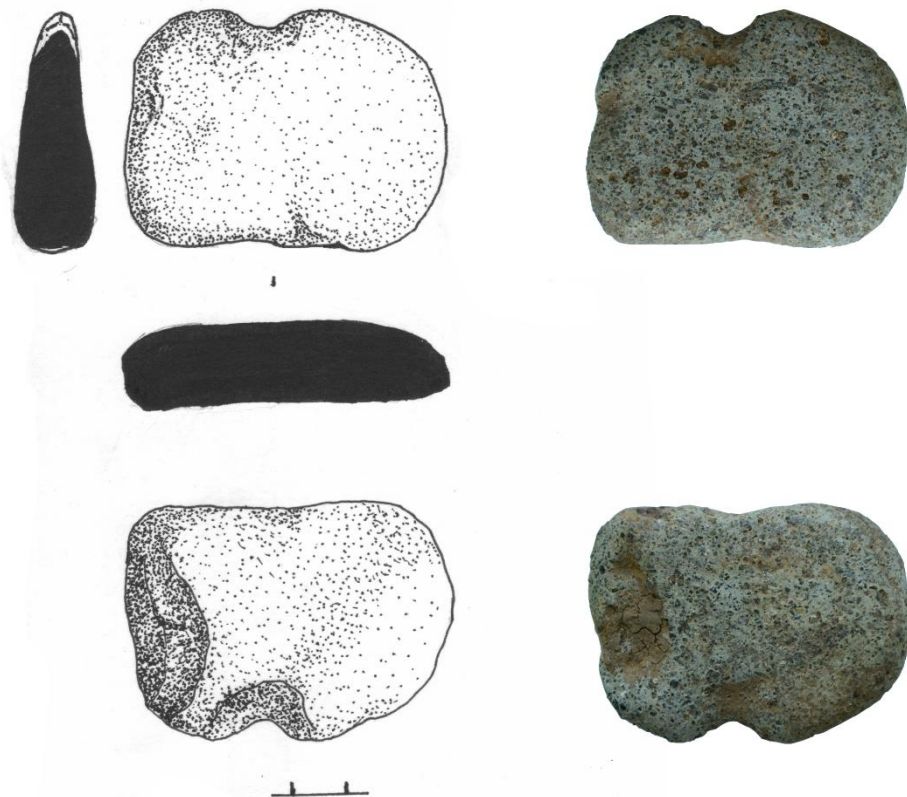


Figure 4. Photo and Graphical illustration of net sinker (illustrated by G. Chkhatarashvili).



Figure 5. The quantitative diagram of the pollen and non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) at Khutsubani.

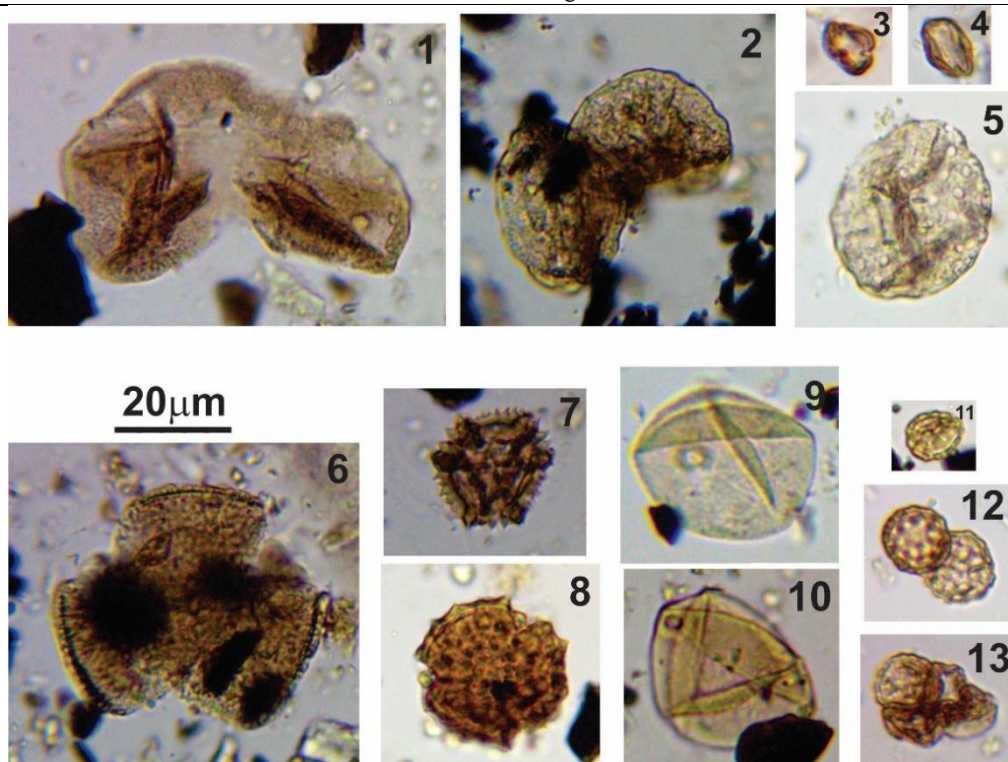


Figure 6. Pollen grains of plants discovered in pit N° 1: 1 - spruce (*Picea*); 2, 5 - walnut (*Juglans regia*); 3-4 - grape (*Vitis vinifera*); 6 - undifferentiated pollen (Undiff. pollen); 7 - common chicory (*Cichorium*); 8 - thistle (*Carduus*); 9-10 - cereals for sowing (*Cerealia*); 11-13 - representatives of the family of goosefoot (*Chenopodiaceae*) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

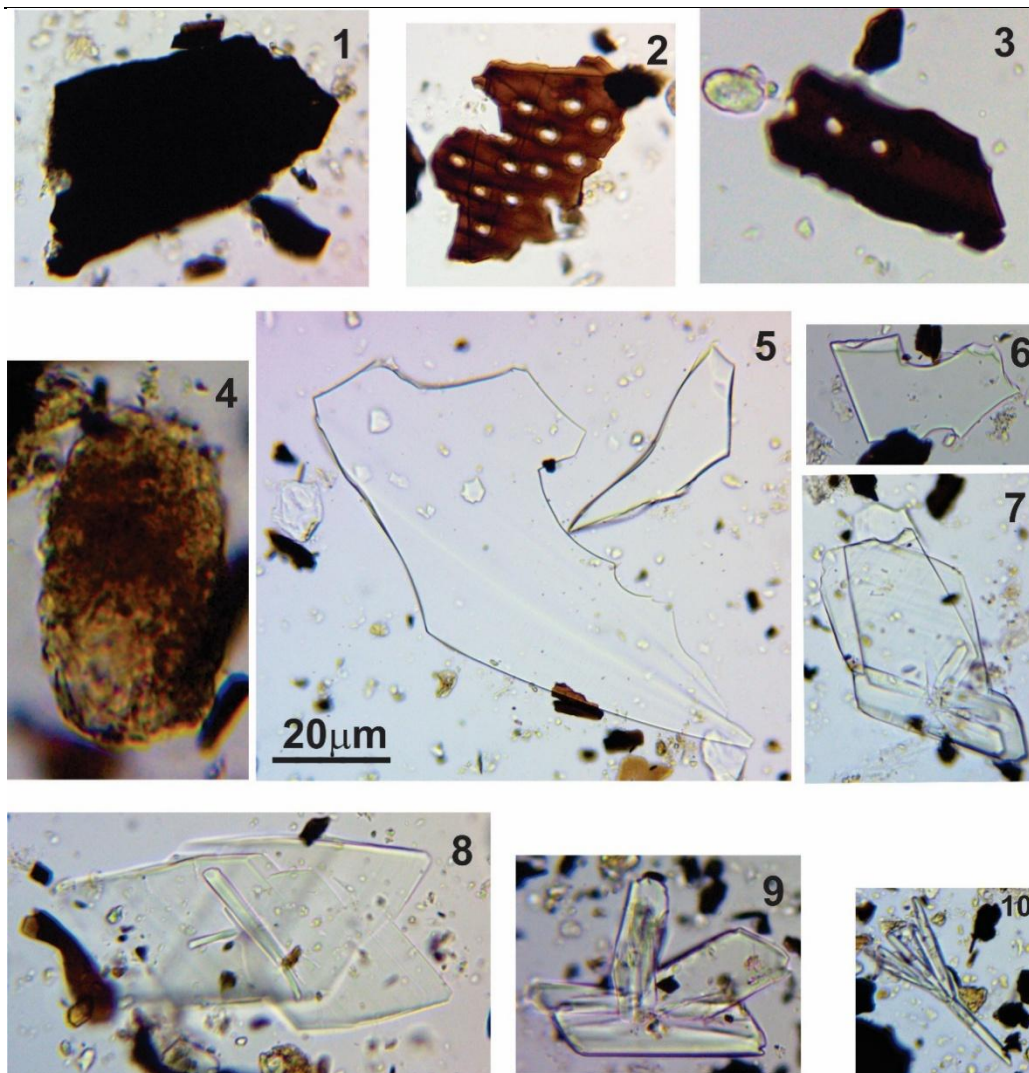


Figure 7. Non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) discovered in pit № 1: 1-3 – tracheal cells of wood; 4 – egg of the parasite worm *ascaris* (*Ascaris*); 5-7 – residues of volcanic ashes (tephra); 8-9 – salt crystal; 10 – bone salt crystal. (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

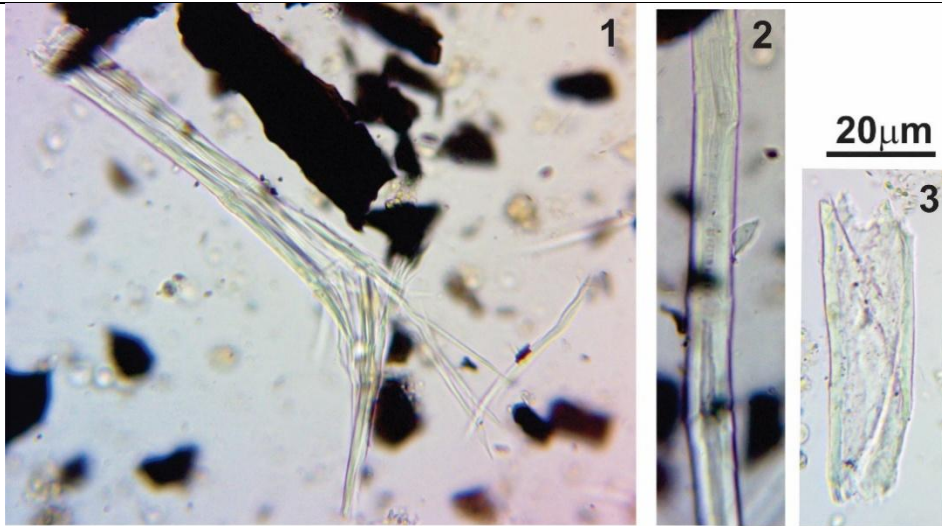


Figure 8. Fabric fibers discovered in pit № 1: 1-2 - flax (*Linum*); 3 - hemp (*Cannabis*) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

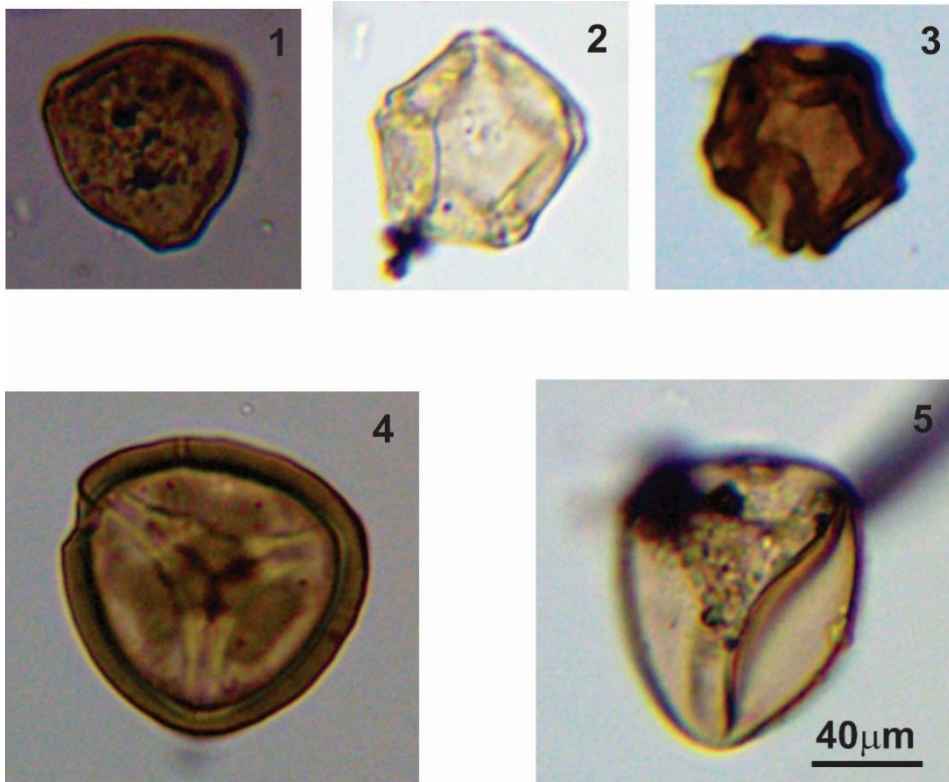


Figure 9. Pollen grains and spores of plants discovered in pit 2 of trench 3: 1- hazel (*Corylus*); 2-3 - alder (*Alnus*); 4 - fern (Polypodiaceae); 5 – cereals for sowing (*Cerealia*) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

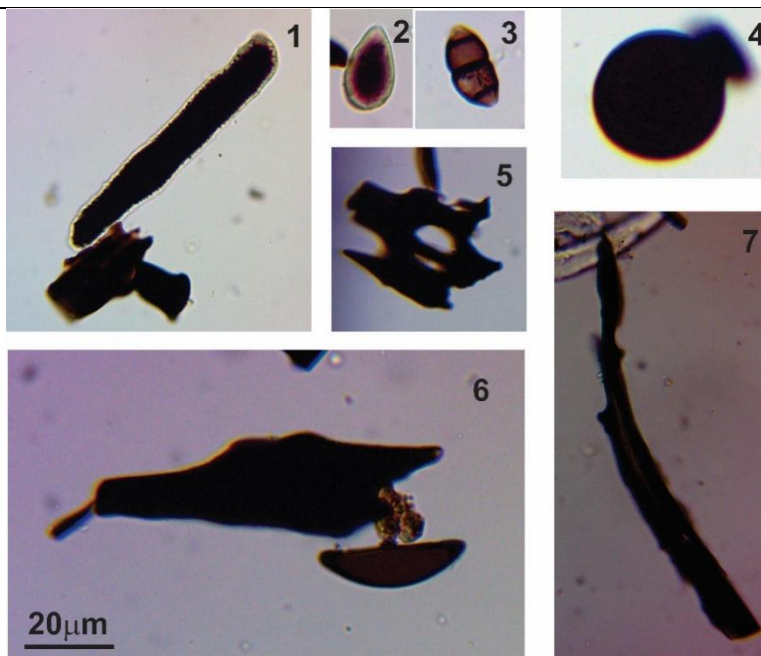


Figure 10. Non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) discovered in pit № 2: 1-2 - plant phytoliths; 3-4 - undiff. ascospores; 5-7 - tracheal cells of wood; 6 - spore of *Ustilina* together with cells of charred wood (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

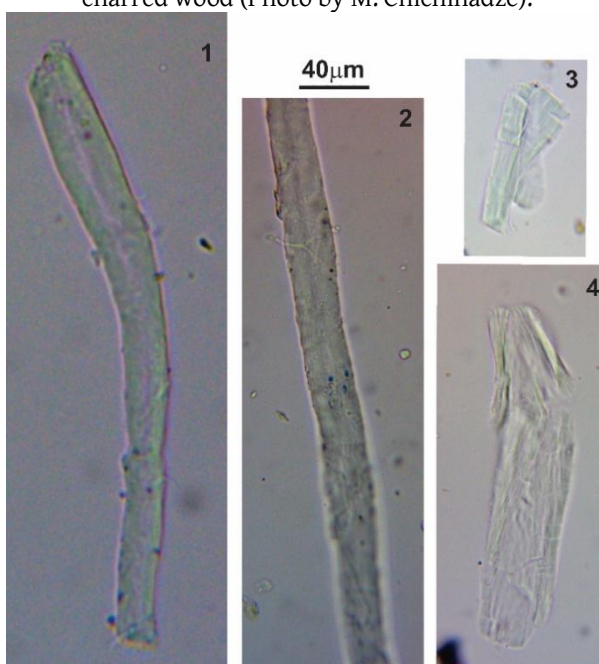


Figure 11. Textile fibers discovered in pit № 2: 1-3 - flax fibers (*Linum*); 4 - hemp (*Cannabis*) fiber (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

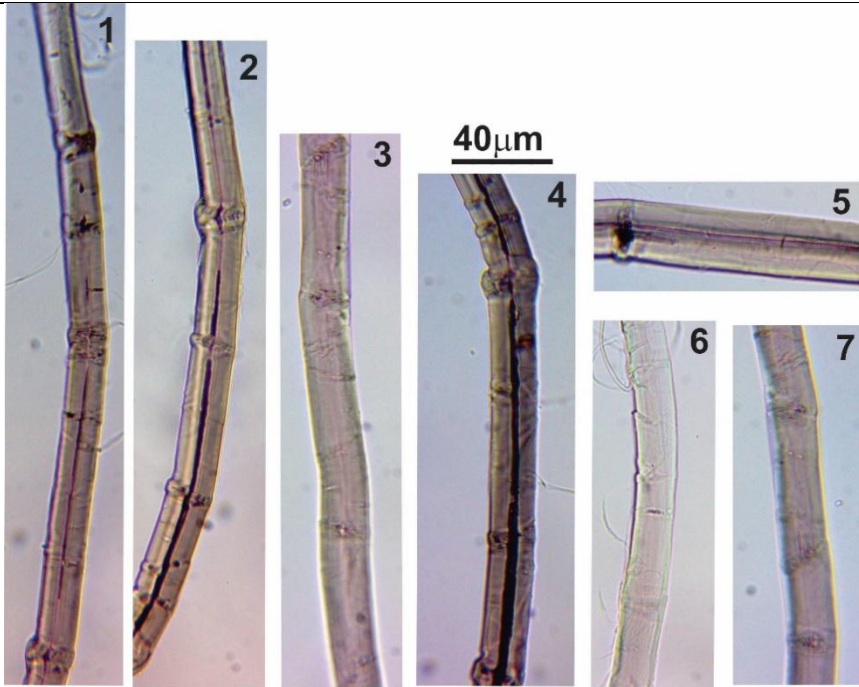


Figure 12. Fibers of flax fabric discovered in the sample of net sinker (1-7) (Photo by M. Chichinadze).



Figure 13. Fibers of linen fabric (*Linum*) discovered in the sample of net sinker (Photo by M. Chichinadze).

Table 1. Stone tools and remnant of production.

Stone complexes	Flint	Obsidian	Total
Core	0	0	0
Tablets	1	0	1
Blades	1	0	1
Proximal parts of blades	3	1	4
Medial parts of blades	3	5	8
Distal parts of blades	2	1	3
Bladelets	1	2	3
Proximal parts of bladelets	4	6	10
Medial parts of bladelets	5	7	12
Distal parts of bladelets	1	1	2
Microblades	3	5	8
Proximal parts of microblades	5	10	15
Medial parts of microblades	7	15	22
Distal parts of microblades	2	3	5
Primary flakes	5	0	5
Secondary flakes	80	55	135
Chunks	11	0	11
Cheeps	156	59	215
Burin spalls	2	1	3
Tools	11	35	47
Burins	2	11	13
Scrapers	2	2	4
Retouched Blade	5	0	5
Retouched Bladelet	1	7	8
Retouched microblades	0	4	4
Notched bladelet	0	1	1
Notched microblade	0	1	1
Chisels	0	1	1
Retouched flakes	0	2	2
Backed microblades	1	6	7
Basalt Net sinker	0	0	1
Total	303	202	506

Table 2. Absolute dates of Khutsubani site.

№	Layer	Dates (BP)	Dates 95.4 % (BC)	Dates 68.3 % (BC)	Lab. Index	Sample	Reference
¹	Fit №1	9491±42	9121-8635	9113-8712	FTMC-ZS22-1	Charcoal	First published
²	Fit №2	9534±45	9146-8737	9120-8769	FTMC-ZS22-2	Charcoal	First published

Traces of the Place of Water in Phrygian Religious Life

Yusuf POLAT¹, Rahşan TAMSÜ POLAT²

Abstract. *Since prehistoric times, people have preferred to settle near water sources. Because of its importance for human life, water has been given deep meaning in different periods and cultures, considered 'sacred' and playing a key role in religious life, becoming the centerpiece of rituals. In the religious life of the Phrygians, one of the Iron Age civilizations in Central Anatolia, water and water sources also occupied a privileged place. However, there is currently a lack of direct information on the relationship of water to the religion and religious practices of the Phrygians. In this article, Phrygian rock monuments, sacred sites and a group of reliefs depicting the Mother Goddess Matar in the form of stelae, and the ritual actions of the goddess called Kybele and Magna Matar, who was revered as the Phrygian Goddess in the Greek and Roman Periods, in relation to water in ancient sources, question the relationship of the Mother Goddess with water resources in the Phrygians. In addition, it is suggested that the monuments with shaft, which are distinguished from other Phrygian rock-cut monuments by their round holes drilled on the back wall of the niches and the wells connected to these holes, which continue to the base of the roof of the facade, serve a different ritual in Phrygian religious practices, and the importance of water in Phrygian culture is emphasised.*

Rezumat. *Încă din timpurile preistorice, oamenii au preferat să se stabilească în apropierea surselor de apă. Datorită importanței sale pentru viața umană, apa a căpătat o semnificație profundă în diferite perioade și culturi, fiind considerată „sacra” și jucând un rol cheie în viața religioasă, devenind astfel piesa centrală a ritualurilor. În viața religioasă a frigienilor, una dintre civilizațiile din epoca fierului din Anatolia Centrală, apa și sursele de apă au ocupat, de asemenea, un loc privilegiat. Cu toate acestea, în prezent există o lipsă de informații directe referitoare la relația apei cu religia și practicile religioase ale frigienilor. În acest articol, monumentele rupestre frigiene, locurile sacre și un grup de reliefuri care o înfățișează pe Zeița Mamă Matar sub formă de stelae, precum și acțiunile rituale ale zeiței numite Kybele și Magna Matar, care era venerată ca Zeița Frigiană în perioadele greacă și romană, în raport cu apa în sursele antice, pun sub semnul întrebării relația Zeiței Mamă cu resursele de apă la frigieni. În plus, se sugerează că monumentele cu puț, care se disting de alte monumente frigiene săpate în stâncă prin găurile rotunde forate pe peretele din spate al nișelor și prin fântânile conectate la aceste găuri, care se continuă până la baza acoperișului fațadei, servesc unui ritual diferit în practicile religioase frigiene, subliniindu-se importanța apei în cultura frigiană.*

Keywords: Phrygians, Matar, Water, Ritual, Shaft Monuments.

Water is a chemical compound that is necessary for all living things to sustain their vital activities. Humanity has cared about water from the moment it has existed throughout history, realizing that it is necessary for the continuation of life, and preferring regions close to water resources while choosing living areas since prehistoric times. Due to its importance in human life, deep meanings have been attributed to water in different periods and cultures. Thus, water has been accepted as “sacred” and has taken its place in these practices by forming the most important step of rituals in religious life.

On earth, soil has been regarded as the protector, harboring and nourishing living creatures, and water as the source of life. While the water in the soil emerges in the form of

¹ Associate Professor, Anadolu University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Archaeology, Tepebaşı/ESKİŞEHİR, TURKIYE, ypolat@anadolu.edu.tr; ORCID: 0000-0002-1455-8318.

² Proffesor, Anadolu University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Archaeology, Tepebaşı/ESKİŞEHİR, TURKIYE, rahsantp@anadolu.edu.tr; ORCID: 0000-0002-5002-9560.

springs, rivers and lakes, it also reaches the soil from the sky as rain and enables plants to reproduce. This vital cycle formed the main religious elements of ancient societies³ and was adopted as a cult element in various cultures and societies throughout history. While water symbolizes both death and rebirth, contact with water signifies revitalization and fertility⁴.

Anatolia, surrounded by seas on three sides, is home to important river resources as well as settlements in the valleys between mountain ranges and mountains. This geography attracts attention with its rich flora and fauna as well as its underground riches. Anatolia's strategic position in the world has made it an ideal living space for every period in historical continuity.

Although the choice of Anatolian lands as settling area dates back to prehistoric times, it is known that there was an intensive habitation especially in the Bronze Age in the Central Anatolian Region. In the second half of the second millennium BC, a period of drought affected Anatolia with the cooling of the climate, and the sea level fell below the present level⁵.

The rainy and hot climate that prevailed for a short period at the end of the second millennium BC was replaced by a cool and dry period in the first half of the first millennium BC (900-450 BC). These climatic changes increased the importance of water resources and became determining factors in the selection of settlement areas for basic activities such as agriculture and animal husbandry.

In the Halys (Kızılırmak) River basin, while the Hittite State, which reached the level of a strong state, was in existence, by the end of the second millennium BC, new immigrant groups, including the Phrygians,⁶ migrating from the southeast of Europe, especially from Macedonia and Thracia⁷ settled in the Halys and Sangarios (Sakarya) basins.

The Phrygians, who entered the interior of Anatolia with migrations lasting approximately 400 years, have existed in a wide geographical area as a political power centered in Central Anatolia since the 9th century BC⁸. The area under the influence of the Phrygians was called the Phrygia Region after this culture lost its effectiveness and withdrew from the stage of history.

The most important water resources of the Phrygia Region are the Halys (Kızılırmak) and Sangarios (Sakarya) rivers. The Sakarya River, which originates near Eskisehir, is one of the most important water sources of Central Anatolia, and while it was called Sahirija or Sahiriya by the Hittites⁹, it is referred to as Sangarios in ancient sources¹⁰. The Tembris (Porsuk) and Kappadoks (Delice) rivers¹¹, Seyit Su (Parthenios Stream), Sarısu (Bathys, Hermos) Stream and many small streams contributing to these streams formed the important fresh water streams of the mountainous region¹². These water resources increased the water potential of the region

³ ÖKSE 2006, 47.

⁴ ELİADE 1992, 182.

⁵ ÖKSE 1998, 305.

⁶ BARNETT 1967, 3.

⁷ Hdt. VII, 73, 385; Str. XII, 3, 20, 550, 405; Plin. NH. V, 41, 145, 329.

⁸ The present borders of the Phrygians are Ankara Province and its surroundings: Çorum, Tokat and Kırşehir to the east of the Kızılırmak River; Samsun to the north; Niğde and Konya to the south; Burdur and Elmalı Plain to the southwest; Eskişehir, Afyonkarahisar and Kütahya to the west, and Bandırma to the northwest (see TÜFEKÇİ SİVAS 1999, 34).

⁹ ÜNSAL 2012, 211.

¹⁰ Str. XII. 3, 7.

¹¹ Sevin states that the name of Delice stream, the largest tributary of Kızılırmak, is Kappadoks and the name Kappadokia originates from the name of this stream (see SEVİN 2007, 216).

¹² CHAPUT 1941, 91-92; HASPELS 1971, 24-25; SİVAS 1999, 9-10.

and contributed to the development of the surrounding settlements. These water resources were among the main factors affecting the settlement potential and density of Central Anatolia in prehistoric and historical times, and thus these lands have been home to many cultures almost continuously.

Water, which is necessary for human beings to sustain their vital activities, has also formed the most important part of religious teachings and rituals in many cultures. Properties such as cleansing, purification and treatment have increased the meanings attributed to water and water resources, giving it a privileged sacredness. These multifaceted religious meanings attributed to water have been the scene of worship around water sources and rivers in the historical process, and the water source has expressed life and continuity¹³.

In antiquity, nature itself and the natural events that took place, which were considered sacred, were personified, and the tendency to deify these events and phenomena increased, as well as the diversity of worship. In almost all the mythologies of ancient societies, the water that brings fertility is placed under the control of the divine power that can utilize it in a beneficial and correct way¹⁴. In rituals, this idea finds its expression in the expectation of kings to perform ceremonies at major seasonal festivals designed to guarantee water and rain for the coming year¹⁵.

The water-related rock monuments¹⁶ found near rivers¹⁷, and Hittite tablets dating to the Hittite Period in the Bronze Age in Central Anatolia¹⁸ provide important information about the importance of water resources in culture and the religious activity of water. Among this information are the existence of rituals of cleansing and purification with water before divination rituals, the necessity of washing with water and being physically and spiritually cleansed in order to be able to enter the temples, which were the home of the gods, to pray, to offer sacrifices, and to appear before the king, who was identified with the gods¹⁹.

The privileged place of water and water resources in the Phrygian culture, one of the Iron Age Civilizations, can be understood by the locations of settlement areas and cult monuments²⁰.

The Phrygians, who chose the Central Anatolia Region—with its fertile agricultural lands, water resources, and areas suitable for settlement—as their habitation area, constructed open-air cult monuments of varying architectural types and sizes in the

¹³ ELIADE 2003, 206.

¹⁴ In ancient Mesopotamian beliefs, it was believed that Abzu, the creator of the world, which means the water of life, fed the springs and rivers. Enki, the chief god of the Sumerians, was the “lord of Abzu” and was equated with Ea, the water god of Mesopotamian societies (see ÖKSE 2006, 48).

¹⁵ GASTER 2000, 321-322.

¹⁶ ERBİL, MOUTON 2012, 53.

¹⁷ Especially during the period of drought, in the late 2nd millennium BC, many water monuments of the Hittite Period were built near water sources in and around present-day Konya.

¹⁸ The reason for the construction of these monuments on the roads is to provide water for the travellers, to show political power to the neighbours, to ensure political dominance against the rebellions in the region, to irrigate the agricultural areas of the dams and ponds in the agricultural areas, and to request water from the gods due to drought and famine (see BAHAR 2005; 2017, 865; TURGUT 2015).

¹⁹ Purification was the first condition for people not to be punished by the gods; the temple was the house of the god and the priests were his officials (see MURAT 2012, 126). Purification was also one of the most important religious rituals of ancient communities (see KÜLAHLI 2024, 94).

²⁰ Barnett, taking into account the proximity of the rock monuments to some springs and streams, looks for signs of a water source cult in the rock monuments, which turn out to be open-air temples of the mother goddess, and assumes that these monuments are religious monuments related to the water source cult, as in the Hittite examples. Barnett's view alerts us to the existence of a water source cult in Phrygia (see BARNETT 1953, 80-82).

region known as Phrygia Epiktetos. This area corresponds to the western part of today's Central Anatolia Region²¹ and encompasses the valleys to the south and southeast of the zone situated²² between the present-day provinces of Eskişehir, Afyonkarahisar, and Kütahya, which they called "Matar," in locations where the rocky plateaus were suitable for their goddesses.

The presence of relief depictions of the goddess in a group of facades, rock niches and in the middle of *stelae* found around Ankyra (Ankara) and Gordion (Yassihöyük) constitutes the most concrete archaeological evidence that the Phrygians placed this goddess at the center of their beliefs in Anatolia, in contrast to the polytheism of other Anatolian communities²³. Apart from these concrete but limited archaeological evidences, many issues such as the life of the Phrygians, their relations with other cultures and their religious practices are still mysterious. For this reason, researchers working on Phrygian religion and cult practices have searched for traces of cult practices in the religious life of the Phrygians in predecessor, contemporary and successor cultures in line with the available sources of information.

The symbols found in the Phrygian expressions of divinity include the Hittites, the most active people of Central Anatolia in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, the Urartians and the Late Hittites, who settled in the east and southeast of Anatolia, contemporary with the Phrygians in the Early Iron Age. Among these cultures, the importance of water and the meaning attributed to water for the Hittites is clearly manifested by the rock monuments related to water, especially in rocky areas, many of which have relief depictions²⁴.

In the Konya Plain, which was a center of agriculture and farming for the Anatolian states as it is today²⁵, the rock relief dated to the Late Hittite Period built on the rock in the area of the İvriz Stream and its source, which plays an important role for the agricultural activities of the region, is interpreted as the scene of a ritual (i.e. the offering of agricultural products - grapes and wheat - obtained with the sacred water), while the monument built next to the water source clearly expresses the meaning attributed to water. It is also stated that spring water comes out of the rocks where the Ambarderesi Monument with the depictions of Tarhunzas and Warpalawas is located, near the Ereğli district of Konya²⁶.

As in many other societies, water and water resources played an important role for the Urartu Kingdom²⁷. In fact, this culture created many dams, canals and ponds, and water resources, plants, mountains, trees and rocks were considered sacred in this civilization where nature came to the forefront in the religious structure, and among these sacred elements, the

²¹ Yazılıkaya, Doğanlı and Kümbet Valleys approximately 70 km south of Eskişehir Province, Köhnüş and Karababa Valleys approximately 30 km north of Afyonkarahisar Province, Doğuluşah Valley near Doğuluşah Village, one of the villages of the Central District of Kütahya Province, Fındık Valley near Fındık Village, İnli Valleys near Ovacık Village.

²² ROLLER 1999, 66.

²³ Information on Phrygian religion and its ritual practices is limited to a few Greek literary texts and a small number of surviving Old Phrygian cult inscriptions. In this case, the main evidence for the culture is the archaeological finds from the cult centres (see ROLLER 2012, 202).

²⁴ For some of the important Hittite monument see NAUMANN 1974 (Eflatunpınar); HARMANŞAH *et alii* 2014, 13; HARMANŞAH, JOHNSON, 2014, 377-394 (Yalbur Rock Monument); BAHAR *et alii* 1996, 48 (Hatip Su); BAHAR *et alii* 1996, 52; TURGUT 2015, 341 (Köylütölu Monument); NEVE 1971, 35-36 (Fraktin Monument); DİNÇOL 1982, 115; DARGA 1992, 178-181 (İmamkulu Monument); BAHAR *et alii* 1996, 46 (Sirkeli Monument).

²⁵ BAHAR 2017, 866.

²⁶ TURGUT 2015, 348, 345.

²⁷ Among the group of gods in Urartian religion is Suinina, the god of the sea and waters (see PİOTROVSKİY 1965, 46).

tree of life symbol became the most prominent element of plant symbolism in Urartian religion²⁸.

The connections between the sacred mountain concept, water sources, predatory animal symbols and religious ceremonies, which are prominent symbols in the Phrygian expressions of divinity, are also prominent in the aforementioned cultures. However, it should not be ignored that these concepts continue to recur in different cultures with different time periods and that each concept is actually in the “basic consciousness” of the peoples living in the region, rather than having a sacred meaning specific to a single ethnic group²⁹.

Although some parallels between the Hittites and Phrygians, such as the cult of water and springs, show that there are obvious similarities in Hittite and Phrygian religious and cultural traditions³⁰, it is not yet clear how the transmission of these religious and cultural values was carried out. However, the temples and sanctuaries seen near water sources and springs show that water has always been the main source of life for Anatolian peoples. On the other hand, there is no information about the direct relationship of water in Phrygian religion and religious practices. However, the Phrygian rock monuments found near water sources³¹ and a group of reliefs depicting the Mother Goddess Matar in the form of *stelae*³² and the knowledge of the ritual actions performed in ancient sources related to water³³ of the goddess called Kybele and Magna Matar (who was revered as the Phrygian Goddess in the Greek and Roman Periods), make it necessary to question the relationship of the Mother Goddess with water resources in the Phrygians. In this direction, it is necessary to correctly interpret the ancient sources and archaeological data available in contemporary and successor cultures.

The cult monuments that the Phrygians equipped the valleys with consist of facades, altars and niches. The rock-cut monuments, called facades, generally reflect the front facade of the building model called “megaron”, which we have seen examples of in Gordion, the capital of the Phrygians, with hill acroter, triangular pediment, gable roof and carved on the steep surface of the bedrock. These facades, which are generally common but differ in details, are monumental and small in size. The monumental facades, with their large courtyards in front, side spaces and galleries opening to the courtyard, are special areas dedicated to the cult of the Mother Goddess, which should be considered as a large “open-air cult complex”. In almost all monumental facades, the triangular pediment and facade are decorated with geometric and floral motifs. The most important part of the facades is the central niche symbolizing the gate, in which a statue of the goddess or a relief of her is placed. In some facades, the relief of the Mother Goddess was carved inside the niche, thereby simulating a continuous epiphany, that

²⁸ BAŞTÜRK 2009, 135.

²⁹ ROLLER 1999, 44.

³⁰ ÖZKAYA 1996, 104, fn. 42-43.

³¹ Both rock facades and rock-cut altars, rock idols and rock niches are located near water sources.

³² At the capital Gordion (TEMİZER 1959, 186, pl. 39; MELLINK 1983, 349-50, pl. 70; NAUMANN 1983, 64, cat. no. 19, pl. 5,3; PRAYON 1987, 203, cat. no. 15, pl. 5c; ROLLER 1999, 72, fig. 7), Ankara/Bahçelievler (BULUÇ 1986, 426; ROLLER 1998, 43; BULUÇ 1988, 18) and Etlik (NAUMANN 1983, 65-66, cat. no. 20, pl. 5,4; PRAYON 1987, 204, cat. no. 27, pl. 9b), none of these are “in situ”. The relief from Gordion was found outside the citadel in the bed of the Sangarios (Sakarya) River.

³³ The name of the goddess is used in Palaeo-Phrygian inscriptions as “Matar”, “Mother”, with the epithet Matar “kubileya/kubelaya”, “areyastin” (BRIXHE, LEJEUNE 1984), matar: M-01 c, M-01 d I, M 01 d II, M-01e, W-01 b, W03, W-06; kubileya/kubelaya: W-04, B-01; areyastin: W-01 a. The Phrygian cult of the Mother Goddess was also adopted by the Greek and Roman world and integrated into their own worship. The goddess, who is referred to as “Μήτηρ” (Mother), Agdistis or Agdistis “Meter Thea” “Μήτηρ Ῥ Θεά” (Mother Goddess) in ancient sources, was called “Meter Megale”, Megale Theia”, “Μεγάλη Θεία” (Great Goddess and more commonly Kybele) by the Greeks and “Magna Matar” (Great Mother) by the Romans (ÇAPAR 1978, 12, fn. 1; ROLLER 1999, 240-241; 244-245; 144; 189).

is, the appearance of the goddess to those who believe in her³⁴. There is also a group of facades in the center of the niches without the relief of the Mother Goddess. For these monuments, it can be assumed that portable statues of the goddess were placed in the niches in the center of the monument at certain periods, or it can be suggested that the believer worshipped and became one with his goddess by thinking that the goddess was behind the closed door, that is, in the essence of the rock³⁵.

Among the Phrygian rock-cut monuments, the first in terms of numerical density are the altars³⁶ with one or more steps in front and behind these steps a round head, in some examples two heads and quadrangular body(s), or a relief-shaped idol depicted in the form of a curve, or an architectural device to place the idol, which is thought to symbolize the Mother Goddess. The steps most probably symbolize the ascent to the presence of the god or goddess, creating a bond between the believer and his/her god³⁷.

The niches consisting of quadrangular and oval shallow cavities cut into the steep faces of the rocks are the simplest monuments in terms of architectural features compared to the Phrygian facades and altars. Some of the niches, most of which are easily accessible from the ground, found in the areas where traces of Phrygian culture have been identified in the geography called Mountainous Phrygia³⁸, have slots on the back wall, ceiling or floor where the Mother Goddess figurine is placed³⁹. In front of some of the niches there are also small platforms where offerings were probably placed for the goddess. In a way, it is possible to interpret these monuments as the simplest, plainest reflections of the niches in the facades⁴⁰.

The Phrygian rock-cut monuments were located at the entrances of the valleys on the road routes, in the castles built on rocky plateaus, at the entrances of the castles and in the rocky areas at the skirts of the castles, near the rock tombs. In addition, almost all of these monuments were built on rocks near a water source, close to lands where agriculture and animal husbandry, the lifeblood of agriculture, could be carried out. This situation reveals the necessity to consider that the monuments may be directly related to water in religious practices (Figure 1).

Although our current knowledge of Phrygian religious practices is limited, the fact that Cybele and her rites are described as Phrygian in Roman sources makes it easier to understand Phrygian religion, since it is possible that Phrygian religious practices were also transferred to

³⁴ The examples with goddess reliefs in a niche are Gökçeğüney Monument, Keskaya Monument No. 2, Kümbet Berberini Monument, Kuzören Tavukpınarı-Bel Mevkii Monument in Günyüzü District, Aslankaya Monument, Büyük Kapıkaya Monument, Küçük Kapıkaya Monument, and Kumcaboğaz Kapıkaya Monument in Afyonkarahisar.

³⁵ TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 185-186.

³⁶ TAMSÜ-POLAT 2008, 439-440, figs. 2-6; 2010, 207-208, figs. 3-7.

³⁷ Rock-cut altars of various forms and sizes were found at Yazılıkaya/Midas Kale on the borders of Eskişehir (Fig. 15-16), Menekşe Kayalar on the borders of Afyonkarahisar, and Fındık Asarkale on the borders of Kütahya. Outside the borders of the Mountainous Phrygia Region, the Dümrek Village in the Mihalıcık District of Eskişehir, the Tekören Village northeast of the Sivrihisar District (DEVREKER, VERMAULEN 1991, 114, figs. 9-10; DEVREKER *et alii* 1995, 131, pl. 1; TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 168, pl. 139 a-b, 140) and Zey Village in the North (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 2005, 221, pl. 8-9) and Kalehisar Hill of Çorum/Alacahöyük in the east of the Halys (AKURGAL 1955, 62, 96, fig. 55, pl. 44; PRAYON 1987, 47, 202, no. 9) are other important centres where Phrygian rock-cut altars have been identified.

³⁸ TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 191-192.

³⁹ In the Deliktaş niche at the southern entrance of the Deliktaş Fortress on the borders of Kütahya, there is a relief of a goddess in front of the back wall of the niche, as on the facades.

⁴⁰ Examples of niches can be seen at Yazılıkaya/Midas Kale in Eskişehir (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 175-176, pl. 159-161), Köhnüş Valley in Afyonkarahisar (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 176-177, pl. 162), and Fındık Asar Kale in Kütahya (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 177-178, pl. 163-165).

Rome⁴¹. Accordingly, there is information in Roman sources that water had a ritual equivalent in the cult of the mother goddess. Herodianus reports that in the ceremonies held on the banks of the Gallos River in Pessinus in Phrygia, it is rumored that the idol of the goddess Cybele was washed on the last day of the ceremony⁴². The washing ceremony of the goddess called “*Lavatio*” and the day of mourning for the goddess (*Dies Sanguinis*) were also of Phrygian origin, which Showerman states with references to Ovidius and Arrianos⁴³. It is known that the “*Lavatio*”, that is, the washing and cleansing stage, was the most important part of ceremonies⁴⁴, which took place between 15-28 March in the Roman world in the name of Attis and Cybele at certain intervals. In this celebration, on 27 March, the statue of the goddess, her terracotta chariot and a procession accompanied by a Phrygian priest with *quindecimvirs* at the head, were taken to the Almo Stream, which flows into the Tiber River outside Rome, and washed there⁴⁵. At the end of the 1st century AD Arrian states that certain features of the annual festival in honor of the goddess were carried out according to Phrygian tradition, while Servius mentions that the Romans were governed by Phrygian worship⁴⁶.

Ritual contact with water is interpreted as a behavior symbolizing regeneration. While entering the water symbolizes rebirth, leaving the water is seen as a repetition of the act of creation. Water, which grants rebirth in the rituals of rejuvenation, heals in magical rituals, and guarantees birth after death in funeral ceremonies, is seen as an element that gathers all potential forces in itself and symbolizes life with its energy. At the same time, water has the ability to purify, recreate and rebirth. The person who enters the water is just like a sinless child⁴⁷. In addition, in many cultures and beliefs from past to present, water has been accepted as the basic element of cleanliness, which is a prerequisite for worship, and similar practices have been passed down from generation to generation in many cultures⁴⁸.

At Midas Fortress in Eskişehir, where the most famous examples of Phrygian cult monuments are found, the excavations of the first period yielded fragments of statues belonging to two women whose lower torsos were recovered and which are probably goddesses (Figure 2). One of these statue fragments was found in the place where the spring water called Çeşme C, which is located to the northeast of the castle today, flowed and was organized as a sanctuary⁴⁹ and the other one was found in the stairs (staircase B) belonging to the water cistern, also to the northeast of the castle. The existence of water-related rituals of God and Goddess statues in many cultures other than the Phrygians⁵⁰, and the tradition of washing the statue of the goddess, an important ceremony in the cult of Magna Mater, who was revered as a Phrygian goddess transferred to Rome, provide important information about the possibility that the rituals performed with water in the Phrygians may be the source of inspiration. In

⁴¹ ÖZKAYA 1996, 106.

⁴² HERODIAN. I. 11.2

⁴³ SHOWERMAN 1969, 19; ÇAPAR 1978, 179.

⁴⁴ SHOWERMAN 1969, 56-57; VERMASEREN 1977, 113-114.

⁴⁵ ÇAPAR 1978, 181.

⁴⁶ ÇAPAR 1978, 180, fn.51.

⁴⁷ ELIADE 2003, 196-197, 202.

⁴⁸ For the Hittites, the first condition of worship was cleanliness. In order to enter the house of the gods, that is, the temple, to pray, and to offer sacrifices, one had to be clean (MURAT 2012).

⁴⁹ ÖZKAYA 1996, 99-100.

⁵⁰ For the Mesopotamian cultures, for example, it is stated that the statue of Dumuzi was washed and then oiled in the ritual held in July (MCCALL 2011, 109; KIYMET 2014, 25). In Hittite rituals, ceremonies related to the purification/cleaning of clothes, cult objects, statues of gods and the ritual master with water are also mentioned in detail in the tablets (MURAT 2012, 132).

addition, a spring sanctuary consisting of a water channel carved out of the bedrock and a rock idol, altar and niches built on the rocks bordering this channel, is located approximately 300 m south of Fındık Asar Kale, in the west of the Phrygia Region, within the borders of Kotiaion (Kütahya), in the village of Sabuncupınar today⁵¹ (Figure 3). The presence of this channel where the waters of a spring are collected and the presence of cult monuments and idols with symbolic depictions of the goddess on the rock just above the channel clearly emphasize the importance of water, which is almost consecrated with cult monuments of Phrygian religious life. Apart from these examples, a group of rock facades among the Phrygian rock monuments differ in design from the other facades with round holes (diameter: 0.40-0.70 m) drilled in the back wall of the niches and quadrangular shaped wells connected to these holes, drilled in the roof of the facade and continuing to the base. These monuments, defined by the researchers as monuments with wells due to the differences in architectural arrangements, are the Bahşeyiş Monument on the borders of Eskişehir⁵², the Maltaş Monument in the Köhnüş Valley on the borders of Afyonkarahisar, the Değirmen Yeri Monument in the Karababa Valley, the Delikli Taş Monument on the borders of Kütahya, and the Fındık Monument, which is much smaller than these monuments and evaluated in this group (Figure 4-10). This difference in the architectural design of the monuments indicates that these may be a reflection of their functional use.

Regarding these monuments, which are seen in Phrygian rock facades and differ from the general pattern, researchers such as Brandenburg and Ramsay considered these monuments as grave structures due to the presence of wells in the monuments⁵³. Körte, on the other hand, pointed out that these monuments with wells should be considered as a religious element and stated that these monuments were offering pits where sacrifices were made for the Mother Goddess. Körte also pointed to the purification ceremonies in the cult of Cybele and Attis in the Roman Period as the basis for this idea, and commented that the wells would have been used for "*haemobolium*" (blood offering) in connection with the *taurobolium* and *criobolium* ceremonies, which were a practice of the cult of Cybele in the Late Roman Period⁵⁴. Haspels states that the mystery of the wells remains unsolved, but that they may have been built for some religious purpose, while Naumann identifies the wells as sacrificial pits, but does not give details of the sacrifices and how they were carried out⁵⁵. Işık analyzed two examples of monuments with wells and found similarities with the hollows in Urartian chamber tombs⁵⁶. Özkaya, assuming that the idea put forward by Körte seems possible, carried the thesis that these wells were used for the *taurobolium* ritual further and emphasized that the *taurobolium* rituals in Rome may have been transferred from Phrygia to Rome through the cult of Cybele⁵⁷. Geza de Francovich, on the other hand, suggested that the well may not have been used for the *taurobolium*, but for the *criobolium* prepared for Attis⁵⁸. Naumann suggests that they were

⁵¹ On the steep faces of the rock masses bordering the 75 m long and 0,75 m deep canal running in the north-south direction, at the beginning and end points of the canal, two rectangular niches with a slot in their bases where a statuette of the Mother Goddess was probably placed, 7 rock altars in groups on the upper parts of the rocks and triple goddess idols made in groups (TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 2003, 9).

⁵² HASPELS 1971, 100.

⁵³ BRANDENBURG 1906, 687; RAMSAY 1882, 17.

⁵⁴ KÖRTE 1898, 97-98.

⁵⁵ NAUMANN 1983, 53-54.

⁵⁶ IŞIK 1989, 21-22.

⁵⁷ ÖZKAYA 1997, 103.

⁵⁸ DE FRANCOVICH 1990, 88-89.

symbolic sacrificial pits, but the wells are too large for a symbolic pit and this cannot explain their functionality. Sivas, another researcher who analyzed the monuments in detail, based on the information provided by ancient sources and the interpretations put forward by these researchers, states that the origin of this cult is in Anatolia and that it gained identity in monuments with wells and reached Greece and Rome from Anatolia. However, as stated in Roman sources, the designs of the monuments make it difficult to bring the ram or bull to be sacrificed to the mouths of the wells, and for this reason, the sacrifice was performed elsewhere and the sacred blood was brought in a container, carried to the mouth of the well and offered there⁵⁹. Hemelrijk, approaching these monuments from a different perspective, suggests that they were a storehouse of valuables. He questioned whether these wells served as *opisthodomos*, where the gifts offered to the gods and goddesses in Greek temple architecture were stored, or they could be a variation of the treasury buildings at Delphoi. Based on the connection between the well and the niche, Ersöz suggested that the well was used as a place of divination. Thus, the priest who conveyed God's answers would be hidden in the well, making it appear that the prophecy and all the answers were coming from the goddess or the facade. In addition, Ersöz stated that the lid covering the wells also served as a cover for the priest to hide. In addition, Ersöz states that a similar practice of the cleric hiding inside the cult statue and conveying the commands from the god as if the cult statue was speaking, may have also taken place in monuments built with wells⁶⁰.

Based on Ersöz's view that the wells were places where the cult statue was placed, the ritual identity of the Phrygian well monuments should be approached from a different perspective. In this context, the presence of water-related rituals performed in honor of the Phrygian goddess in festivals held in the name of the Phrygian goddess in pre-Phrygian and contemporary cultures and in Rome, together with their architectural design, suggests the possibility that these monuments, whose function we do not have precise information about, may be associated with water. In the monuments with wells in the Phrygian cult facades, the portable statue of the goddess was symbolically washed by immersing it in the water filled in the well, thus suggesting that the statue washing seen in the Roman Period may be a practice of Phrygian origin (Figure 11). It is also possible that this ceremony, just like the one carried to Rome, was performed in accordance with the calendar heralding the arrival of spring. During this washing process, it should be taken into consideration that water was discharged through the slot in the center of the central niche, which is one of the most important parts of the monuments and connected to the well, with the weight of the statue immersed in the well. Thus, it is possible that both the washing of the statue of the goddess and the water, which is vital for the existence of abundance and fertility, were part of a ritual in which the Goddess Matar blessed and bestowed abundance and fertility to her believers (Figure 12).

In conclusion, besides the fact that water is a part of religious rituals in almost all ancient societies, it also has important effects in Phrygian culture; the use of water in Hittite religious life, the fact that almost all of the Phrygian rock monuments are located near a water source, the presence of sculptural artefacts and idol depictions of the goddess found around the water sources show that water should be considered as an important ritual element in Phrygian religion⁶¹. In addition, the fact that Greek and Roman sources include water-related practices

⁵⁹ TÜFEKÇİ-SİVAS 1999, 197.

⁶⁰ BERNDT-ERSÖZ 1998, 98-99.

⁶¹ For newly discovered idol depictions see POLAT 2019, and TAMSÜ POLAT *et alii* 2020; TAMSÜ POLAT 2022.

in the cult rituals of the mother goddess, who is accepted as the Phrygian Goddess, reveals that water played a central role in the religious life of the Phrygian culture.

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Figure 2. Fragment of sculpture from Midas Kale C (Photo by R. Tamsü Polat).



Figure 3. Kütahya Fındık Sacred Area (Photo by Y. Polat).

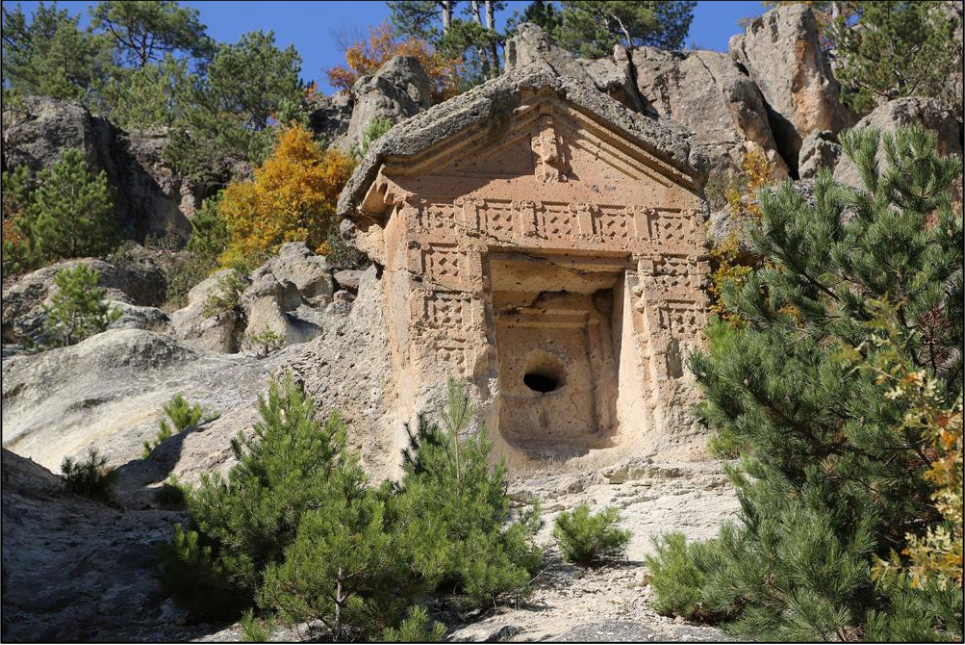


Figure 4. Eskişehir Bahsayiş Monument (Photo by Y. Polat).



Figure 5. Shaft detail of the Eskişehir Bahshayish Monument (Photo by Y. Polat).



Figure 6. Maltas Monument in the Köhnüş Valley of Afyonkarahisar (Photo by Y. Polat).

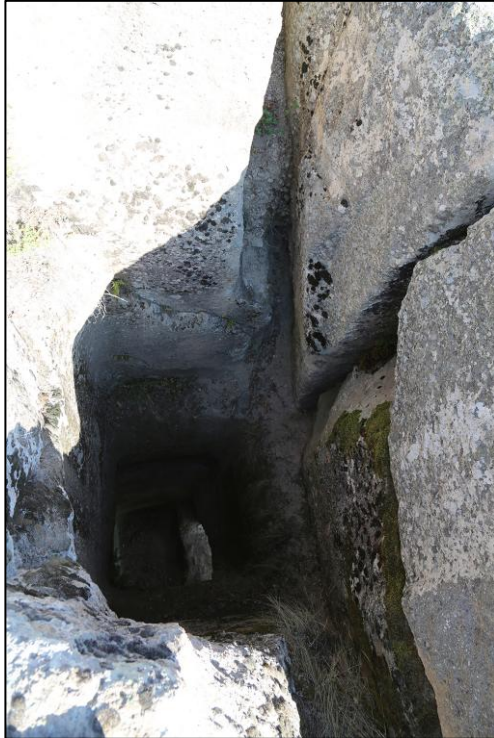


Figure 7. Detail of the shaft of the Maltas Monument in the Köhnüş Valley of Afyonkarahisar (Photo by Y. Polat).

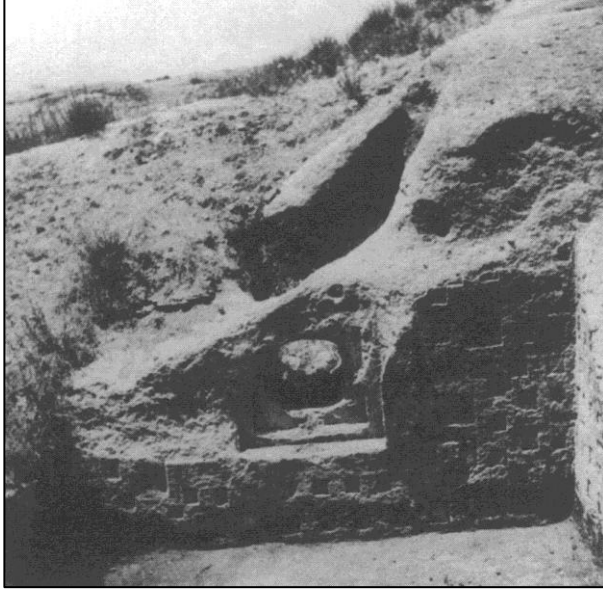


Figure 8. Afyonkarahisar Degirmenyeri Monument (Berndt-Ersöz, 1998, fig. 13).



Figure 9. Kütahya Deliklitaş Monument (Photo by R. Tamsü Polat).



Figure 10. Kütahya Deliklitaş Monument shaft detail (Berndt-Ersöz, 1998, fig. 17).

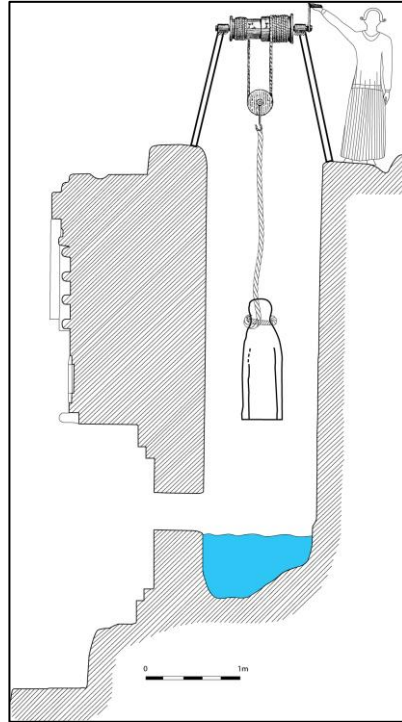


Figure 11. Illustration of the use of monuments with shaft (Draw. Y. Yılmaz)

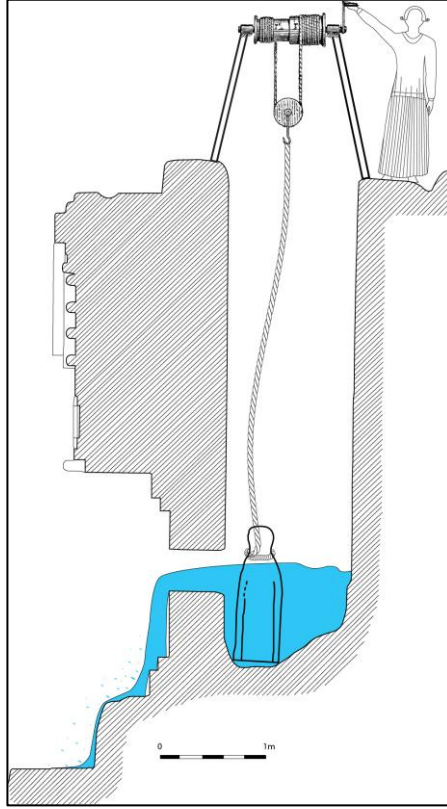


Figure 12. Illustration of the use of monuments with shaft (Draw. Y. Yılmaz).

A "Necklace" Made of Gold Rings Discovered within the Radius of Braşov Municipality, Braşov County

Florin MOŢEI¹

Abstract. *The main objective of the present study is to bring to light a small treasure discovered in 2014, near the city of Braşov, dated in Halstatt B1 and consisting of four indented links of the Brăduţ type. The treasure is analyzed along with other similar discoveries from Transylvania. The links were researched in order to determine the specific characteristics regarding decoration, weight, dimensions, shape, technology, decoration techniques, and metallographic composition.*

Rezumat. *Principalul obiectiv al prezentului studiu de faţă este cel de ilustrare a unei mici comori descoperite în anul 2014, în apropierea municipiului Braşov, datată în Halstatt B1 şi formată din patru verigi indentate de tip Brăduţ. Comoara este analizată alături de alte descoperiri similare din Transilvania. Piese în cauză au fost investigate în vederea determinării caracteristicilor specifice privind decorarea, greutatea, dimensiunile, forma, tehnologia, tehnicile de decorare şi compoziţia metalografică.*

Keywords: treasure, Early Iron Age (Hallstatt B1), notched Brăduţ-type rings, characteristics.

In February 2014, a small treasure consisting of four gold rings decorated with indentations was brought to the Braşov County Museum of History, the pieces being purchased, studied, photographed, drawn, and spectrographically analyzed. In the records of the Braşov County Museum of History, the treasure can be found in the Archeology Inventory Register under inventory number II 8350 AR-1,2,3,4.

The treasure was discovered with the metal detector in a wooded area, located approximately 100 m to the left of the road that connects Braşov municipality with Poiana Braşov (45°37'35.1' N 25°33'32.8' E) (Pl. 1/A-B)².

Later, during March 2014, a second hoard consisting of twenty-two indented gold rings was discovered by Mr. Fănel Şerban on the western slope of Frasinului Hill (altitude 777.5 m) in the southern part of the Prund-Schei neighborhood, approximately 1,120 m (Pl. 5) away from the hoard that is the subject of this study³. Initially, the treasure was brought to the Braşov County Museum of History, but the management at that time declined its acquisition, the pieces reaching the National History Museum of Romania, where they were researched and published⁴.

The pieces discovered in the two hoards fall into the category of the Brăduţ type, named after the eponymous discovery made in 1858 in the village of Brăduţ, Tălişoara commune, Covasna County⁵.

¹ Braşov County Museum of History; florinmotei@yahoo.com.

² The pieces were discovered by Mr. Fănel Şerban with a Garrett AT PRO International metal detector.

³ ŢÂRLEA *et alli* 2015, 45-46.

⁴ ŢÂRLEA *et alli* 2015, 45-46.

⁵ POPESCU 1956, 228; 1962, 410; PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIŢA 1977, 127.

Rings of this type have the characteristic cross-section and roundness of the bar, as well as a thinning of the ends, but also the decoration on the entire surface consisting of parallel notches arranged on the entire surface⁶.

Cluj-based researcher M. Rusu differentiates three types of indented bracelets⁷:

- the Meseşeni version (the entire surface, except for the ends, is decorated with equal vertical notches, and the bar of the bracelet has a round section);
- the Şona variant (with similar notches, except for the inner face of the bracelet, so that the resulting cross-section of the metal bar is in the form of the letter D);
- the Recaş variant (the notches are oblique on the smooth inner surface of the bracelet, and the cross section of the metal bar has the shape of the letter D)⁸.

All three types are round in shape and are made of thin gold thread, decorated on the entire surface, excepting the ends, thin and pointed, close to each other or slightly overlapping⁹.

On the territory of Romania, five discoveries were made consisting of ring objects belonging to the Brăduţ type (Pl. 6), to which the discussed discovery is added.

1. Apoldu de Sus (Miercurea Sibiului, Sibiu County; Pl. 6/1). In 1843, eighteen indented gold rings of the Brăduţ type were discovered¹⁰. The rings, which are currently part of the heritage of the National History Museum of Romania, were linked together in the form of a chain that weighs 75.27 g and is approximately 34 cm long and can be dated to Hallstatt B1 (10th century BC. Chr.)¹¹. The rings are arranged in a chain in relative order of size, with the largest element at one end and the smallest at the other end.

2. Brăduţ (Tălişoara commune, Covasna County; Pl. 6/2). The deposit from Brăduţ (Tălişoara) was found in 1858 and entered the collections of the Natural History Museum in Vienna in 1899. The treasure included: two boilers; six axes; two sickles; a sword fragment; two bronze rings; bronze ingots; 25 gold rings. The hoard was dated to Hallstatt B1, the Moigrad – Tăuteu hoarding horizon, based on the characteristics of the bronze objects¹².

3. Unknown place in Bihor County. The pieces were discovered in the 19th century as part of a warehouse that included axes, knives, hammers and spearheads¹³. The five rings are interpreted by V. Pârvan as "silly rings"¹⁴. The "necklace" consists of a larger ring, with overlapping ends, to which are attached, through a thinner ring, four rings of the same size, with overlapping ends¹⁵. According to its composition, the hoard most likely belonged to Hallstatt B1 (10th century BC).

4. Braşov (Braşov county; Pl. 6/4). The Braşov II¹⁶ hoard consists either of 22 separate pieces or of groups of rings attached to each other¹⁷. When the hoard was handed over to the

⁶ POPESCU 1956, 228.

⁷ RUSU 1972, 35-36, Pl. III/1-7.

⁸ RUSU 1972, 35-36, Pl. III/1-7.

⁹ DUMITRESCU 1936, 231.

¹⁰ MOZSOLICS 1973, 200; LUCA *et alii* 2003, 38; POPESCU 2013, 225.

¹¹ MOZSOLICS 1973, 200; POPESCU 2013, 225.

¹² PÂRVAN 1926, 308; POPESCU 1962, 410; MOZSOLICS 1973, 200; PETRESCU-ŢÎMBOVIŢA 1977, 127; LUCA *et alii* 2003, 38; POPESCU 2013, 225.

¹³ PÂRVAN 1926, 404, fig. 257/22.

¹⁴ PÂRVAN 1926, 404, fig. 257/22.

¹⁵ DUMITRESCU 1936, 232.

¹⁶ Name given by the authors of the study to differentiate between the hoard discussed in these pages and the one discovered in March, also in the Braşov area.

¹⁷ ȚÂRLEA *et alii* 2015.

National History Museum of Romania, there were nine individual rings, six rings attached two by two and six rings attached three in a row. The weights of the rings differ, the lightest is only 2.01 g, and the heaviest is 9.73 g. Typologically, the pieces cover all three variants proposed by M. Rusu.

5. Orchidan Collection. Eleven gold notched rings of unknown provenance are present. In the specialized literature they are presented as part of a Hallstatt necklace consisting of ten earrings and a ring, decorated with notches, having various horizontal and oblique motifs. The diameter is given as 22.5 mm and their total weight is 43.02 g¹⁸.

6. Tăuteu (Bihor County; Pl. 6/6). In the Bereteu valley, near Marghita, and the forest, a 10-year-old boy found in September 1934 objects from the Bronze Age, which entered the collections of the "National House" museum. The oldest publication of the hoard, presents it as consisting of: six bronze rings; one ax with bronze; two bronze buttons; five bronze knives; one half ax; five gold rings; a small clay pot; five copper ingot fragments; fragments of clay vessels dating from the Bronze Age¹⁹.

The five full gold notched rings are open with the ends slightly overlapping, thin and pointed. All are decorated with parallel incisions, longitudinal and transverse, the incisions being arranged in groups on the entire surface of the objects, only the extremities remaining undecorated. Their weight and maximum diameter are 38: 10.20 g with 55 mm; 7.20g with 34mm; 5.90g by 33.2mm; 3.05g by 24.3mm; 2.40g by 21.2mm; 1.20 g with the length of the two fragments together of 10 mm²⁰. Together with two fragments that are part of some of the rings, the total weight of the resulting piece would have been 11.40 g²¹.

Chronology. Based mainly on their association with the bronze objects in the hoards, the incised gold rings of the Brăduț type are considered to belong to the Early Iron Age, specifically Hallstatt B1 (10th century BC), and fall into hoarding horizon Moigrad – Tăuteu²².

The four rings will be analyzed taking into account their size, shape, technology, decoration techniques and metal composition.

Form. All four rings have a circular-ovoid shape.

Decor. Based on the décor, an attempt was made to determine how many variations could be obtained if the number of decor segments was taken into account. These variants are established only for the Brașov II hoard, without any certainty that they will prove to be generally applicable and more as a tentative approach for possible future research on this subject²³.

Based on the number of decoration segments the rings from the Brașov II hoard were separated into three main variants: A – the metal bar is divided into 5 segments (2 undecorated ends; 2 segments with notches parallels; 1 central segment with more sophisticated decoration); B – the metal bar is divided into 9 segments (2 undecorated ends; 2 segments with parallel notches; 2 segments with more sophisticated decoration; 2 segments

¹⁸ GRAMATOPOL, THEODORESCU 1966, 66, pl. V/1.

¹⁹ DUMITRESCU 1936, 225.

²⁰ OANȚĂ-MARGHITU 2013, 224, cat. 35,1-35,5.

²¹ DUMITRESCU 1936, 225; DÂMBOVIȚA 1961, 81; OANȚĂ-MARGHITU 2013, 224, cat. 35,1-35,5.

²² PÂRVAN 1926, 308, dates the treasure from Brăduț to Bronze IV (1000-900 BC); PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA 1961, 106; PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA 1977, 136-137; RUSU 1972, 36.

²³ ȚÂRLEA *et alii* 2015, 58. Taking into account the geographical proximity of the two hoards, but also the typological proximity of the pieces, I have taken as reference the decoration variants used in this study.

with parallel notches; 1 central segment with more sophisticated decoration); C – the metal bar is divided into 3 segments (2 undecorated ends; 1 longer segment with parallel notches)²⁴.

Functionality. Although there have been numerous discussions on how to use this type of artifact, researchers have not reached an unanimously accepted conclusion. V. Pârvan considers them "money-rings"²⁵ or "perhaps coins"²⁶. D. Popescu states that, in general, notched rings can be considered "money-rings", but also as ornaments, as loop rings²⁷.

The arrangement in which rings of this type are often found, in the form of chains, might suggest that they were worn on at least some occasions or by some people as such, perhaps hanging from the neck or waist, or attached to clothing or helmets²⁸.

Spectral analyses²⁹. Energy-dispersive X-ray fluorescence (ED-XRF) analyzes were performed using a Bruker Tracer S1 Titan portable spectrometer. The spectrometer uses a rhodium (Rh) anode tube to generate an X-ray beam with maximum energy of 50 keV. For the present study, the beam energy was limited to 40 keV.

To probe each sample, the beam passed through an 8 mm collimator to reach each sample. A silicon drift detector (SDD) positioned back at an angle of approximately 45° to the Rh anode tube was used to record the spectra.

As a result of the analysis, the majority percentage is gold (between 87.542% and 89.189%), followed by silver (between 9.641% and 10.651%), and copper (between 1.173% and 1.619%). In only one case, in the piece with inventory number II 8350-1, a small amount (0.255 %) of iron appears.

Weight. Due to the fragility of the four rings, I considered it inappropriate to separate them, the risk of them being damaged being unavoidable. The four rings together weigh 7.19 g³⁰.

Technology. Rings with turned or rolled flat-hammered ends (*Ösenringe*). In their case, the metal was cast into a groove and resulted in thin, elongated bars³¹. The investigation results indicated sand casting, but stone molds could not be completely ruled out. The cross-section of the rough cast bar was then reworked to make it rounder, the ends of the bar were flattened and curled more or less into loops, then the bar was bent into a ring shape. Most of the items were found in an annealed state, which would suggest that the final deformation was hot working. The most characteristic aspect of this method is the resulting concave appearance of the inner part of the ring, indicating the cooling shrinkage that affected the surface of the original metal bar. This feature is a direct result of using open molds³².

Catalogue.

1. Braduţ type ring (II 8350-1), variant C (Pl. 1/1; 2/1)

Dimensions: maximum diameter 0.18 cm; minimum diameter 0.16 cm; thickness between 0.6 and 0.23 cm.

Section: circular transverse, with pointed ends, undecorated, slightly overlapping.

²⁴ ȚÂRLEA *et alii* 2015, 58-61.

²⁵ PÂRVAN 1926, 308.

²⁶ PÂRVAN 1926, 404.

²⁷ POPESCU 1956, 227.

²⁸ FLORESCU, FLORESCU 1983, 115.

²⁹ The analyzes were carried out at the National Institute for R&D in Physics and Nuclear Engineering Horia Hulubei, Măgurele, Romania by researchers D. A. Mirea and D.C. Olteanu, I thank them in this way.

³⁰ Weighing was done with a ROSLIM high-precision jeweler's scale.

³¹ ȚÂRLEA *et alii* 2015, 67.

³² ȚÂRLEA *et alii* 2015, 67.

Decoration: the piece is divided into five segments: undecorated heads; two segments decorated with 20 parallel circular incisions, respectively 32 parallel circular incisions on the opposite side; a central segment decorated with eight parallel oblique incisions.

Spectrographic analysis: the piece contains: Fe- 0.255% (+/- 0.018%); Cu- 1.552% (+/- 0.039%); Ag- 10.651% (+/- 0.170%); Au- 87.542% (+/-0.454%).

State of conservation: very good.

Bibliography: MOZSOLICS 1973, 200; POPESCU 2013, 225.

2. Braduț type ring (II 8350-1, version C (Pl. 1/2; 2/2)

Dimensions: maximum diameter 0.22 cm; minimum diameter 0.20 cm; thickness between 0.6 and 0.24 cm.

Section: circular transverse, with pointed ends, undecorated, slightly overlapping.

Decoration: the piece is divided into five segments: an undecorated end; two segments decorated with 34 parallel circular incisions, respectively 43 parallel circular incisions on the opposite side that go to the pointed end of the ring; a central segment decorated with eight parallel oblique incisions.

Spectrographic analysis: the piece contains: Cu- 1.379% (+/- 0.043%); Ag- 9.641% (+/- 0.170%); Au- 88.981 % (+/- 0.387%).

State of conservation: very good.

Bibliography: PÂRVAN 1926, 404; DUMITRESCU 1936, 232.

3. Brăduț type ring, variant A (Pl. 1/3; 2/3)

Dimensions: maximum diameter 0.21 cm; minimum diameter 0.18 cm; thickness between 0.6 and 0.23 cm.

Section: circular transverse, with pointed ends, undecorated, slightly overlapping.

Decoration: the piece is divided into five segments: undecorated ends; two segments decorated with 28 parallel circular incisions, respectively 30 parallel circular incisions on the opposite side that go to the pointed end of the ring; a central segment decorated with two parallel oblique incisions and nine parallel oblique incisions arranged opposite to the first.

Spectrographic analysis: the piece contains: Cu- 1.619% (+/-0.043%); Ag- 10.657% (+/-0.184%); Au- 87.742% (+/- 0.416%).

State of conservation: very good.

Bibliography: PÂRVAN 1926, 404; DUMITRESCU 1936, 232.

4. Brăduț type ring, variant C (Pl. 1/4; 2/4)

Dimensions: maximum diameter 0.26 cm; minimum diameter 0.16 cm; thickness between 0.5 and 0.21 cm.

Section: circular transverse, with pointed ends, undecorated, slightly overlapping.

Decoration: the piece is divided into five segments: an undecorated end; two segments decorated with 31 parallel circular incisions, respectively 28 parallel circular incisions on the opposite side that go to the pointed end of the ring; a central segment decorated with eight parallel oblique incisions.

Spectrographic analysis: the piece contains: Cu- 1.173% (+/- 0.035%); Ag- 9.571% (+/- 0.167%); Au- 89.189 % (+/-0.401 %).

State of conservation: very good.

Bibliography: ȚÂRLEA *et alii* 2015.

The publication of this small hoard consisting of four gold rings decorated with notches brings a new contribution to the history of the analysis of these types of pieces, which are

quite rare in the intra-Carpathian space. Together with the other five discoveries of this type, the Braşov I hoard completes the picture of the spread of these types of spectacular artifacts.

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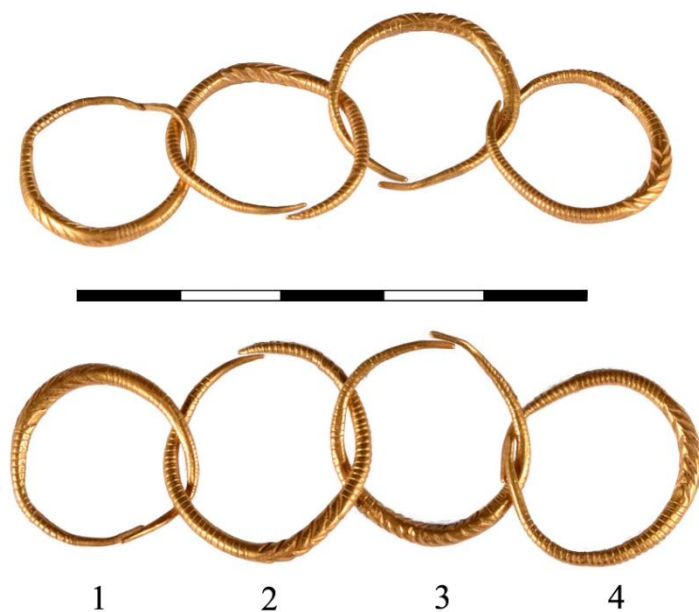


Plate 1. Gold rings from the Braşov I hoard (photo Dan Gridean; processing images Mihaela Cioc)

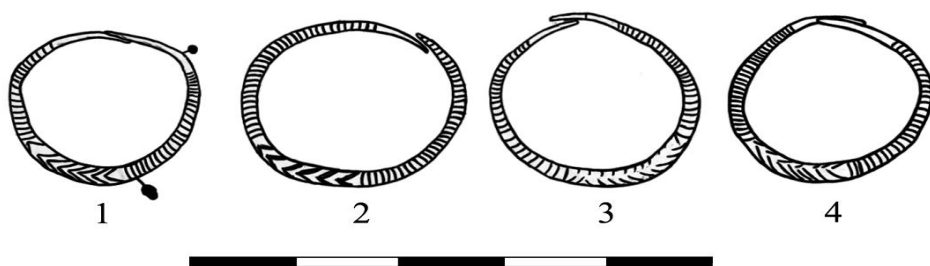


Plate 2. Gold rings from the Braşov I hoard (drawing: Mihaela Cioc).

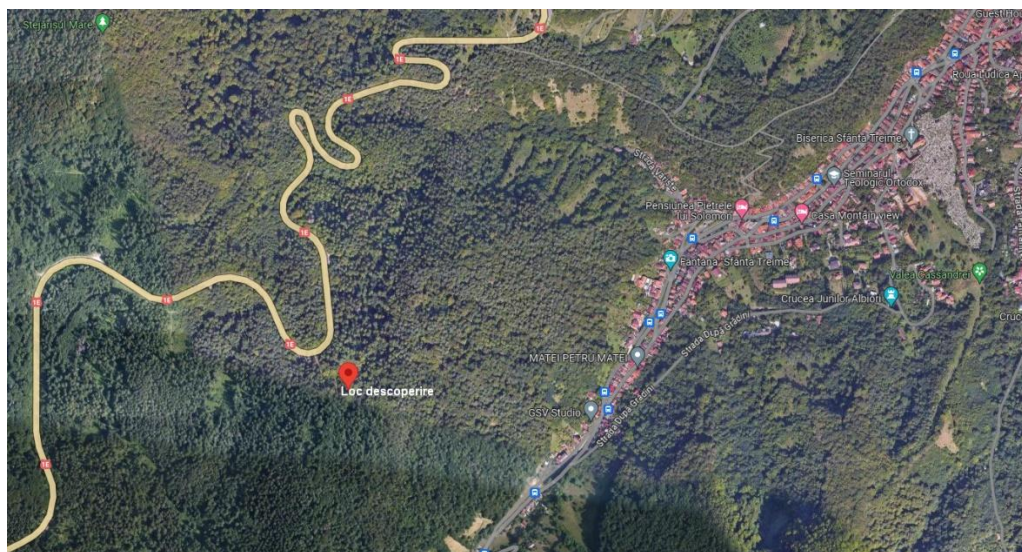


Plate 3. Treasure discovery location Braşov I.

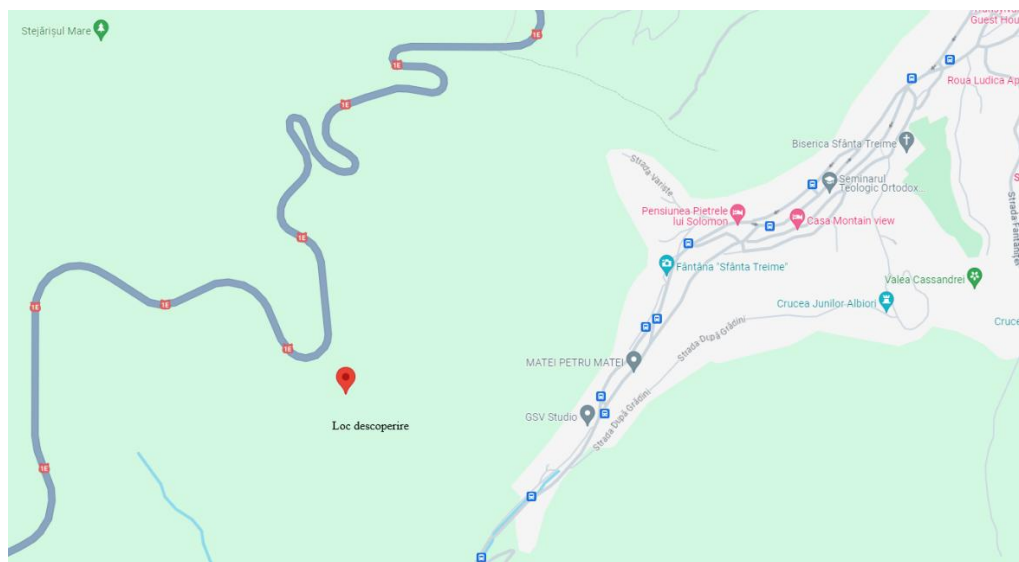


Plate 4. Treasure discovery location Braşov I.

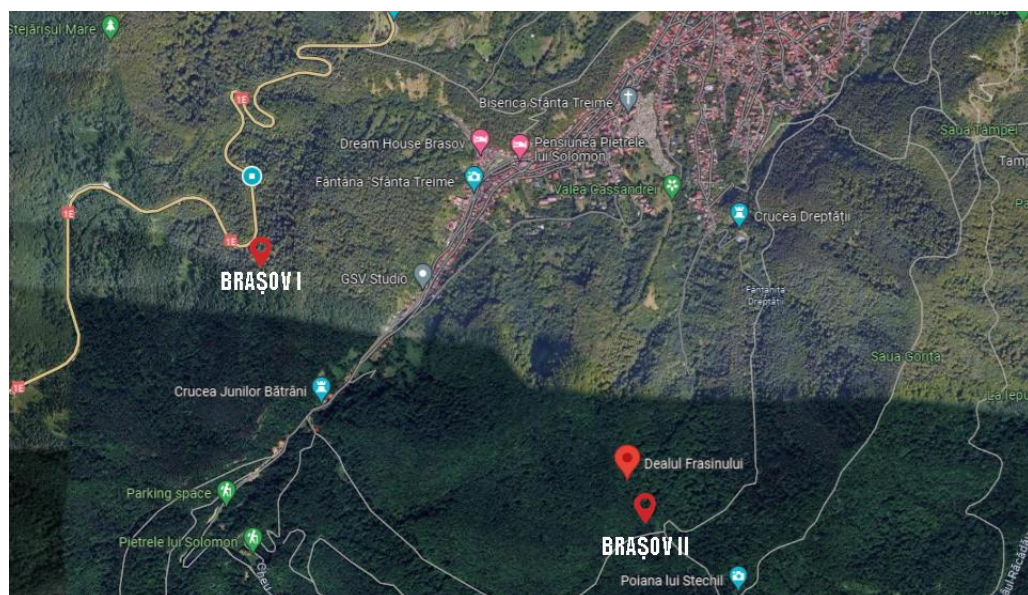


Plate 5. Map of Brașov I and Brașov II treasure locations.

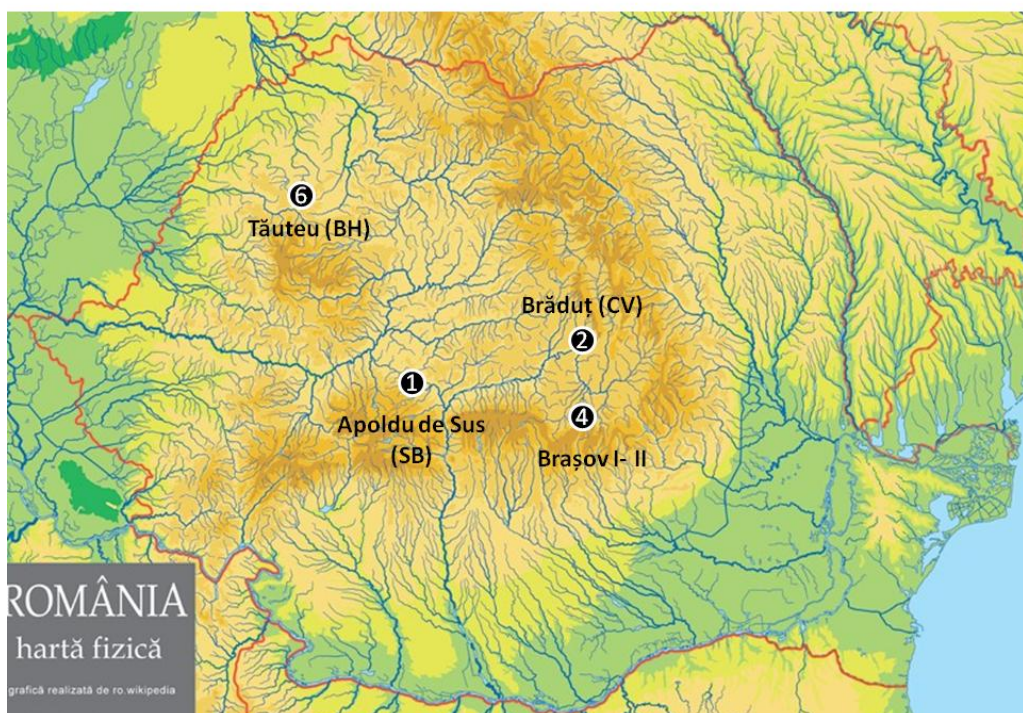


Plate 6. Map of Romania with the distribution of Brăduț type rings.

Herodotus on the Role of the Spartans and Thespians in the Battle of Thermopylae

Larisa PECHATNOVA¹

Abstract. *The article examines sources that mention a detachment of seven hundred hoplites from the Boeotian city of Thespieae, who, together with three hundred Spartans, took part in the Battle of Thermopylae and died heroically (480 BC). The author analyzes the reasons for the complete or partial hushing up of the role of the Thespians in the heroic resistance to the Persians. Already in Herodotus, the Spartan tradition completely dominates in his story about this battle. The concentration of attention on the Spartans is explained by the firm intention of Spartan ideologists to glorify the feat of Leonidas and his detachment exclusively, leaving the merits of the Thespians in the shadows. The Spartans' efforts were not in vain: the European tradition has taken root in the idea of the Spartans as the only heroes of Thermopylae.*

The article attempts to explain why the Thespians turned out to be the only allied detachment that voluntarily and enthusiastically remained with Leonidas when all the other allies left, not wanting to be surrounded and killed by the Persians. Perhaps the citizens of Thespieae were so actively involved in the fight against the Persians out of a desire to oppose themselves to Thebes, whose pro-Persian sentiments and actions were well known. The Thespieae always tried to take a position opposite to Thebes in foreign policy.

Rezumat. *Articolul analizează sursele istorice care menționează detașamentul format din șapte sute de hopliți din cetatea beotiană Thespieae, care, alături de cei trei sute de spartani, au participat la bătălia de la Termopile (480 BC.). Autoarea investighează motivele pentru care rolul thespienilor în această rezistență eroică împotriva perșilor a fost complet sau parțial trecut sub tăcere.*

Deja la Herodot, tradiția spartană domină în totalitate relatarea sa despre această bătălie. Concentrarea exclusivă asupra spartanilor se explică prin intenția ideologilor din Sparta de a glorifica fapta lui Leonidas și a detașamentului său, minimalizând contribuția thespienilor. Eforturile spartanilor nu au fost zadarnice, întrucât tradiția europeană a consacrat imaginea spartanilor drept unici eroi ai Termopilelor.

Articolul oferă și o posibilă explicație privind alegerea thespienilor de a rămâne alături de Leonidas. Este posibil ca cetățenii din Thespieae să fi acționat astfel din dorința de a se opune Tebei, cunoscută pentru atitudinea sa pro-persană. De altfel, Thespieae s-a poziționat constant în politica externă în opoziție față de Teba.

Keywords: Thespieae, Thespians, Sparta, Spartans, Thermopylae, Leonidas, Thebes, Plataea, Herodotus, Plutarch.

The purpose of this article is to study and analyze sources that mention or, on the contrary, conceal information about the detachment of Thespians who fought and died together with three hundred Spartans in the Battle of Thermopylae. A strong tradition has reached our time that the heroes of Thermopylae were three hundred Spartans led by the king of Sparta, Leonidas. However, the seven hundred Thespians who fought alongside the Spartans and who would seem to have earned the same glory are not mentioned very often in our tradition. If Herodotus said anything about them, the later authors Diodorus and Plutarch did not even do this, although they made significant changes and additions to their version of the history of Thermopylae that were absent from Herodotus. As a result, the general public,

¹ St. Petersburg State University, Institute of History, Russia; email: l.pechatnova@spbu.ru. ORCID - orcid.org/0000-0001-037X

both in ancient times and in modern times, has developed a one-sided view of the true heroes of Thermopylae: so, any schoolchild knows about the feat of the Spartans at Thermopylae, but is unlikely to have ever heard of the Thespians. Let's try to understand the reasons for this phenomenon.

Of course, the history of Athens and Sparta, as the most significant Greek cities, is reflected to the greatest extent in the sources. The bulk of the narrative tradition concerns precisely these two states. Even about such important Greek cities as Corinth, Megara or Thebes, we know much less. This applies even more to the policies of the 'second' tier, such as Thespieae. The latter was one of the Boeotian cities, information about which is usually very fragmentary. It seems to us that it is all the more important to analyze both the narrative tradition and the relatively recent archaeological and epigraphic material that expands our knowledge of Thespieae and the Thespians.

From this point of view, a seemingly insignificant event – the participation of the Thespian detachment in the battle of Thermopylae – expands our knowledge in several respects. Thus, we begin to better understand how exactly the 'Spartan-centric' scale of spiritual values was formed not only within Sparta, but also outside of it. We expand our knowledge of the relations of Thebes, as the head of the Boeotian League, with the communities that comprised that League. We gain additional information about the peculiarities of the political orientation of those Boeotian cities that were in constant opposition to Thebes.

The most detailed account of the battle at Thermopylae between the allied Greek army and the Persians in 480² is found in Herodotus (VII. 201–233). The great attention that Herodotus paid to this episode of the Greco-Persian Wars shows that by the time he wrote his work, the legend of Thermopylae had already been created in its main features. Otherwise, Thermopylae would have been perceived as an insignificant episode in the Greeks' failed attempt to stop the Persians on the border between Northern and Central Greece. As an indisputable defeat of the Greek army, this episode would hardly have received much attention from Herodotus. But Herodotus not only described all the stages of the Battle of Thermopylae, he even named the most outstanding fighters by name (VII. 226–227) and quoted three funeral epitaphs of fallen soldiers (VII. 228). The depth of Herodotus' interest in this story is also evidenced by his statement that he knows the names of all three hundred Spartans who died in battle (VII. 224)³. The high assessment that Herodotus gives to King Leonidas⁴ as a military leader also causes some surprise. Herodotus speaks of him as 'the one most admired (ὁ δὲ θωμαζόμενος μάλιστα) the leader of the whole army' (VII. 204, hereinafter translated by A. D. Godley).

Such a high assessment of a commander who actually destroyed and himself and his entire detachment and ultimately allowed the Persians to enter Central Greece can only mean one thing: in the time of Herodotus the heroic death of Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans was already perceived by all of Greece as the highest manifestation of military valor

² All dates here and below are BC.

³ Herodotus apparently had access to specifically Spartan sources and was able to familiarize himself with the list of those killed in Sparta itself. Pausanias, seven centuries later, saw this stele in the center of the city with the names and patronymics of all the fallen Spartans (III. 14. 1).

⁴ Leonidas (c. 540–480) belonged to the royal family of the Agiads and was the son of Anaxandridas II (c. 560–c. 520). He succeeded his half-brother Cleomenes I on the throne between 491 and 488. At the beginning of his reign, he was about 50 years old. Almost nothing is known about his activities before Thermopylae. He owes his fame solely and only to Thermopylae (VANNICELLI 2017, 554–555).

ever recorded since the time of Homer. So, Herodotus' story about Thermopylae is, in fact, not just a presentation of the facts known to him, but his own version of the events that took place at Thermopylae. He presented them under the influence of the mythologized plot about the feat of three hundred Spartans led by Leonidas, which had already developed by his time.

By the middle of the 5th century, the idea that the Spartans would rather die than retreat had apparently already become firmly entrenched in the mass consciousness. It is no coincidence that the Greeks were in great amazement when they learned that the Spartan garrison on the island of Sphacteria had surrendered to the Athenians (425). Thucydides explains the reason for this astonishment as follows: '... men could not conceive that the Lacedaemonians would ever be induced by hunger or any other compulsion to give up their arms, but thought that they would keep them till they died, fighting as long as they were able...' (IV. 40. 1, hereinafter translated by Ch. F. Smith).

The Spartan authorities, apparently, very quickly appreciated the educational and propaganda potential of the feat of Leonidas and his detachment. They, not without the help of Delphi, worked hard to create a mythologized version of this Thermopylae episode. Official tradition insists that the Greeks' final resistance was solely the result of Leonidas' deliberate choice, and not of a random and poorly controlled objective course of events⁵. Herodotus makes this clear. Here is how he explains Leonidas' strange, from a military point of view, decision to release the allied contingents before the final battle with the Persians: the king, already aware of the inevitability of death, wanted '... to win distinction for the Spartans alone...' (...βουλόμενον κλέος καταθέσθαι μούνων Σπαρτιητέων...) (VII. 220. 4)⁶. All the more valuable for us is the testimony of Herodotus, where he mentions the Thespians along with the Spartans.

It is worth looking at how and in what context Herodotus mentions the Thespians. After all the allied contingents, as Herodotus claims, with the consent of Leonidas, left Thermopylae, only Leonidas remained in the camp with three hundred Spartans. A detachment of seven hundred Thespians joined them voluntarily and even enthusiastically (VII. 222)⁷. Unfortunately, Herodotus says not a word about the considerations that guided the Thespians in their decision to stay with Leonidas rather than leave with all the other allies. For a comparatively small town such as Thespieae, the dispatch of such a large contingent seems excessive. Their contribution to the common cause was more significant than that of such rich and populous cities as Corinth with its detachment of 400 men, or Tegea and Mantinea, which sent 500 men each (VII. 202). Even the Spartans sent only three hundred hoplites, although they claimed that this was only their avant-garde (VII. 206).

⁵ VANNICELLI 2017, 570–571.

⁶ In Herodotus, the word κλέος and its cognates are most often associated with the Spartans (V. 77. 1; VII. 220; IX. 48. 3; 78) (VANNICELLI 2017, 573; TUPLIN 2022, 315).

⁷ Not a single Boeotian city, except Thespieae and Thebes, sent its troops to the allied army. The Thespieae, apparently, sent almost their entire hoplite militia to Thermopylae. The area of Thespieae (447,358 km²) was about half the size of Thebes (907,612 km²). In Boeotia terms, Thespieae was a significant city. Nearby were four smaller settlements dependent on Thespieae. For Thespian *synteleia* see esp.: GONZALEZ 2006, 36–37. The wealth of the city and the desire of the Thespians to decorate it worthily are evidenced by the numerous statues of gods and heroes, executed by the best sculptors of Greece, such as Lysippus and Praxiteles (Paus. IX. 27. 3–4; Plin. NH. XXXVI. 22).

Leonidas also left a detachment of 400 Thebans in his camp⁸. The Spartan king probably feared betrayal by the Thebans, rightly suspecting them of *medism*⁹ (Her. VII. 205. 2–3). The Thebans sent their warriors to the allied army only under strong pressure from Leonidas: apparently, they did not want to openly admit that they were supporters of the Persians¹⁰. This is how Herodotus talks about it: After the departure of all the allied squads, ‘... the Thebans remained against their will and desire, for Leonidas kept them as hostages’ (VII. 222)¹¹. Most likely, Leonidas’ goal was to detain them in his camp to prevent them from joining the Persians. The Theban detachment did not take part in the final fatal battle. The Thebans surrendered, abandoning the Spartans and Thespians, as soon as they saw the detachment of Persian immortals in their rear (VII. 225. 2; 233).

Herodotus clearly contrasts the valor of the Thespians, who were determined to join Leonidas, with the reluctance of the Thebans to do the same: ‘The Thespians very gladly remained, saying they would not abandon Leonidas and those with him by leaving; instead, they would stay and die with them’ (... Θεσπιέες δὲ ἐκόντες μάλιστα, οἳ οὐκ ἔφασαν ἀπολιπόντες Λεωνίδην καὶ τοὺς μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἀπαλλάξεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καταμείναντες συναπέθανον) (VII. 222).

But in his account of the third and last day of the battle, Herodotus does not mention the Thespians. He speaks only of the Spartans (VII. 223). However, from the preceding and subsequent context it is clear that the Spartans did not put up the final heroic resistance to the Persian advance at Thermopylae alone, but together with the Thespians (Her. VII. 222; 226. 1)¹². They all died in the final clash with the Persians, but true glory went only to the Spartans. Already in Herodotus, who was probably strongly influenced by the pro-Spartan tradition¹³, preference is clearly given to the Spartans. He focuses his attention exclusively on them. This is partly, of course, explained by the fact that the allied troops were led by a Spartan – King Leonidas. However, it is already important that Herodotus considered it necessary to mention the Thespians at all: the historian, by speaking of the warriors who distinguished themselves most in the last battle, noted that they were from among the Lacedaemonians and Thespians (Λακεδαιμονίων δὲ καὶ Θεσπιέων τοιούτων γενομένων) (VII. 226. 1). In doing so, he voluntarily or involuntarily recognized their objective equality¹⁴. But Herodotus then clearly singles out the Spartans: among the most valiant warriors, he first names the Spartan Dieneces, who ‘is said to have exhibited the greatest courage of all’ (ἀνὴρ ἄριστος) (226.1), followed by Alpheus and Maron (227). It is curious that Herodotus interrupts his list of the bravest Spartan warriors by ‘wedge’ into it a laconic witticism attributed to Dieneces. With its help, the historian once again emphasizes the fearlessness and heroism of

⁸ Plutarch, a Boeotian patriot, tried to rehabilitate the Thebans and clear them of the charge of pro-Persian sympathies (Plut. *Mor.* 865 e = *De mal. Her.* 31). As for Herodotus, his commentators believe that the historian ‘has been misled by malignant Athenian gossip’ (HOW, WELLS 1912, 229: [VII. 222]).

⁹ A term usually restricted to states or individuals who voluntarily collaborated with the Persia during the Greco-Persian Wars.

¹⁰ HOW, WELLS 1912, 228–229.

¹¹ Ephorus offers a different version. He claims that ‘... the inhabitants of Thebes were divided against each other with respect to the alliance with the Persians’ (Diod. XI. 4. 7, hereinafter translated by C. H. Oldfather). Perhaps the ruling party, which supported the Persians, sent opponents of rapprochement with them to the front. This was one of the traditional ways of getting rid of the opposition (Her. III. 44. 2; Thuc. III. 75; Xen. *Hell.* III. 1. 4).

¹² The Persian marines who found themselves at the site of the battle at Thermopylae were convinced that all the fallen Greeks were Lacedaemonians and Thespians (Her. VIII. 25. 1–2).

¹³ LORAUX 1977, 113–114; PARADISO 2011, 529.

¹⁴ PARADISO 2011, 529.

the Spartans. And of the seven hundred Thespians, Herodotus found it necessary to single out only one warrior – Dithyrambus son of Harmatides (227). Unfortunately, this is all that Herodotus tells us about the Thespians who fought and died with the Spartans¹⁵. So, on the one hand, Herodotus mentions the merits of the Thespians, but, on the other hand, he focuses his main attention on the Spartans. In this regard, P. Vannicelli noted the following: 'Listing the best in battle, Herodotus therefore allows a gap to emerge between the content of his story (that tends to recognize equal valor on the parts of the Lacedaemonians and the Thespians) and the catalogue of the *aristoi*'.¹⁶

Later authors Diodorus (XI. 9. 2) and Pausanias (IX. 20. 2) say even less about the Thespians than Herodotus: only the fact of their presence in Leonidas' troop is voiced, without any value judgments. However, the Thespians are nevertheless mentioned.

Herodotus certainly acknowledged the valor of the Thespians. However, this recognition contrasts with the absence of any mention of the Thespians in the epitaphs that Herodotus saw fit to quote¹⁷. The historian cites the texts of three inscriptions placed on memorial steles in honor of those who died in the Battle of Thermopylae. He explains that two of these inscriptions are collective. They appeared by order of the Delphic *Amphictyony* and at its expense (VII. 228):¹⁸ the first epigram was dedicated to Sparta's Peloponnesian allies, and the second – to the Spartans themselves. The third epitaph was intended for the famous diviner Megistias, an Acarnanian, whom the Spartans invited into their service.¹⁹ This third epigram most likely did not appear by order of the Delphic *Amphictyōnes*, but solely due to the private initiative of Simonides, whose friend Megistias was. Simonides was also the author of this epitaph.

The first epigram speaks of fallen warriors only from the Peloponnese, although in the first days of the battle there were also hoplites from other regions of Greece among the dead. The second, most famous, mentions only the fallen Spartans (Her. VII. 228. 2). The third speaks of a soothsayer who was in the service of the Spartans. In this regard, A. Petrovic noted that 'it is hard to evade simultaneous feelings of admiration for Sparta' greatness in

¹⁵ It must be admitted that there is also little information about the Spartans. Herodotus describes the last battle quite schematically and briefly. Apparently, since there were no living participants in the battle on the Greek side, the source of fragmentary information about the course of the battle could have been those Greeks who fought on the side of the Persians. It is known, for example, that in the Battle of Plataea there were about 50 thousand of them (Her. IX. 32; Plut. *Arist.* 18. 7).

¹⁶ VANNICELLI 2007, 318.

¹⁷ ALLGAIER 2022, 80.

¹⁸ At the beginning of the Greco-Persian Wars, pro-Persian sentiments prevailed among the members of the Delphic *Amphictyony*, since most of its participants belonged to the communities of Northern and Central Greece. But after several victories won by the Greeks, the *Amphictyōnes* tried to rehabilitate themselves by becoming the initiators of a number of patriotic initiatives. On the Delphic *Amphictyony* see esp.: LEFEVRE 1998.

¹⁹ The Spartans attached great importance to all kinds of prophecies and often relied on them when making important decisions. On their campaigns they tried to take professional fortune tellers with them. They were, as a rule, famous priests and prophets, invited from other regions of Greece. During military operations, they helped Spartan commanders-in-chief perform all the necessary sacred manipulations. Such an invited priest was the Acarnanian Megistias from the line of hereditary soothsayers, descendants of Melampus (Her. VII. 221). After his death, the Spartans called upon another famous seer, Tisamenus from Elis. According to legend, with him they won five victories in the Greco-Persian Wars (Her. IX. 33–36; Paus. III. 11. 5–9; IV. 14. 13). Apparently, the Spartans have valued Tisamenus' contribution to their military successes so highly that they granted him and his brother civil rights. Herodotus claims that they were the only foreigners to receive such an award (IX. 33). Indeed, we know of no other examples of foreigners being granted Spartan citizenship in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, although in earlier times such cases may have occasionally occurred. On the particular religiousness of the Spartans and their tendency to superstition, see esp.: PARKER 1989, 142–172; FLOWER 2018, 425–452.

battle and chagrin at its pettiness in refusing to recognize the accomplishments of other *poleis* at Thermopylae in September 480 BC'.²⁰

Herodotus, having quoted three Thermopylae epitaphs, leaves us in the dark as to how many there were in all. Most likely, in his time there were already more than three of them. But it was precisely these three epigrams that seemed to Herodotus, apparently, especially worthy of perpetuation. Perhaps Herodotus liked the laconic severity of the Spartan epitaph. The choice of the inscription dedicated to Megistias is most likely explained by the fact that its author was the famous Athenian poet Simonides, whose talent Herodotus probably admired. But these are all assumptions. In fact, we will never know what considerations Herodotus actually had in choosing these three epitaphs. There could have been just an element of chance here.

We would assume that at least by the middle of the 5th century there was already a monument to the seven hundred fallen Thespians at Thermopylae. This is all the more likely since there is evidence to show how much importance the Thespians attached to perpetuating the memory of their heroes.²¹ It was most likely on their initiative and at their expense that the stele in honor of the fallen heroes of Thespieae was erected.²² But, be that as it may, Herodotus does not mention or quote any Thespian epitaph, thereby voluntarily or involuntarily allowing the tradition to focus exclusively on the Spartans and King Leonidas. In this regard, Pietro Vannicelli, perhaps too bluntly, noted that 'in fact, the epigrams offer a further example of that discrimination against the Thespians, to the advantage of the Spartans'.²³

We cannot, of course, say with certainty that among the tombstones at Thermopylae there was also a stele with an epitaph dedicated to the fallen Thespians. However, this assumption is quite probable and can be supported by one, albeit not direct, piece of evidence. Stephanus of Byzantium, in his ethno-geographical dictionary, in the article on Thespieae (Steph. Byz. s.v. Θέσπεια), cites an elegiac distich attributed to a certain Philiadas of Megara. It speaks precisely about the fallen Thespians:

ἄνδρες θ' οἳ ποτ' ἔναιον ὑπὸ κροτάφοις Ἑλικῶνος, |
 λήματι τῶν αὐχεῖ Θεσπιάς εὐρύχορος
 (Philiadas FGE 289–290)

'These people once lived on the upper slopes of Helicon;

²⁰ PETROVIC 2009, 57.

²¹ Thus, in Thespieae itself, a grandiose monument was erected in the form of a marble lion, towering over nine steles listing the one hundred and one names of Thespians who fell at Delium in 424 (IG VII 1888). This lion's monument, with which the Thespians immortalized the memory of their new demographic catastrophe, became a generally accepted symbol of veneration for the citizens of Thespieae who died in battle. (But stone lions were traditional funerary monuments used throughout Greece from the beginning of the Archaic period.). For this monument and the surviving fragments of inscriptions, see esp.: ROESCH 2009, 3–5. In Thespieae, during excavations, fragments of another collective burial monument were found with the names of fallen Thespians. As far as we can judge from the writing of some letters, it is more ancient than the monument dedicated to those killed at Delium (424). It is assumed that we could be talking about the battles either at Plataea (479), or at Oenophyta (457), or at Coronea (447) (ROESCH 2009, 1–2).

²² The usual practice, at least from the middle of the sixth century onwards, was to bury the dead either on the battlefields (Paus. IX. 2. 5) or in the territories of nearby friendly communities (Her. IX. 85; Xen. *Hell.* II. 4. 33). Thus, according to Herodotus, after the Battle of Plataea 'the Greeks... buried each contingent of their dead in a separate place' (IX. 85).

²³ VANNICELLI 2007, 319.

the vast Thespieae are proud of their courage' (transl. is ours. – L.P.)²⁴

Such an epigram could well have been on one of the five funerary steles that Strabo saw at the site of the battle (IX. 4. 2. P. 425)²⁵. It should be noted that Philiadès' epigram is similar in style and content to the epitaphs of the Greco-Persian Wars. But, of course, this is only an assumption that is not shared by everyone. Thus, the editor of Greek epigrams, Denys L. Page, believed that this epitaph was more of a later literary exercise than a genuine classical inscription²⁶. But we rather join the supporters of its authenticity. Thus, in a newly published study devoted to the perpetuation of the memory of Spartans who died in the war, Matthew A. Sears spoke out in favor of the authenticity of this epigram. In his opinion, it corresponds in form and content to the Spartan epitaphs of this period, which do not contain any pan-Greek propaganda clichés: there is not a word about defending the homeland or the struggle for the freedom of all Hellenes. Most of the epitaphs from this period are usually very laconic: they glorify the dead and the cities that sent them²⁷. Philiadès' epigram fully corresponds to this model.

The question arises as to why it was precisely the detachment of hoplites from Boeotian Thespieae that, as Herodotus asserts, voluntarily (ἐκόντες) remained with Leonidas (VII. 222). The few fragmentary pieces of information that have come down to us about Thespieae can to some extent help to understand this problem. Thespieae (Θεσπιαί), located 80 stadia west of Thebes, remained in opposition to Thebes throughout its history, negatively perceiving the latter's claims to hegemony in Boeotia. As a rule, Thespieae took a position in foreign policy opposite to that of Thebes. E. V. Rung quite correctly noted that the choice between patriotism and *medism* 'depended to a large extent... on traditional priorities in foreign policy, which effectively excluded the choice of one and the same side in the Greco-Persian conflict between warring Greek tribes and city-states. The old-time feud did not allow the Thebans and Thespians to come to a common consensus...' (transl. is ours. – L.P.)²⁸.

Thespieae, unlike Thebes and most of the Boeotian city, took the most active part in the Greco-Persian Wars on the side of the Hellenic League. Two cities, Thespieae and Plataea, were the only ones in Boeotia that in 481 refused to give the heralds of Xerxes 'earth and water' (Her. VII. 132. 2; VIII. 66. 2). It was not without reason that Xerxes burned only these two cities when he passed through Boeotia (VIII. 50). Although the Thespieae lost their entire hoplite militia at the battle of Thermopylae (VII. 225), already in the following year, 479, they sent almost two thousand of their lightly armed soldiers to Plataea (IX. 30). The enormous human losses suffered by Thespieae during the Persian Wars greatly weakened the city and significantly reduced the civilian population.

But in ancient tradition the merits of the Thespians were not always mentioned. This concerns in particular the participation of the Thespians in the Battle of Plataea. For example, they were named among the victors on the Serpent Column, placed in Delphi and located there until 324 AD (ML 27)²⁹. But their name was absent from the inscription on the base of

²⁴ This text is also quoted by Eustathius of Thessalonica in his *'Commentary on the Iliad'* where Thespieae are mentioned among other Boeotian cities (Il. II. 498). In this regard, he refers to the *'Ethnica'* of Stephanus as his source.

²⁵ BROWN 2013, 112.

²⁶ PAGE 1981, 78–79.

²⁷ SEARS 2023, 74.

²⁸ RUNG 2005, 24–25.

²⁹ Initially, a distich dedicated personally to the regent Pausanias, who stood at the head of the allied army, was carved here. After the allies were outraged by such injustice, the Spartan authorities, wishing to hush up the scandal,

the statue of Zeus, which 'was dedicated by those Greeks who at Plataea fought against the Persians under Mardonius' (Paus. V. 23. 1, hereinafter translated by W. H. S. Jones). Pausanias included only the Plataeans in his list of Boeotian victors (V. 23. 2). P. Vannicelli suggests that this 'list might be aligned with a string of traditions that obscure the Thespian presence in the Persian Wars'³⁰.

In its consistent anti-Persian policy, Thespieae, together with Plataea, invariably found itself in opposition to Thebes and other Boeotian cities. The latter were accused of *medism*³¹ and in the 80s and 70s, during the campaign against traitor cities, were often sentenced to various kinds of punishment, sometimes very severe (Her. IX. 86–88; Xen. *Hell.* VI. 3. 20; 5. 35; Polyb. IX. 39. 5; Justin. XI. 3. 10; cf.: Her. VII. 132). One of the forms of such punishments was monetary compensation, which had to be paid to the policies that suffered at the hands of the Persians by those Greek communities that collaborated with the Persians. The text of a court decision from Olympia (mid-470s) has been preserved (SEG 31. 358). It follows from this decree that the Boeotians had previously been condemned for their active pro-Persian position and fined. As for Thespieae, the Thessalians had to pay them monetary compensation, apparently because they, as part of Xerxes' army, took part in the capture and plunder of Thespieae³².

The Thespians, like the Spartans, were distinguished by their amazing warlike spirit, fortitude and desperate bravery. They always preferred to die rather than retreat. These qualities of theirs were especially clearly demonstrated during the Greco-Persian Wars. But exactly the same behavior was characteristic of them in the future. As a result, they continued to suffer enormous losses throughout the classical period. The Thespians lost so many citizens during numerous military campaigns that they were even forced to invite new colonists to their city and grant them civil rights (Her. VIII. 75. 1).

The struggle to maintain independence from Thebes, sometimes latent, sometimes open, was, it seems the main content of the history of Thespieae³³. Many of their actions and deeds were determined by the desire to oppose themselves to the Thebans and the rest of Boeotia, which was inclined to recognize the hegemony of Thebes.

Tradition usually unites Thespieae and Plataea in their opposition to Thebes. Thus, the citizens of Thespieae and Plataea were the only Boeotians who did not give 'earth and water' to the envoys of Xerxes (Her. VII. 132. 1). These cities, again the only ones of all the Boeotians sent their troops to Plataea in 479 (IX. 28. 6; 30).

The hostile relations between Thebes, which stood at the head of the Boeotian League, on the one hand, and Thespieae together with Plataea, on the other, have a long history. As early as 519 the Thebans led an attack on Plataea in an attempt to force the Plataeans to join their newly formed League (Her. VI. 108. 5). Their enmity intensified during any military crisis. Both cities disloyal to Thebes, in search of allies, turned for help either to Athens or to Sparta, depending on the balance of political forces³⁴.

ordered 'immediately to chiseled off these verses and inscribed on the tripod by name all the cities which had had a part in overthrowing the Barbarians and had together set up this offering' (Thuc. I. 132. 3).

³⁰ VANNICELLI 2007, 318.

³¹ Herodotus repeatedly notes the *medism* of the Thebans (VII. 206. 233; IX. 15. 40. 67. 86–88) and of the Boeotians in general (VIII. 34). On the phenomenon of *medism*, see esp.: RUNG 2005, 14–35.

³² BECK, GANTER 2015, 139–140.

³³ For the relations between Thespieae and Thebes during all periods of the existence of the Boeotian League, see esp.: ROESCH 1965.

³⁴ HORNBLOWER 2011, 107.

Apparently, the Thebans began to feel a particular hostility towards Thespieae and Plataea after the heroic behavior of these two communities during the Greco-Persian Wars. Their confrontation often led to tragic consequences for these two cities. Thus in 423 the Thebans destroyed the walls of Thespieae. Thucydides explains the reason for such an act as follows: 'In the same summer the Thebans dismantled the wall of the Thespians, accusing them of favoring the Athenians (ἀττικισμόν). Indeed, they had always wished to do this, but now found it easier, since the flower of the Thespians had perished in the battle with the Athenians' (IV. 133. 1). Thucydides clearly does not approve of the punitive action of Thebes.

The Thebans also showed exceptional cruelty towards disloyal Thespieae at the end of the 70s of the 4th c. After the Spartans left Boeotia in 375, Thespieae was forced to join the recently revived Boeotian League³⁵. According to Diodorus, as a measure of intimidation, at some point between 373 and 371³⁶ during the campaign against Plataea, 'the Thebans ... pillaged Thespieae as well, which was at odds with them' (... οἱ μὲν Θηβαῖοι... καὶ Θεσπιάς ἄλλοτρίως πρὸς αὐτοὺς διακειμένας ἐξεπόρθησαν) (Diod. XV. 46. 6)³⁷. The Thebans seem to have treated Thespieae less harshly than Plataea. The punishment did not include the complete destruction of the city and the expulsion of all its inhabitants, as was the case with Plataea (Diod. XV. 46. 4–6). This conclusion, however, is contradicted by the statement of Demosthenes that among the cities destroyed by the Thebans, besides Orchomenus and Plataea, were also Thespieae (Dem. XVI. 4). But it is worth noting that in the speeches of orators there are often inaccuracies and exaggerations, which is due to the peculiarities of this genre.

Thebes, by carrying out such punitive actions against Thespieae, thereby punished them for their pro-Spartan sentiments and actions. During the period of Sparta's hegemony, Thespieae, along with Plataea and Orchomenus, placed their bets on Sparta and became Sparta's strongholds in Boeotia. Spartan garrisons led by *harmosts*³⁸ appeared in Thespieae. For the Spartan king Agesilaus, Thespieae even became the main base in Boeotia (Polyaen. II. 1. 11). The king, in his two Boeotian campaigns of 378 and 377, used Thespieae as a base for attacking and devastating the environs of Thebes³⁹. Agesilaus even rebuilt or strengthened the city walls (Xen. *Hell.* V. 4. 41), and when he left the city, left there as *harmost* Phoebidas, one of his high officers. The Thespian hoplites apparently voluntarily and willingly joined the Spartan garrison (*Hell.* V. 4. 42–43).

The confrontation and hostility between Thespieae and Thebes were of a long-term nature. At critical moments, especially during the weakening of Thebes, this enmity burst out into the open. Perhaps the Thespians took such an active part in the struggle against the Persians

³⁵ Under the terms of the Peace of Antalcidas in 387/6, the Boeotian League was dissolved, and in 375/374 it was restored.

³⁶ The sources indicate this date differently. Thus, according to Pausanias (IX. 1. 8), the action against Plataea took place in the summer of 373. In that case, the attack on Thespieae took place at the same time.

³⁷ Since Diodorus' phrase is somewhat ambiguous, it has often been understood to mean that the Thebans treated Thespieae as cruelly as they did Plataea, completely destroying it. This is the opinion, for example, of M. A. Sears (SEARS 2023). According to K. Taplin, Thespieae as an urban center was destroyed, and the inhabitants were resettled in other communities (*dioecism*) (TUPLIN 1986, 321–341). We find more convincing the opinion of those scholars who believe that the city was not subjected to complete destruction, but was only captured by the Thebans, plundered and returned to the bosom of the Boeotian Confederacy (Xen. *Hell.* VI. 3. 1) (FIEHN 1936, 38; HORNBLLOWER 2011, 247).

³⁸ *Harmosts* are Spartan military governors who appeared during the Peloponnesian War. They were sent together with garrisons to the most important allied cities to exercise direct rule and provide forceful support to pro-Spartan regimes. The body of *harmosts* existed until the Battle of Leuctra (Xen. *Hell.* VI. 3. 18; Paus. IX. 6. 4).

³⁹ For Agesilaus' military campaigns in Boeotia, see: MUNN 1987, 106–138.

not so much out of patriotic considerations as out of a desire to oppose themselves to the Thebans, whose pro-Persian sentiments and actions were well known.

The feud between Thebes and Thespieae continued into the Hellenistic era. Thus, in 335, when the Thebans rebelled against Macedonia, the Thespians, Orchomenians and Plataeans took part in their suppression (Diod. XVII. 13. 5). Their actions were motivated by long-term grievances and a thirst for revenge⁴⁰. As a result, Alexander destroyed Thebes and enslaved most of the surviving population (Diod. XVII. 9–14; Arrian. *Anab.* I. 7–10; Plut. *Alex.* 11).

To sum up, we note that quite early, even before Herodotus, there was a tendency to highlight the heroism of only Leonidas' detachment, mentioning in passing or completely ignoring the role of the Thespians both in the Battle of Thermopylae and in the Greco-Persian Wars in general⁴¹. This was partly because the Greeks, quite naturally, viewed Sparta (along with Athens) as the undisputed political leaders, thanks to whose efforts the victory over the Persians had been achieved. The merits of these two cities were so great that they involuntarily overshadowed the contribution of other Greeks to the overall victory. As for Thermopylae specifically, the role of the Spartans in that battle seems to have been imagined by the Greeks to be more significant than it actually was. This is largely explained by the fact that the allied army was led by a Spartan – King Leonidas. He became a key figure at Thermopylae, a model of military valor and patriotism. Already in Herodotus' description of the last battle, traces of stylization in the spirit of Homer are visible, especially in the picture of the Spartans' struggle for the body of their king with its obvious epic coloring (VII. 225)⁴². It is not surprising that Herodotus, apparently in line with an already established legend, praised Leonidas' military talents extremely highly (VII. 204). The historian, apparently wanting to expand the Greeks' knowledge of Leonidas and to emphasize the antiquity and nobility of his origin, even provided a complete list of all his ancestors, right up to Heracles (VII. 204)⁴³. Greek genealogies like these, with so many ancestors (both mythical and historical), are rare⁴⁴.

The legend of Thermopylae, which has become one of the key elements of European and Western cultural tradition, was largely formed thanks to the efforts of the Spartan authorities. They were probably able to secure the support of both the Delphic Oracle and the famous priestly family of the Melampides⁴⁵, to which Megistias belonged. Certainly, both the Delphic priests⁴⁶ and the famous Greek soothsayers who collaborated with Sparta played a role in developing the official version of the death of Leonidas and his detachment. For the Spartans themselves, the legend of Thermopylae became the central event of their history

⁴⁰ BECK, GANTER 2015, 151.

⁴¹ LORAUX 1977, 113.

⁴² Researchers have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the fierce struggle for Leonidas' body is reminiscent of certain episodes from the Iliad, especially those that deal with the struggle around Patroclus' body (Il. XVII. 256–318) (VANNICELLI, CORCELLA 2017, 577–578; ZALI 2021, 238; TUPLIN 2022, 354–355, n.171).

⁴³ Leonidas was given posthumous honors that were unusual even for Spartan kings. He was the first to have a separate tombstone erected in the very center of the city (Plut. *Lyc.* 27. 1–2; Paus. III. 14. 1). The Spartans even instituted an annual festival in Leonidas' honor – *Leonideia* (Λεωνιδεία) (Paus. III. 14. 1).

⁴⁴ VANNICELLI, CORCELLA 2017, 555–556.

⁴⁵ For the Melampides, with reference to literature, see: VANNICELLI, CORCELLA 2017, 573.

⁴⁶ The Spartan kings had long-standing and very close ties with Delphi. There are a number of known cases where the Delphic priests helped individual kings to obtain the prophecies they needed. Sometimes, to please the kings, priests even decided to fabricate oracles (Her. VI. 66; Thuc. I. 134. 44; II. 21. 1; V. 16. 2–3; Plut. *Per.* 22–23; cf.: Diod. XI. 45. 8–9).

and an important element of the patriotic education of their own youth. And outside of Sparta, the feat of the three hundred Spartans began to be perceived as an unsurpassed example of heroism.

Herodotus contributed to this tradition, focusing mainly on the heroism and sacrifice of Leonidas and his 300 Spartans. The military defeat of the Spartans under the pen of Herodotus was transformed into the most striking demonstration of the moral superiority of the Spartans not only over the Persians, but also over the rest of the Greeks. In such a context, of course, the Thespians were not needed. They, despite their outstanding valor, failed, unlike the Spartans, to make their name an appellative word⁴⁷. I think it is no great exaggeration to say that Herodotus' account of the Battle of Thermopylae is dominated by the Spartan tradition. One of the many Boeotian cities, Thespieae found itself in the shadow of the great Sparta. This is psychologically understandable. For example, the Athenians often forgot about the help of the Plataeans in order to attribute the glory of Marathon to themselves alone (Her. IX. 27. 5; Thuc. I. 73. 4; Lys. *Epitaph*. 23–24)⁴⁸. Apparently, Athenian orators repeated this false assertion about the Plataeans so often that it became a propaganda *cliché*. And others did the same. Thus, Thucydides conveys the words of the Plataeans, addressed to the Spartans in 427, that in the battle of Plataea (479) they were the only Boeotians who fought (III. 54. 3). That is, the Plataeans also quite deliberately forgot to mention the Thespians.

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⁴⁷ The Thespians, for example, are not even mentioned in Zack Snyder's famous film '300 Spartans'.

⁴⁸ LORAUX 1977, 114.

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The Shadow of Sextus Pompeius in Virgil's *Aeneid*

Lee FRATANTUONO¹

Abstract. *The article argues that Virgil's Aeneid contains subtle allusions to Sextus Pompeius, a rival of Octavian. These references appear in several key episodes, including the storms faced by Aeneas's fleet, which mirror Octavian's naval disasters against Sextus. The deaths of Aeneas's companions, Palinurus and Misenus, are also seen as symbolic of Octavian's losses, given their names are tied to real-world locations from the conflict. Furthermore, the episode where the Trojan women attempt to burn Aeneas's ships is interpreted as a metaphor for Sextus's later attempts to burn his rival's fleet. The article concludes that Virgil intentionally used these veiled references to depict Octavian's victory over Sextus, a sensitive topic for Augustan propaganda due to the civil nature of the war*

Rezumat. *Articolul susține că Eneida lui Virgiliu conține aluzii subtile la Sextus Pompeius, un rival al lui Octavian. Aceste referințe apar în mai multe episoade cheie, inclusiv furtunile înfruntate de flota lui Eneas, care oglindesc dezaastrele navale ale lui Octavian în lupta cu Sextus. Morțile însoțitorilor lui Eneas, Palinurus și Misenus, sunt de asemenea considerate simbolice pentru pierderile lui Octavian, deoarece numele lor sunt legate de locuri reale din timpul conflictului. În plus, episodul în care femeile troiene încearcă să incendieze corăbiile lui Enea este interpretat ca o metaforă a încercărilor ulterioare ale lui Sextus de a incendia flota rivalului său. Articolul concluzionează că Virgiliu a folosit intenționat aceste referințe voalate pentru a descrie victoria lui Octavian asupra lui Sextus, un subiect delicat pentru propaganda augustană din cauza naturii civile a războiului.*

Keywords: Sextus Pompeius, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Octavian/Augustus, Roman civil wars, propaganda.

Among the noteworthy figures of late republican history, Sextus Pompeius presents a curious enigma². Pompey's younger son was a significant player in Roman political and military affairs for more than a dozen years after the Battle of Pharsalus. From Africa to Spain to Sicily to Asia Minor, Sextus lived a life of adventure and daring, now and again clashing and coming to terms with the men who would constitute the Second Triumvirate (Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus). Famous for his naval clashes with Octavian (and his admiral Agrippa) in 37-36 B.C., Sextus would prove to be a resilient challenge to the maintenance of order in the western Mediterranean. Finally defeated in the waters off Sicily and compelled to flee to the East, Sextus was captured and slain in 35, in an ignominious end to a colorful career.

Sextus is referenced in the *Epodes* of the Augustan poet Horace, where he is identified as the *Neptunius dux* (9.7-8), in something of a dismissive nod to the grandiose place of the sea god in his iconography³. Our purpose will not be to revisit well-trodden paths of Horatian

¹ Maynooth University, Maynooth, Ireland, lee.fratantuono@mu.ie; ORCID: 0009-0002-1828-2678.

² For a detailed biography and appraisal see HADAS 1930. WELCH 2012 is noteworthy for its treatment of numismatic evidence; cf. ROWAN 2019, 72-79. Various aspects of the life and its depiction in literature are considered in POWELL, WELCH 2002. On the history of the period note especially DE MÉRITENS DE VILLENEUVE 2023. The present study focuses on literary evidence, with only occasional forays into coinage. "How the participants in the civil wars following Caesar's murder used coin types is the subject of much debate" (ZARROW 2003).

³ On the depiction of Sextus in Horace note WATSON 2002, 213-228; cf. WATSON 1987, 119-129, his notes *ad loc.* in WATSON 2003, and the commentary of MANKIN 1995. Horace alludes derisively to Sextus' use of freedmen and slaves in his operations (9.9-10). The seventh epode expresses fear about renewed civil war; the reference at 7.3-4 to the question of the shedding of Latin blood on fields and the sea (*Neptuno*) may be generic, but naval engagements with

scholarship by re-examining the ninth epode, but to consider a related question in Augustan poetry: are there allusions to Sextus in Virgil's *Aeneid*?⁴ While certainty is impossible and a degree of speculation inevitable, we shall endeavor to build a case for detecting the influence of Octavian's engagements with Sextus on Virgil's portrayal of aspects of the hazards encountered by Aeneas on his journey to Italy, especially as recounted in the first book of the epic⁵. First, detailed analysis of elements of the storm sequence in *Aeneid* 1 will support the thesis that Virgil intended to evoke memories of the war with Sextus as part of his depiction of Aeneas, with the goal of solidifying connections between his hero and the *princeps*. Second, later evocations of storm imagery (and losses connected to the sea) in the epic will also be considered, as part of an investigation into the development and refinement of the poet's allegorical equation of Aeneas and Augustus. Third, we shall give due attention to Virgil's allusions to Agrippa and his achievements in both military and public works projects and undertakings, as well as the honors he won in battle. Lastly, we shall see how the Sextus war offers a possible explanation for the otherwise seemingly fantastic episode of the attempted burning of Aeneas' ships and their transformation into sea creatures.

The present investigation is rooted in previous scholarly efforts to find allegories of contemporary history in the *Aeneid*. Yves Nadeau notably saw the figure of Sextus lurking behind the depiction of the Harpy Celaeno in *Aeneid* 3. In Nadeau's argument, Virgil's Celaeno threatened Aeneas and his men with extreme hunger, in allusion to how Sextus threatened the Roman economy and caused privation and want by blockade and quasi-piratical raids⁶. Others have followed a more circumspect course, while acknowledging that "It is conceivable ... that at the time Vergil was writing the *Aeneid*, the presence of Sextus was more strongly felt than is now apparent"⁷. But there has been no comprehensive look at the matter of possible allusions to Sextus in Virgil's epic. By assembling relevant passages and examining closely the connections between candidates for inclusion in the roster of "Sextus scenes" in the *Aeneid*, it will be possible to explore the related questions of why Virgil would allude to the son of Pompey in his Augustan epic, and of how he chose to present the problem of Sextus in the record of Augustus' career. The problem is worthy of investigation precisely because the undeniably civil character of the conflict with Sextus posed appreciable difficulties for Augustan propaganda, at least as compared to the war with Ptolemaic Egypt.

We may commence our study near the beginning of Virgil's epic. The storm in *Aeneid* 1 immerses the reader almost at once in an immense crisis⁸. While Virgil's tempest narrative has formal literary antecedents, the consequences of the storm are of far greater import than in his epic predecessors⁹. Conjured by Aeolus at the behest of Juno, the devastating meteorological

Sextus in particular may have been on Horace's mind. Especially after Actium, it was easy to evoke the difficulties and horrors of the war against Sextus by reference to challenges at sea; the reader would think of the defeat of Cleopatra and her lover, while also remembering Octavian's longer and more arduous campaign against a fellow Roman.

⁴ It is noteworthy that Sextus and Cleopatra are never referred to by name in Augustan poetry. There are clear allusions to Cleopatra in Horace, Virgil, and in Augustan elegy, and the sole reference to Sextus in *Epode* 9. But neither adversary is named explicitly.

⁵ On Book 1 of the *Aeneid* see further AUSTIN 1971; STÉGEN 1975; and FRATANTUONO, ROUMPOU forthcoming.

⁶ NADEAU 2007, 94-98. The same scholar expanded his argument in his subsequent paper NADEAU 2009, 35-42.

⁷ SPENCE 2023, 166, n. 51.

⁸ The bibliography is predictably extensive; cf. in particular RAABE 1974, 74 ff.; HARDIE 1986, 176-193, and VILLALBA SALÓ 2021, 47-48, 54-59.

⁹ Cf. *Od.* 5.282-312, 7.244-55 and 13.403-49, and *Arg.* 4.1225 ff.

disturbance is quelled only by the intervention of Neptune¹⁰. All of this is deeply immersed in the realm of mythology and poetic fancy, though in his crowning scene of the pacification of the sea, Virgil introduces a striking political image, of undeniable immediate resonance to his contemporary audience:

*ac ueluti magno in populo cum saepe coorta est
seditio saeuitque animis ignobile uulgus,
iamque faces et saxa uolant, furor arma ministrat;* 150
*tum, pietate grauem ac meritis si forte uirum quem
conspexere, silent arrectisque auribus adstant;
ille regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet:
sic cunctus pelagi cecidit fragor, aequora postquam
prospiciens genitor caeloque inuectus aperto* 155
*flectit equos curruque uolans dat lora secundo. (1.148-56)*¹¹

This is the first formal simile of the epic, prominent by priority and allusive import¹². Possible historical identifications of the nameless man of the simile have been suggested, in particular Augustus¹³. But it has been recognized that a considerable part of the simile's power comes from its studied ambiguities¹⁴.

I would argue that for the poem's first, programmatic simile, Augustus is the likeliest comparand. The context is a storm at sea, which metaphorically may recall the victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, but more properly evokes the memory of the struggle against Sextus, where stormy weather was as much a hazard (if not more) as anything mustered by Sextus and his officers. Especially given the place of the god Neptune in Sextus' iconographic propaganda, a case could be made that Virgil's audience would have thought first and foremost of what Augustus had achieved in 38-6 in his dealings with the son of Pompey. The first simile is invested with importance by its very priority; the comparison describes the work of a god. It befits Augustus.

Octavian faced enormous challenges in dealing with Sextus. The storm that wrecked his fleet during the Sicilian campaign in the late spring/early summer of 38 was one of the gravest¹⁵. The embellished account in Appian is a masterpiece of rhetorical prose¹⁶. The disaster would spur the energetic and ultimately supremely efforts of Agrippa in 37 to refurbish

¹⁰ At 1.65-75, Juno makes her appeal to the wind god Aeolus, who accedes to her plan at 76-80. At 81-101 the storm is unleashed; the Trojan ships are wrecked (102-23). Neptune becomes aware of the crisis, and he summon the winds (124-31). He vents his anger, and sees to the priority of restoring peace to the waves (132-41). The storm is calmed (142-56).

¹¹ Quotes from the *Aeneid* are cited from CONTE 2019.

¹² Cf. here CARLSON 1972, 22 ff.; GLEI 1991, 24 ff., and ADLER 2003, 92 ff.

¹³ See CONWAY 1935, *ad loc.* in favor of the view that the simile recalls an event that Virgil himself saw that left a vivid impression (*contra* Austin, who argues for a more general application). MOUNTFORD 2017 argues that Maecenas may be the intended referent. Certainly, Maecenas played a significant role in quelling discontent in Rome during the Sextus crisis. "Maecenas stayed behind to govern affairs in Rome and the rest of Italy. Sextus had become a magnet for those who had become disenfranchised by the Triumvirs' violent initiatives, and his effective sea force had placed the grain supply to Rome under constant threat" (LAW 2024, XIV).

¹⁴ BECK 2014, 67-83.

¹⁵ For the date see HADAS 1930, 110-111 (citing Appian 5.89, and comparing Suetonius, *Augustus* 16.1).

¹⁶ 5.89-90; see also the narrative in Dio (48.48.1-4), with the notes *ad loc.* of FREYBURGER, RODDAZ 1994.

Octavian's navy and to train an effective marine force; victory at sea would follow in 36¹⁷. A key impetus for the intense attention to naval matters was the fact that Octavian's forces seemed to suffer from a lack of experience in dealing with spring storms compared to Sextus' fleet¹⁸.

Apart from this major weather-related crisis, Octavian's fleet suffered an earlier, ominous loss on account of a storm¹⁹. His commander Lucius Cornificius lost only one ship en route to Tarentum, but the vessel was the flagship intended for Octavian's use. Appian notes that the sinking of the ship was taken to be a harbinger of future ills (... καὶ ἔδοξε τοῦτ' ἐς τὰ μέλλοντα σημεῖναι).

And there was more. Dio relates the storm-related catastrophe suffered by another of Octavian's commanders, Gaius Calvisius Sabinus²⁰. His fleet was wrecked off the promontory of Scyllaeum while he was pursuing forces allied to Sextus. In other words, first there was the tempest that sank Octavian's newly commissioned flagship that Cornificius was conducting to Tarentum. Then a storm wreaked havoc with a significant deployment of his navy under Calvisius. Further, there was the aforementioned meteorological disaster of the late spring/early summer of 38.

Storms were a regular feature of ancient naval operations; the peril they posed was impossible to predict with anything approaching reliable accuracy. Lepidus himself suffered appreciable losses from a storm system when he made his landing in Sicily in July of 36 to support the campaign against Sextus. Octavian's vessels also fared poorly in this period, when a storm struck near the promontory of Palinurus in Lucania. One ship was lost, while the rest were able to hurry to shelter in the Bay of Velia²¹. Relief was momentary. A southwesterly wind followed on a southerly, and the ships were effectively trapped in the bay given its westward opening. The vessels could not be properly moored or anchored, and they began to crash into each other and the shoals. The coming of night only worsened the situation. In the end, the losses were considerable: six heavy ships, twenty-six lighter vessels, and still more of the fast-moving Liburnians that constituted so potent a force with which to confront Sextus²². It would take a month for Agrippa's shipbuilding elves to make up for the catastrophe in the bay. There was serious consideration of delaying the campaign, but the privations occasioned by Sextus' effective harassment of Roman commerce demanded a rapid resolution of the problem.

We may tabulate the storm incidents. Apart from the ominous loss of the flagship that Cornificius was escorting and the storms that struck Calvisius and Lepidus, there were two weather-related disasters that befell Octavian himself. The storm of 38 inspired a long program of refurbishment and preparation for naval war. The storm of 36 caused chaos in what was supposed to be a safe, sheltered haven. The loss of one ship was but a harbinger of the disaster to come.

From Sextus' vantage point, it is easy to see how the readily exploitable propaganda coup developed that he was nothing less than a son of Neptune²³. After either the Velia disaster or the earlier storm of 38, Sextus is said to have begun to don a dark blue robe and to subscribe to

¹⁷ For a definitive account of Agrippa's career see POWELL 2014.

¹⁸ See further here HADAS 1930, 110-111.

¹⁹ Appian 5.80.

²⁰ 48.47.1-3.

²¹ Appian 5.98.

²² Appian 5.99.

²³ Cf. here GURVAL 1995, 91-92, and SUMI 2015, 197.

the conceit of Neptunian origins²⁴. The idea seems to have arisen from the role that Pompey the Great played in the history of the Roman navy; he was celebrated for his successful efforts to curtail pirate raids in the Mediterranean²⁵. It was no surprise that his son would seek to inherit the naval mantle, especially after Octavian seems to have so many disasters on the water.

Sextus had no monopoly on the employment of the sea god in his propaganda²⁶. Antony utilized Neptune for his own image enhancement: “sesterces minted c. 36-35 BC show Antony and Octavia as Poseidon and Amphitrite ...”²⁷. We cannot be sure how much of this reflects an Antonian response to Sextus. Any military hero projecting power on the waves would be tempted to embrace Poseidon as patron.

I propose that the first simile of the *Aeneid* would seem to equate Augustus with Neptune. The god plays an interesting role in the epic, as he did in the propaganda of the variegated history of the wars of the late republican civil wars²⁸. Not surprisingly, Octavian made solemn offerings to Neptune at Puteoli before his climactic clash with Sextus²⁹. There is an element of appropriation here, of tactfully encouraging a god to transfer his allegiance to the winning cause. In the history of Octavian’s eventual consolidation of power, naval supremacy encompasses Actium as well as his earlier achievements against Sextus. Actium was a comparatively far easier campaign, in no small part because of the extensive experience of naval operations mastered by Agrippa.

Neptune constituted but one element of Sextus’ iconographic image. The concept of *pietas* was another³⁰. In Virgil it is Aeneas’ signal quality from the proem of the epic (cf. 1.10 *insignem pietate uirum*)³¹. And *pietas* is also highlighted as an attribute of the nameless man of the simile (*tum, pietate grauem ac meritis si forte uirum quem / conspexere, silent arrectisque auribus adstant*). This is a key detail that diverges somewhat from the events that prompted the simile. Neptune is annoyed that the winds have usurped his marine prerogatives; *pietas* is not really a factor. But the man who calms the crowd clearly succeeds in his pacification of the civil disturbance in no small part because of this storied quality.

To be fair, as was true for Neptunian imagery, so also in the matter of *pietas* it was not uncommon for Roman luminaries to invoke the virtue; both Octavian and Antony donned its mantle³². The sons of Pompey (Sextus and his older brother Gnaeus) employed *Pietas* as the watchword for their cause at the Battle of Munda in 45³³. Given their violent deaths, both Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar were potent catalysts for demonstrations of this characteristic Roman quality on the part of their sons by blood or adoption.

²⁴ Cf. Dio 48.48.5 (describing the aftermath of the storm of 38) and Appian 5.100 (after Velia).

²⁵ See WELCH 2012, 43-91 (“Sons of Neptune”) on Pompey’s naval strategy with both the pirates and Caesar, and the question of what his sons did with what they inherited from their father. On Sextus’ particular role in naval history note also CALIRI 2024, 111-123 (a helpful study).

²⁶ On the topic of claims of the particular favor of certain gods in this period, note FREYBURGER-GALLAND 2009, 17-30.

²⁷ WATSON 2003, 320.

²⁸ DREW 1927, 71-72 considers the place of the god in the epic in light of the conflict with Sextus in particular; more generally, see POWELL 2008, 93 ff. and FRATANTUONO 2015, 130-148.

²⁹ Cf. WELCH 2012, 273.

³⁰ See further KOPIJ 2011, 203-218; GOŁYŹNIAK 2020, 135-138.

³¹ See further here SUERBAUM 1999, 207-209. ERDMANN 2000, 184-187, and VON ALBRECHT 2006, 173-174; cf. LOVATT 2019, 394-397. On less commendable traditions surrounding Aeneas, note CALLU 1978, 161-174.

³² Cf. WELCH 2012, 26-31, 219-220, and 304 ff.

³³ See here WELCH 2012, 113.

The hero Aeneas had associations with *pietas* that predate Augustan poetry³⁴. But let us consider more closely the Virgilian context in which Aeneas is introduced. The epic action commences *in medias res*, and the first trial that Aeneas endures is the great storm. One prominent feature of the tempest is how ships are driven toward hidden rocks, shoals, and sandbars (1.108-12). While the fleet will be sorely discomfited and rendered largely inoperable absent repairs, in the end only one vessel is actually lost (1.113-17).

The action into which the reader is immersed is heralded by mention of Sicily (1.34 *Vix e conspectu Siculae telluris in altum*). After their sojourn with Acestes, the Trojans set sail for the mainland, only to be hampered by Juno's machinations with Aeolus³⁵. While Sicily evokes memories of the First Punic War (and its bard Naevius), for Virgil's audience the long conflict with Sextus would be more readily recalled³⁶. For the Trojans, disaster strikes almost as soon as they are out of sight of the island.

Aeneas is associated with *pietas* in the epic poem, and the signal quality is mentioned as a defining attribute of the anonymous man of the simile. If Augustus is referenced, we are invited to compare the *princeps* to Aeneas.

Notably, stormy conditions will compel the Trojans to make a return visit to Sicily after their Carthaginian interlude (5.1-34). The meteorological conditions described there do not cause any harm to the refurbished fleet, but they do compel Aeneas and his men to make a detour back to the island. Calm conditions will then prevail for the next leg of the journey to Hesperia³⁷. But the sea's serenity is paid for with the life of Aeneas' helmsman Palinurus, whose mysterious death at the close of *Aeneid* 5 (833-71) has been studied as part of a reminiscence of Octavian's experiences in the Sextus campaign³⁸. There has been speculation that the trumpeter Misenus was the actual life that Neptune demanded, and at the very least Misenus has been viewed as a "doublet" of Palinurus. Misenus challenged the gods and was hurled into the sea by Triton (6.171-4), while his funeral was a necessary antecedent of Aeneas' descent to the underworld (6.158-82), his death was not Neptune's price. His name, however, would have been associated with the locus of the ill-fated Treaty of Misenum in 39, that brief interlude of hopeful peace before the resumption of conflict with Sextus.

In Aeneas' rendition of the journeys of the Trojans at Dido's banquet, he recalls the stormy conditions that befell his fleet and that compelled him to make a stop at the Strophades, where he encountered Celaeno (3.192-210). Palinurus was unable to navigate successfully given the bad weather.

What we have then are three storms: 1) the tempest that forced the landing at the Harpies' lair, 2) the major disturbance en route from Sicily to Italy that led to the arrival in North Africa, and 3) the deteriorating conditions that prompt Palinurus to recommend a detour back to Sicily before proceeding to Italy. There were thus two storms that Aeneas' fleet actually weathered, one far more grievous than the other. These two storms from *Aeneid* 1 and 3 may have been

³⁴ Cf. Xenophon, *Cyn.* 1.15: Αἰνεΐας δὲ σώσας μὲν τοὺς πατρώους καὶ μητρῶους θεούς, σώσας δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν πατέρα, **δόξαν εὐσεβείας** ἐξηνέγκατο, ὥστε καὶ οἱ πολέμιοι μόνῳ ἐκείνῳ ὦν ἐκράτησαν ἐν Τροίᾳ ἔδωσαν μὴ συληθῆναι (text from MARCHANT 1920).

³⁵ On Sicily in Virgil see especially MONACO 1984, 274-282.

³⁶ For reminiscences of the First Punic War in Virgil note GOLDSCHMIDT 2013, 110. The fact that the conflict with Sextus was fought in the same waters would be a feature in commemorative artwork; on this see BIGGS 2018, 47-68, especially 49-50. On all things Punic in the epic see especially GIUSTI 2018.

³⁷ See further here the perceptive article of JOHNSTON 1981, 23-30.

³⁸ BRENN 1988, 69-80.

intended to correspond to Octavian's disasters in 38 and 36. The major storm hits just out of sight of Sicily, while the threat of a new disturbance is what prompts a return visit to the island.

Sicily is also associated with the hazard posed by the marine monster Scylla. In Virgil, she is presented as a threat that Aeneas must take pains to avoid as he follows in something of the footsteps of Odysseus (3.410-32)³⁹. Scylla figured in the numismatic iconography of Sextus⁴⁰. Anton Powell has argued that Virgil alludes to Sextus' use of Scylla imagery in association with Octavian's losses in the strait of Messina⁴¹. The storm that struck Calvisius just off Scyllaeum would have been all too easy to associate with the monster who lent the promontory her name, as would the troubles that ensued in the same vicinity in the immediate aftermath.

Leaving aside Nadeau's ingenious speculation about Celaeno's evocation of Sextus, we are left with storms in Sicilian waters and deaths (Palinurus, Misenus) associated with places that recall Octavian's conflict with Pompey's son. Why is there is no explicit reference to Sextus in the *Aeneid*? Antony is depicted on the shield of Aeneas (8.675-713), which for its centerpiece has a depiction of the Battle of Actium, complete with Augustus, Agrippa, Antony, and Egypt's queen (as well as a host of deities)⁴². Antony, however, was associated with the foreign Cleopatra; the civil dimension of the war was more or less easily glossed over by depicting Augustus and Agrippa as defenders of Rome against Egypt. Sextus presented a more uncomfortable situation, not least because of the respectful, indeed venerable place of his father in the Roman consciousness. In the vision of Roman history that the shade of Anchises reveals to his son in the underworld, the civil war between Caesar and Pompey is glimpsed with dread and the prayer that it might be averted (6.826-35)⁴³. The conflict between Octavian and Sextus was not so easy to incorporate into the portrait of Augustus as conqueror of external foes and bringer of peace and a restored Golden Age. Sextus could be cast in the role of pirate in triumphal propaganda, indeed as a betrayer of his father's cause and the liberation of the Mediterranean from pirate raids. But such attempts were by no means universally accepted, and if the war with Antony had uncomfortable associations, the Sextus problem was even more fraught with the distasteful memory of long decades of bloody civil war.⁴⁴

There is a subtle allusion to Sextus in the picture of Actium on the shield. Agrippa is explicitly identified by his *corona navalis*, the decoration that he received for his victory over Sextus at Naulochus in 36 (8.682-4)⁴⁵. Naulochus was the occasion for a flurry of commemorative acts, and in time it was all too easy to confuse and conflate Actium and

³⁹ On Virgil's Scylla passage see WILLIAMS 1962; HORSFALL 2006; HEYWORTH, MORWOOD 2017, *ad loc.* At 7.302-3, Juno laments that Scylla and Charybdis were of no avail to her in her efforts to thwart the Trojan arrival in Hesperia. *Scyllae biformes* are among the bogeys at the threshold of the underworld (6.286). In a less ominous context, Cloanthus' ship at the regatta is named the *Scylla* (5.122-3).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., KERSTEN 2024, 80-81.

⁴¹ POWELL 2008, 100-107; see further here KAYACHEV 2020, 94. On the appeal of the vivid association of Sextus and Scylla for employment in literary imagery, note GERRISH 2016, 193-217.

⁴² On this passage note *ad loc.* EDEN 1975; FRATANTUONO, SMITH 2018.

⁴³ See further here AUSTIN 1977; HORSFALL 2013, *ad loc.*, and cf. the pessimistic reading of FARRON 1980, 53-68. Attempts have been made to find allusions to Pompey elsewhere in the epic; note Bowie 1990, 470-481 (and cf. Moles 1983, 287-288). More generally on the question of the portrayal of Caesar in the epic, note White 1988, 334-356.

⁴⁴ Lange 2014, 69-98 is an insightful assessment of how some of the problems inherent to portraying internecine strife were handled in this period.

⁴⁵ We may note here that the argument has been made that Virgil allegorical alludes to Agrippa in his depiction of Aeneas' colleague Achates (see, e.g., POWELL 2018, 106; cf. DREW 1927, 86 ff.). Achates has received more attention than this relatively brief appearances in the epic might seem to warrant, with a monograph (WEBER 1988) and several shorter studies devoted to him.

Naulochus⁴⁶. Whether Agrippa was the first to receive the decoration or the only one, the very rarity of the award made it noteworthy for inclusion on the shield, but no contemporary reader would have failed to remember Sextus⁴⁷. The very subtlety of the reference further displays the problems that Sextus posed for Octavian's reputation. Horace's labeling of Sextus as the *Neptunius dux* reflects a certain criticism of those who would foolishly don divine trappings. Virgil follows a more indirect path than his poetic colleague.

In the years after Actium, Sicily was a major agenda item in the Augustan settlement, as consolidation followed on the suppression of military threat⁴⁸. In short, what had been a respectably prosperous, increasingly urbanized landscape was radically transformed economically into what Shelley Stone has labeled "a purely agricultural appendage of Italy". Sicily was of immense strategic value, and the Augustan reduction of the island to pastoral breadbasket served in part to ensure that it would never again be a bastion of potential military or economic threat to Rome⁴⁹.

Virgil's Sicily is the locus for the attempt of the Trojan women to burn Aeneas' ships (5.604-99). It is significant that Virgil chose to set this episode on the island, given that traditionally it seems to have been associated with the founding of Rome⁵⁰. The burning of the ships has parallels to the storm of *Aeneid* 1. Juno is once again the instigator, and she uses another minion (Iris for Aeolus). Neptune's realm was infringed in the case; for the burning, the disguised Iris recommends using fire from four altars to the god (5.639-40), and in the end four ships are entirely lost (5.698-9). Water is the element of the one assault, fire of the other. In the end, a Trojan settlement (Acesta/Segesta) is established in Sicily, though it is composed of the survivors of the four lost ships, and from those who did not have the energy or spirit for the struggles to come (5.713-8). To the best of our knowledge Segesta was largely irrelevant to the Sextus campaign. What matters most in Virgil's narrative is that the Trojans who stay behind in Sicily include the weak and the infirm. The episode of the ship-burning is transferred from Latium to Sicily, and in consequence Sicily is associated with betrayal (the women are engaging in a profoundly civil act of violence), and, ultimately, with pacification and a degree of enervation. This all accords with what happened in the 30s (including how some of Octavian's ships were burned after Velia)⁵¹.

We have mentioned the immense labors that Agrippa oversaw in 37 as part of the effort to refurbish Octavian's navy. The public works projects connected with this undertaking were centered on the lakes of the Gulf of Baiae (Lucrinus and Avernus) that served as Agrippa's main naval base⁵². Cumae was part of the building program that Agrippa undertook at the behest of his colleague, and the temple of Apollo that was rebuilt and renovated is memorably recalled in Aeneas' visit to the god's shrine in the opening scene of *Aeneid* 6 (9-41)⁵³. The memory of the

⁴⁶ On the former see ROLLER 2018, 148; on the latter, note POLLINI 2012, 74.

⁴⁷ Cf. here VERVAET, DART 2018, 313-345; BARAZ 2020, 175; MAXFIELD 1981, 74-75.

⁴⁸ On this subject see further the important study of STONE III 1983, 11-22, which was reprinted (with revisions) in POWELL, WELCH 2002, 135-165.

⁴⁹ On the strategic value of the island note DENIAUX 2014, 127-144.

⁵⁰ See further here GALINSKY 2014, 1172.

⁵¹ Cf. HADAS 1930, 125 (referencing Dio 49.1.3).

⁵² On Virgil's reminiscence at G. 2.160-4 of the veritable conquest of nature accomplished by Agrippa see LEACH 1999, 115-116.

⁵³ It is beyond the scope of this study to consider the question of the temple artwork that captivates Aeneas' attention, let alone the implications of the poet's introduction of Daedalus and Ariadne lore. For a start to a vast subject, see SYED 2005, 79 ff.

campaigns against Sextus is thus recalled at a significant juncture in the narrative, namely on the cusp of Aeneas' descent to the underworld. Aeneas encounters Palinurus' shade in the underworld (6.337-83), and we have mentioned the Misenus episode from the same book. The Palinurus passage closes with an emphasis on the everlasting memorial that will be accorded to the lost hero (6.378-81); similar attention to the locus of Misenus' *tumulus* (6.232-5). The grave honors of both Trojans reflect something of the great losses incurred by Octavian in the same vicinities. The sixth *Aeneid* palpably recalls both what Octavian suffered, and how Agrippa assisted him in resolving the crisis in Sicilian and adjacent waters. Whatever mastery of naval warfare was attained by the experience of fighting Sextus was then employed in the campaigns of 31.

There is one last episode of note in conjunction to the Sextus peril that Octavian endured. While Aeneas is away from his camp in search of local allies (not to mention his reception of the divine shield), Turnus is frustrated by the unwillingness of the Trojans to engage in an open, pitched battle. He decides to try to set fire to the Trojan fleet (9.69-76)⁵⁴. The ships are magically transformed into sea creatures after Cybele appeals to Jupiter (9.77-122). There are obvious parallels here to the Sicilian episode. In Sicily disaster was averted by a timely Jovian rainstorm; in Latium, we have the fantastic metamorphosis of ships that are no longer needed.

Toward the end of his career, Sextus tried to flee into the interior of Bithynia, with locales like Armenia on his ultimate itinerary. He burned his fleet, deciding to rely solely on a land force as he sought to escape his pursuers by heading inland⁵⁵. He was pursued, and in the end, he conceived the bold plan to try to set fire to the ships of Marcus Titius, who had been sent by Antony with an army and a fleet to bring Sextus to Alexandria⁵⁶. Appian is of the opinion that Sextus could have succeeded in his daring enterprise, had his friend Scaurus not deserted him.⁵⁷

In Virgil's narrative, there is one final scene that recalls the image of naval disasters, as Turnus makes his incendiary threats against the Trojan ships. The fiery peril is averted by the dramatic intervention of the Trojan mother goddess Cybele, who successfully importunes Jupiter to allow her to save the fleet. The ships will not be burned, but they are also unnecessary. And so, they are transformed into nymphs.

Critics and commentators have rendered various judgments on the success of Virgil's scene. It is one of the more fantastic and otherworldly sequences in the epic. It makes more sense if viewed in light of the resolution of the Sextus problem.

After Octavian's victory at Naulochus, Sextus was able to escape to Asia. He had had success in his career playing the triumvirs against each other, and his eastward flight took him to Antony's sphere of influence, thus complicating the already thorny question of Octavian's possible pursuit of his adversary. Sextus had a brief, checkered career in this period, winning some victories that were reminiscent of the flair and spirit of the commander at his best, while also suffering setbacks that were indicative of how unlikely it was that he would regroup and rebuild successfully yet again. In the end he contemplated burning the ships of his adversary, only to be stymied by Scaurus' desertion. Responsibility for his death would be somewhat open to dispute. There was the question of whether Titius acted on his own responsibility, or on orders from Antony⁵⁸. Octavian would formally celebrate the death with games, only later to

⁵⁴ Cf. here HARDIE 1994; DINGEL 1997, *ad loc.*

⁵⁵ See here HADAS 1930, 156-158 (with reference to Appian 5.139-40).

⁵⁶ Appian 5.141-2.

⁵⁷ On Scaurus see HADAS 1930, 158.

⁵⁸ Cf. Appian 5.144.

blame the death on Antony – clear enough evidence that the Sextus question was a delicate one⁵⁹.

In Virgil, Aeneas is not present for Turnus' attempt to burn the ships. The threat from Turnus is quelled by the intervention of Cybele, the preeminent goddess of the Troad. For Virgil's contemporary audience, this would not be a mere instance of poetic, fanciful adventure and magical whimsy. Rather, it would recall how Octavian's Sextus problem was solved in his absence, in the region of the world famous for Troy and the Trojan origins of the Julian *gens*, after a failed attempt by an enemy to burn the ships of his foe.

Without question, Sextus Pompeius was an awkward figure in the résumé of Octavian's early career. The war was both indisputably civil and against the son of the widely revered Pompey. Dismissing Sextus as a buccaneer with delusions of godhead would be more or less persuasive, depending on the audience. Apart from public relations, confronting Sextus was a long and arduous process, one that involved military and political efforts in tandem with surviving and overcoming the vicissitudes of bad weather and severe storms at sea. If there was any stroke of luck for Octavian in the whole enterprise, it came at the end. Sextus' final defeat was achieved without Octavian's involvement, and when relations with his triumphal colleague collapsed beyond repair, it was all too easy for Octavian to pin the blame for Sextus' defeat on Antony, and to claim that he would have spared Pompey's son.

The delicacy of the Sextus question is reflected in Virgil's refraining from direct mentioning him. Aeneas' experience of storms both moderate and severe recalls the peril Octavian endured from the same threat. The double loss of his companions Palinurus and Misenus further evokes the war with Sextus, given the geographical associations of their names, the emphasis on onomastic memorial, and the circumstances of their deaths. Reference to the areas transformed by Agrippa's building projects and naval enterprises adds to the picture, as does the remembrance of his *corona navalis* at Actium, where the Sextus problem is neatly elided into the more readily celebrated victory over Cleopatra and her Roman lover.

But perhaps most strikingly, Octavian's experience with Sextus offers a cipher to aid in understanding the point of the magical interlude of Cybele with the Trojan ships. In the foiling of the burning of ships under the auspices of the Trojan mother goddess, we recall the foiling of Sextus' plan to burn his adversary's ships in Asia Minor. The specter of Sextus haunts the *Aeneid*, notwithstanding any valiant efforts to focus attention on Actium and a less awkward episode of the Roman civil wars.

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⁵⁹ Cf. HADAS 1930, 159.

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The Representation of Plural Female Deities in Ancient Hispania: The Decorated Stelae of Ortigosa and Villoslada in Camero Nuevo (La Rioja, Spain)

Ángel ALEIXANDRE BLASCO¹

Abstract. *Camero Nuevo (La Rioja, Spain) preserves a group of Roman-period funerary stelae featuring anthropomorphic decoration, traditionally interpreted as funerary portraits. This study offers an iconographic and iconological analysis of their most representative elements: the triadic grouping of figures, the bust-like depiction, the emphasis on the head, and the radiate disc. Two of the tombstones, from Ortigosa and Villoslada, depict the figures with female attributions through the schematic representation of breasts. We propose a new interpretation, considering the Celtic substratum and the attested cult of the Matres and other plural female deities in the same area. This analysis offers a deeper insight into the iconography associated with sovereign deities governing both this life and the afterlife, as well as certain dance-related rituals linked to the renewal of nature.*

Rezumat. *El Camero Nuevo (La Rioja, Spania) păstrează un grup de stele funerare din perioada romană cu decor antropomorf, interpretate ca portrete funerare. Această lucrare prezintă un studiu iconografic și iconologic al elementelor sale cele mai reprezentative: gruparea figurilor în număr de trei, reprezentarea sub formă de bust, accentul pe cap și discul radiat. Două dintre pietre funerare, cele ale lui Ortigosa și Villoslada, încorporează caracterizarea feminină a figurilor prin reprezentarea schematică a sânilor. Articolul propune o nouă interpretare, ținând cont de substratul celtic și de cultul Matres atestat în aceeași zonă și alte divinități feminine de natură plurală. Această analiză oferă o perspectivă mai profundă asupra iconografiei asociate cu divinitățile suverane care guvernează atât această viață, cât și viața de apoi, precum și asupra anumitor rituri legate de dans, asociate cu reînnoirea naturii.*

Keywords: Ancient History, Ancient Religions, Epigraphy, Funerary Monuments, Iconography

Introduction

Roman Hispania offers few representations of indigenous deities, despite the attested persistence of religious expressions with a pre-Roman substratum. This contrasts with other regions of the Roman West, where such divine images persist well into the process of Christianization.

The corpus of plural female deities in ancient Hispania² led us to identify different areas of Indo-European or Celtic substratum, whose plastic expressions deserved more careful consideration than previously acknowledged. Our study focuses on two decorated stelae from the Camero Nuevo group (La Rioja, Spain). This group is dated to the Early Empire period, enabling a deeper analysis into the persistence of earlier religious conceptions and the degree of continuity and transformation of ancestral beliefs and representations in Roman-period monuments, as explored in previous research³.

¹ Universitat de València; angel.alexandre@uv.es. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4980-8601.

² ALEIXANDRE BLASCO 2015.

³ BLÁZQUEZ 1983; SALINAS 1984-1985; MARCO SIMON 1987; ídem 1999; SOPENA 1987; LORRIO 1997; GORROCHATEGUI, STEMPEL 2004.

1. The Stelae of the Camero Nuevo Region (La Rioja)

1.1. The Camero Nuevo Region

Camero Nuevo is located in the upper part of the Rioja Media region, bordering the province of Soria (Spain) to the south. It lies in the upper basin of the Iregua River and occupies the northern foothills of the Iberian System, adjacent to the Cebollera and Piqueras mountain ranges. The area consists of forests and grasslands with altitudes exceeding 1,000 metres, making it highly suitable for livestock farming⁴. The rivers that flow through the region — Najerilla, Iregua, Leza, and Cidacos— have irregular courses and flows and have been used throughout different periods for transportation purposes, connecting the Ebro Valley with the Plateau and the upper Duero Valley⁵.

In ancient times, the region was part of the northwesternmost area of the *conventus Caesaragustanus*, territory of the Berones according to literary sources⁶. Camero Nuevo was a relatively isolated area from the main urban centres of the surrounding regions: *Vareia* (Varea) and *Tritium Magallum* (Tricio). However, communication between Camero and the outside world relied on these two enclaves, via certain secondary routes that we can partially reconstruct (Figure 1). The location of *Vareia*, on the route through the Ebro Valley⁷, made it the central urban hub of the territory during Romanisation⁸. Its connection with Camero Nuevo has probably been preserved by the current N-111 road (Mecinaceli-Viana), which follows the Iregua River valley to Numancia⁹. Communication between Camero Nuevo and the municipality of *Tritium Magallum* may have been even more intense, as the communities of Camero could sell their livestock and acquire artisan products there¹⁰. Another route, between Camero region and Demanda Mountain Range, would have taken advantage of the western slope of the Najerilla River valley up to the vicinity of Mansilla and Canales de la Sierra¹¹. Canales forms a natural passage between the Plateau and the Middle Ebro Valley, and it is located on the likely secondary Roman road that connected *Clunia Sulpicia* to *Tritium*¹².

⁴ ESPINOSA 1989.

⁵ VILLACAMPA 1978; ARIÑO, MAGALLÓN 1991-1992.

⁶ VILLACAMPA 1978, 46-48.

⁷ *It. Ant.* 393.2.

⁸ PASCUAL, ESPINOSA 1981, 74.

⁹ CALONGE MIRANDA, 2020.

¹⁰ ESPINOSA 1989, 406.

¹¹ CALONGE MIRANDA 2019, 201.

¹² ARIÑO, MAGALLÓN 1991, 448.

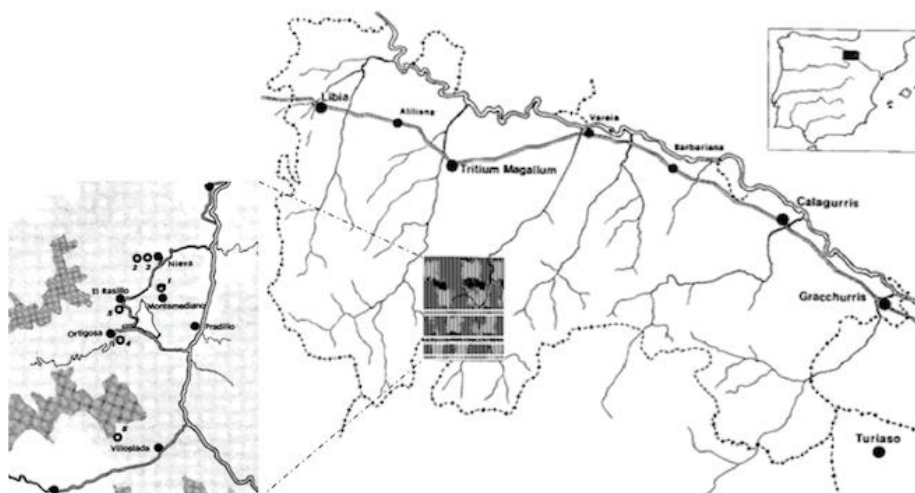


Figure 1. Map of the Rioja territories with markings along the Ebro road. The hatched area indicates the geography corresponding to the Camero Nuevo epigraphic set, extended to the left with the locations of the finds and the numbering of the stelae. Source: Espinosa 1989, Figs. 1 and 2. Layout: own creation.

1.2. The Epigraphic Set: General Features

Around the areas of Nieva, Montemediano, Pradillo, El Rasillo, Ortigosa, Villanueva and Villoslada, an epigraphic set of nearly twenty tombstones has been recovered. This set represents almost 20 % of the regional epigraphic catalogue of La Rioja (Spain)¹³ and it is the most abundant after the Tritian set. The physical conditions of the region suggest that livestock farming was probably the main economic activity. In the peaceful context of the Early Empire, this would have enabled the emergence of a relatively wealthy social class capable of commissioning stonework, such as the pieces that have been preserved¹⁴.

The Camerano epigraphic group is predominantly funerary. The inscriptions preserve anthroponyms of Indo-European substratum. In Nieva de Cameros, an individual named *Titullus Calaedicus(n) Viam(i) f(i)lius*¹⁵ bears a *cognomen* documented in Indo-European Hispania, particularly in central Celtiberia¹⁶; the patronymic *Viamus* may be of pre-Roman origin¹⁷, while *Calaedicus(n)* could refer to a supra-familial organisation, as seen in Hispanic anthroponyms such as *Calaetus* or *Calaitus*¹⁸. In other cases, they appear to be probable Hispanic ethnic groups, such as the *cognomen* *Paesu(ro)* in El Rasillo de Cameros¹⁹.

The votive inscriptions are limited to five copies, two of which have an illegible theonym²⁰. In El Rasillo de Cameros, the local deity named *CALDO VLEDICO*²¹ is believed to be associated with

¹³ *ERRioja*, 12.

¹⁴ ESPINOSA 1989, 414.

¹⁵ *ERRioja*, 52

¹⁶ UNTERMANN 1965, 172, map 75: *Titullus*.

¹⁷ ALBERTOS 1966, 249.

¹⁸ UNTERMANN 1965, 84, map 25: *Calaetus*; ALBERTOS 1966, 72.

¹⁹ *ERRioja*, 61; ESPINOSA 1989, no. 5. In this regard, ALBERTOS 1966, 175. Other associated testimonies are the *cognomina* of kinship detected in the area (*ERRioja*, 53 and 54), regarding this onomastic phenomenon. cf. ABASCAL 1984; ESPINOSA, CASTILLO 1995-1997, 108.

²⁰ Montemediano (ESPINOSA, CASTILLO 1995-1997, no. 7; *Hep* 7, 1997, 587) and Torrecilla de Cameros (*Hep* 6, 1996, 799).

²¹ MORESTIN 1976, 187, Figure 5; *ERRioja*, 60.

a thermal cult. The other two inscriptions, whose theonym are Roman, appear to reflect phenomena of religious syncretism: one dedicated to *Silvanus* in Nieva de Cameros²², and the other to *Jupiter Optimum Maximum* in El Rasillo de Cameros²³.

1.3. The Decorated Stelae of the Camerano Set

Within the Camero Nuevo epigraphic set, Espinosa identifies six decorated stelae as products of the same local workshop²⁴, to which other pieces could be added with some degree of uncertainty²⁵. These pieces come from the towns of Montemediano, Nieva —where two pieces have been found: Nieva I and Nieva II—, Ortigosa, El Rasillo and Villoslada (Figure 2)²⁶.



Figure 2. Group of decorated stelae from Camero Nuevo. Stela no. 1: Montemediano; no. 2: Nieva (I); no. 3: Nieva (II); no. 4: Ortigosa; no. 5: El Rasillo; no. 6: Villoslada. (ESPINOSA 1989, Figure 3).

According to Espinosa —whose reading, description, and classification we follow— the close formal resemblance among the pieces and their distinct character, compared to other monuments in the area, suggest that this set was produced by a single individual or a family of stonemasons within a limited timeframe, around the 2nd century AD, given the recurrent invocation *D(is) M(anibus)*²⁷.

²² ERRioja, 52. MORESTIN (1976, 84) suspects this phenomenon of *interpretatio* due to the dedicant's anthroponym: *Titullus Calaedico(n)* (see above).

²³ ERRioja, 59. Its indigenous character is inferred from the widespread worship of Jupiter in areas of pre-Roman and Celtic *substratum*, cf. Le ROUX, TRANOY 1973, 178; OLIVARES 2015, 195, Figure 7.

²⁴ ERRioja, 12; ESPINOSA 1989; HERNÁNDEZ *et alii* 2005.

²⁵ These are three stelae, respectively found in San Andrés de Cameros (ERRioja, 142 and ESPINOSA 1989, no. 7), Pradillo (ERRioja, 58) and La Pasada (ERRioja, 10).

²⁶ Montemediano (ERRioja, 51; HEP 1, 1989, 506; ESPINOSA 1989, Figure 3, no. 1), Nieva with two monuments: Nieva I (MORESTIN 1976, 190, Figure 8; ERRioja, 55, pl. 8; HEP 1, 1989, 511, ESPINOSA 1989, no. 2) and Nieva II (ESPINOSA 1989, no. 3), Ortigosa (ERRioja, 56, pl. 9; ESPINOSA 1989, no. 4), El Rasillo (ERRioja, 61, pl. 10; HEP 1, 1989, 513; ESPINOSA 1989, no. 5), Villoslada (ERRioja, 62, pl. 10; ESPINOSA 1989, no. 6).

²⁷ ESPINOSA 1989, 409–411.

2. General Methodology: Iconography and Iconology in the Stelae of Camero Nuevo

Our aim is to reassess the sculptural decoration accompanying the funerary stelae of Camero Nuevo. It is well known that images serve as a privileged means of understanding the mindsets of the pre-Roman Iberian peoples. However, Iberian sources reveal significant methodological paradoxes, such as the non-coinciding meaning of epigraphy and iconography within the same piece²⁸, as well as the documentation's partly Roman and partly indigenous nature. In light of these difficulties, we will rely on the distinction between the concepts of iconography and iconology²⁹, differentiating between the iconographic elements or the formal features displayed in a plastic representation, and their iconology or significance, that is, the symbolic interpretation that this set of signs could evoke in the viewer—whether in the dedicant themselves or in their contemporaries who interpreted the images according to traditions and symbols belonging to their collective imagination.

2.1. Review of the Proposed Iconology for the Stelae of Camero Nuevo

The general interpretation of the decoration on the Camerano stelae has been shaped by the funerary nature of the pieces. According to Espinosa³⁰, the sculpted field alludes to the image of the deceased, with the upper section representing a sort of aedicule or funerary shrine, modelled after certain monumental stelae with a triangular pediment found in *Tritium*³¹. Under this proposal, the schematic rendering of the figures suggests impersonal, archetypal representations rather than direct depictions of the dedicant or the deceased. Certain isolated features that individualize some figures could be explained by the stonemason's willingness to accommodate specific requests from the client³².

On this basis, it seems pertinent to question whether there is any correlation between these formal variations and the information in the epigraphs, particularly regarding the number and gender of the individuals mentioned in the epigraphs and the figures depicted on the same pieces. This, however, proves difficult to determine in most cases due to their state of conservation.

The Ortigosa stela (Figure 3) is the only one that allows for such a comparison. The epigraph indicates a woman, *Cor(nelia) Sextina*, who dedicates the monument, *ex testamento*, to three men: her husband, son, and father-in-law (Figure 7: epigraphic fiche). All three figures retain the schematic representation of breasts, a detail previously noted by Espinosa, who executed a careful tracing of the piece³³, and which we confirm after visual inspection (Figure 4). We believe that the individualization of the breasts suggests their identification as women, although it is contradictory with the content of the text³⁴.

²⁸ MARCO SIMON 2004.

²⁹ ISLER-KERÉNYI 2014.

³⁰ ESPINOSA 1989, 143.

³¹ *ERRioja*, 36, 26 and 22.

³² ESPINOSA 1989, 412.

³³ *EERioja*, 56, pl. 9.

³⁴ In this regard, Espinosa had already indicated that "the number and interrelation of the individuals mentioned is not entirely clear" (*ERRioja*, 56, 74).



Figure 3. Comparison between photograph and tracing of the Ortigosa stela. On the left, image of the stela. Source: author. On the right, drawing based on the tracing of the piece. Source: Espinosa 1989, detail Figure 3. Layout: own creation.



Figure 4. Detailed image of the anthropomorphic figures on the Ortigosa stela, detail of the schematic representation of the breasts. Source: authors. Layout: own creation.

On the other hand, the Villoslada stela, although it does not allow us to make this comparison due to the difficulty in reading and interpreting its epigraph (Figure 11), aligns with the individualization of the breasts of the three figures depicted, a feature that we were able to identify upon inspecting the piece (Figure 9). This iconographic alignment between the two has led us to reconsider their supposed nature as an archetypal representation of the deceased, which is usually considered the most likely for these funerary stelae, with the aim of reviewing, at least for these two cases, the connotations that these images may have suggested to dedicants and their relatives.

2.2. Common Iconographic Features of the Camero Nuevo Set

To advance in this iconological reassessment, we will first identify three iconographic traits shared by the Camero Nuevo stelae: (1) the predominance of anthropomorphic figures arranged in groups of three –present in three out of the six monuments: Montemediano, Ortigosa, and Villoslada; (2) their schematic representation in the form of busts, with an emphasis on the head; and (3) the association of the hexapetal motif –six petals– with the *fastigium* –replaced by a tetrapetal motif in the stela of El Rasillo.

We will examine each of these three iconographic elements separately, considering their parallels in the Iberian Peninsula and the Roman West. This analysis does not contradict a unified interpretation of the tombstones, as the selection of certain elements was governed by codes shared between the stonemason and the clients, who perceived the image as a meaningful whole.

a. Triadic Anthropomorphic Groupings in the Iberian Peninsula

The grouping of three figures is distinctive of the regions corresponding to the Cluniac and Caesaraugustan conventus³⁵. In contrast, it is rare in other regions of the peninsula, except for certain iconographic and technical parallels observed in the stelae of the Northwest and in some stelae and funerary urns from the Pyrenean valleys of Arán, Arboust, and other locations.

Within this extensive area, the highest concentration of documents featuring groups of three human figures is found along the upper course of the Ega River, in the borderlands between Álava and Navarra. In Antiquity, this region was traversed by a section of the road leading to Aquitaine³⁶, as well as forming the frontier between the ethnic groups of the *Berones*, *Varduli* and *Vascones*³⁷.

Regarding the formal analogies between the Camero Nuevo stelae and those from their surrounding area, this issue had already been noted by García and Merino³⁸, given the similarities between certain stelae from the Meseta region of Soria and those from the Navarrese-Alavese area: both areas share the decorative motif of three frontal anthropomorphic figures.

Considering this particular feature of the triadic groupings, a few isolated cases can be observed south of the Camero region, particularly in two Sorian stelae found, respectively, in

³⁵ The finds extend from Galdácano (Vizcaya) to the Pyrenean valleys, but not uniformly, cf. MARCO 1978, 43. The hypothesis was already outlined in GARCÍA MERINO 1977. MARCOS POUS–GARCÍA SERRANO (1972, 324) extend the typological analogies as far as Aquitaine, which is also agreed upon by MARCO SIMON (1979, 43) and ABÁSOLO (1993, 183).

³⁶ MARCO SIMON 1979, 207.

³⁷ MARCOS POUS, GARCÍA SERRANO 1972, 325; SIMÓN 1979, 206; EMBORUJO SALGADO 1987, 381; GARCÍA ARIZA 1991, 210.

³⁸ GARCÍA MERINO 1977.

Santervás³⁹ and in San Esteban de Gormaz —the latter being fragmented⁴⁰. To the north, in the Navarrese-Alavese area, additional examples have been documented. The locality of Aguilar de Codés (Navarra) has preserved a set of five stelae, each depicting three human figures in low relief⁴¹. In its vicinity, two other tombstones featuring triadic groupings have been identified, specifically in Marañón (Navarra)⁴² and Santa Cruz de Campezo (Álava)⁴³. All these sites appear to be interconnected due to their location along the route that, from Navarra, entered La Rioja via Asa or Laguardia⁴⁴. This type of grouping is also evident in the eastern Navarra, particularly in the area surrounding Estella-Lizarra, where two examples have been recorded: one in Estella-Lizarra itself⁴⁵ and another in Urbiola⁴⁶.

The corpus of triadic groups extends further, both to the northeast of the Camero, in the current provinces of Vizcaya and Cantabria, and to the southeast, in the province of Burgos⁴⁷. This iconographic consistency across such a vast area corresponds to the communication network linking the Ebro and Duero river valleys, suggesting that these representations may also reflect a socioeconomic background. Given the underlying cultural elements, it is not unlikely that these interconnected communities shared not only certain aesthetic preferences propagated by active workshops but also an ancestral substratum that, despite various processes of Romanisation, persisted in the heritage of mentalities, religiosity and vision of the world.

b. Triple Repetition in Celtic Hispania

Triplication is an emerging iconographic feature in countless manifestations of the Indo-European peoples, particularly within the worldview inherited by the monuments and literature attributed to the Celtic sphere⁴⁸. This category is always subject to reassessment, as ethnographic divergences and various processes of Romanisation led to the development of different expressions stemming from this common denominator⁴⁹.

The persistence of triadic conceptions in Hispania prior to Romanisation has been identified through various indicators⁵⁰, among which we have previously noted the concentration of stelae decorated with three figures in the area surrounding the Duero and Ebro river valleys (see above). The fundamental question is whether these representations should be interpreted solely in a realistic manner, as family portraits, or whether, in some cases, they allude to other aspects of the indigenous religious sphere. It is to Marco's credit⁵¹ that he observed how this concentration of representations in groups of three is accompanied by a regional artistic style characterized by highly simple and schematic forms, which show little alignment with funerary stelae from other parts of the Roman Empire —such as *Cisalpine*

³⁹ GARCÍA MERINO 1977, 314 ss., pls. II, 2 and III, 1; *ERPSO*, 109, pl. XXXV: 1.

⁴⁰ GARCÍA MERINO 1977, 314 ss., pls. II, 2; *ERPSO*, 100, pl. XXXII: 2.

⁴¹ MARCOS POUS, GARCÍA SERRANO 1972, nos. 1-5; *IRMN*, nos. 38, 37, 70, 71, 72; MARCO SIMON 1978, 191, nos. 1-5; MARCO SIMON 1979, 233, nos. 1-5.

⁴² MARCOS POUS, GARCÍA SERRANO 1972, no. 5, Figure 8; MARCO SIMON 1978, no. 31; MARCO SIMON 1979, no. 31.

⁴³ ELORZA 1967, no. 110; MARCOS POUS and GARCÍA SERRANO 1972, no. 6; MARCO SIMON 1978, no. 59.

⁴⁴ ELORZA 1967.

⁴⁵ Lost stela, cf. MARCOS POUS, GARCÍA SERRANO 1972; MARCO SIMON 1978, no. 9; MARCO SIMON 1979, no. 38.

⁴⁶ BARANDIARÁN 1968, 216 ss.; MARCOS POUS, GARCÍA SERRANO 1972; MARCO 1978, no. 38; MARCO SIMON 1979, no. 38.

⁴⁷ MARCO SIMON 1978, 43.

⁴⁸ USENER 1903; VENDRYES 1935; GREEN 1995b, etc.

⁴⁹ VITAL PEDREIRA 2018, 74.

⁵⁰ BLANCO 2011-2012.

⁵¹ MARCO SIMON 1978, 44.

Gaul, Illyria, Dacia, and Pannonia. On this basis, he suggests that some of these Hispanic funerary stelae may reflect a probable legacy from the ancient heritage of Celtic and Indo-European peoples, referring to the notion of the number three as “repetition of intensity”⁵². In this sense, the triplication of figures would express the heroic vitality of the deceased, without precluding a gradual “infantilisation” of this symbolism, which may have progressively influenced a more realistic vision of family representation, as seen in a significant number of monuments.

It should be considered, *a priori*, that the religious tradition of the Celtic peoples of the Iberian Peninsula did not encourage the representation of their deities in the central-peninsular region and its surroundings⁵³. This phenomenon may be a legacy of the possible religious aniconism prevalent among certain pre-Roman Iberian peoples and is perhaps echoed in the atheism attributed by Strabo⁵⁴ to the *Gallaeci* until the Roman conquest⁵⁵.

Conversely, the artistic production of Celtic tradition in the Western Roman world abundantly attests to the incorporation of imagery in sacred representations, particularly employing indications of plurality as a distinctive marker of divine power. It should be noted, however, that these groups, frequently triadic, were not exclusive to any specific deity but were applied to various Celtic divinities—whether to their anthropomorphic representations or to certain animals associated with them or some of their functions⁵⁶. Within this category, certain female deities stand out due to their broad territorial distribution and considerable presence. Their theonymy or iconography presents them in plural form, typically as triads: *Matres, Iunones, Parcae*, etc⁵⁷. Some of these divinities can also be traced epigraphically in Ancient Hispania; however, paradoxically, there is scarcely any identifiable imagery of them.

c. Representation in Bust Form and Emphasis on the Head

The figures of the Camerano group consistently reduce the body to a bust-like form. The disproportionately large head—on some stelae, the head and neck nearly equal the size of the torso—corresponds to an almost total absence of limbs, with the exception of the Villoslada stela (see below). Funerary stelae from the neighbouring region of Alto Cidacos, in Camero Viejo, also depict anthropomorphic busts⁵⁸. However, this group does not exhibit a significant number of triadic compositions, and its decoration frequently includes images of livestock. These differences suggest that they should not be included in this study, despite sharing certain features with other triadic representations in this area, which would merit a dedicated analysis.

On the one hand, the bust was one of the preferred modes of portraiture in Roman art, particularly in funerary sculpture, often framed within semicircular arches⁵⁹. On the other hand, across different periods and regions, there is well-documented evidence of a correlation between the hypertrophy of certain body parts and a lack of interest in realistically rendering the rest, as if the emphasized feature were endowed with a specific power. This tendency toward emphasising the head is also observed in Celtic European sculpture, explaining the characteristic schematic nature of the figures. Far from indicating technical incompetence, this stylisation appears to be a deliberate artistic choice shared by both artisan and client⁶⁰.

⁵² LAMBRECHTS 1954, 7.

⁵³ ALFAYÉ VILLA 1995; 2003; 2011; 2013b.

⁵⁴ Str. 3.4.16.

⁵⁵ BLÁZQUEZ 1990.

⁵⁶ GREEN 1989; 1995a.

⁵⁷ GREEN 1989, 171.

⁵⁸ ESPINOSA, USERÒ 1988.

⁵⁹ MARCO SIMON 1978, 41.

⁶⁰ GREEN 1989, 214.

Additionally, the iconography represented by these Hispanic tombstones from the central-peninsular area aligns with broader Celtic plastic art at the continental level. It also exhibits the archetypal characteristics of head representations in Celtic art as defined by Jacobsthal: frontal positioning, frequent absence of ears, a broad-based triangular nose, and horizontal eyes, either appearing closed or large and prominent⁶¹.

d. The Radiate Disc

The radiate disc is a recurrent decorative motif on Hispanic tombstones, appearing either with straight or curved rays —the former predominate— or in the form of discs or stars with six, four, or five rays⁶². It is difficult to determine, in general terms, whether these motifs are merely decorative or hold a deeper significance. However, their widespread placement at the *apex* of the Camerano stelae, adorning the interior of the *fastigium*, suggests a significant symbolic value.

This motif is ubiquitous within the Camerano group, with two partial exceptions. First, the Ortigosa stela is fractured and lacks its upper section. Second, as noted by Espinosa⁶³ and confirmed through our direct examination of the piece, the central motif of the *fastigium* on the Nieva (II) stela does not correspond to a radiate disc. Instead, the series of broken and parallel incisions resemble an arboreal representation. To its left, the letter 'A' can be distinguished, and further left, the letter 'M'. However, due to the loss of the epigraphic field, any further interpretation remains speculative.

Marco⁶⁴ interprets these vegetal decorations as an allusion to a living reality that regenerates periodically —a symbolism we associate with the message conveyed by what appears to be a cyclical dance representation on the Villoslada stela (see below).



Figure 5. Detail of the *fastigium* of the Nieva stela (II), where the outlines of an arboreal motif and the letters 'A' and 'M' can be discerned on the left and right, respectively. Source: authors.

The radiate disk, or “wheel”, is a common but not exclusively Celtic symbol. In particular, within Celtic Europe, this symbol appears to be associated with solar connotations and functions as an attribute of *Taranis*, as well as other deities linked to chthonic and funerary aspects, and to dominion over water, fertility and salvation —such as the *Matres*, *Epona*, and

⁶¹ JACOBSTHAL 1944, 12.

⁶² MARCO SIMON 1978, 18-19.

⁶³ ESPINOSA 1989, 407 and 410, no. 3.

⁶⁴ MARCO SIMON 1978, 55.

Sucellus, among others. In the same regions, it is also recognised as an attribute of other deities bearing Greco-Roman theonyms, though these are often interpreted as indigenous divinities, especially *Genius* and *Bonus Eventus*, as well as *Mars*, *Hercules* and *Fortuna*⁶⁵. According to Vries, the symbol evolved from a “*simple cercle à l’origine sans doute, on y voit bientôt apparaître quatre rayons, puis d’autres*”⁶⁶, thereby suggesting that the original four-spoked wheel signified the cardinal directions. Thus, the circular shape would not primarily allude to the solar disk itself but rather to its cosmic orbit over both our world and the underworld.

2.3 Comparative Study of the Significance of the Represented Figures

The iconographic analysis of the Camero Nuevo stelae, despite their sparse decorative elements, reveals the presence of three well-established features in the artistic expressions of Celtic Europe: the tendency to group figures in triads, the emphasis on the head, and the prominence of the radiate disk. While these symbols also appear in other ancient cultures, their convergence with the Celtic substratum attributed to the region’s populations (see above) suggests that they reflect a Celtic tradition.

The grouping of figures in triads is particularly characteristic of a relatively confined area in the central Iberian Peninsula, where this plastic singularity is framed within a coherent ethnic, sociocultural, and economic framework. Within this context, the Camerano group displays a degree of distinctiveness, likely influenced by the region’s isolation, which may have fostered a unique expression of certain early religious beliefs.

Two of the stelae, those of Ortigosa and Villoslada, exhibit a distinctive feature: the identification of their figures as female through the schematic representation of breasts. However, these depictions are not identical. They differ in the relative emphasis placed on the head’s size —significantly larger in the figures from Ortigosa compared to those from Villoslada. The latter, in contrast, present a more proportionate relationship between the head and body, along with the unique inclusion of arms, depicted in a horizontal position (Figure 10).

In our opinion, both iconographic programs refer to meanings that go beyond a mere representation of the deceased as a form of memory, which in other tombstones seems to be the most likely explanation or simply the least risky one. We do not question the funerary nature of both pieces, which is confirmed by the formula *D(is) M(anibus)*, a reading that we have confirmed in both cases. However, we believe we can identify some parallels that allow for a new and fairly close iconological proposal.

A priori, the depiction of a triad of female figures evokes monuments dedicated to certain deities of Celtic Europe, particularly the *Matres*, *Matrae* and *Matronae*⁶⁷. However, before assessing the validity of this interpretation, we must first consider the distribution of testimonies dedicated to these deities across the Iberian Peninsula. While no evidence of plural divinities —nor of any female deity— has been found in the Camero region, such testimonies do exist in the surrounding area of La Rioja, specifically in Badarán and Canales de la Sierra, as well as in Laguardia (Álava), where they bear the theonym *Matres*⁶⁸.

To the southwest, beyond the Demanda Mountain Range —topographically connected to the Camero region by ancient routes— one of the most significant concentrations of Iberian

⁶⁵ GREEN 1984.

⁶⁶ VRIES 1977, 44.

⁶⁷ DUGAST 2017, 240.

⁶⁸ Cf. Epigraphic Corpus (CE onwards) *apud* ALEIXANDRE BLASCO 2015. Badarán: CE 1; Canales de la Sierra: CE 13; Laguardia: CE 12.

Legend — Triangle: Theonym of other plural deities⁷³

LVGOBIBVS (CE 30) —Burgo de Osma, Soria

LVGVNIS DEABVS (CE 31) —Atapuerca, Burgos

DIVIS (CE 44) —Clunia, Burgos

DVIRIS ORDAECIS (CE 45) —Valdegeña, Soria

LATTVERIS (CE 47) —Hinojosa de la Sierra, Soria

PARCIS (CE 48) —Termes, Montejo de Tiermes, Soria

Legend — Circle: Stelae with triadic anthropomorphic decoration

La Rioja, Camero Nuevo: Montemediano (LR 1), Nieva I (LR 2), Nieva II (LR 3), Ortigosa (LR 4), El Rasillo (LR 5), Villoslada de Cameros (LR 6).

Soria: Santervás (SO 1), San Esteban de Gormaz (SO 2).

Navarra: Aguilar de Codés (NA 1-5), Marañón (NA 6), Urbiola (NA 7).

Álava: Santa Cruz de Campezo (AL 1).

The relative concentration of some testimonies allows us to reconsider Marco's hypothesis of interpreting triadic groupings as a way of expressing the heroisation of the deceased, and to propose⁷⁴, at least for the female triads of Ortigosa and Villoslada, an allusion to a local plural deity, whether reflecting sacred images or cultic practices.

a. Category of Plural Female Deities

In the Roman West, we are aware of a significant number of indigenous female deities identified by attributes associated with the granting of fertility, which led Germanic research to coin the general term “mother goddesses”⁷⁵. This is a broad category based on epigraphic and archaeological findings, and it has required certain heuristic considerations:

a. To approach the general corpus, as Rüger⁷⁶ does, using the categories of “mother goddesses” (*Muttergottheiten*) and “plural deities” (*mehrzahlige Gottheiten*). Plurality is distinctive in deities of Germanic or Celtic substratum, but their maternal character is only made explicit in the theonyms of some: *Matres*, *Matronae*, *Matrae*, or in iconography of a nurturing nature.

b. To limit the iconographic corpus, as Schauerte⁷⁷ does, to areas of Celtic or Germanic substratum and to deities where the notion of motherhood can be inferred.

The Iberian Peninsula contributes nearly fifty epigraphs from three main areas: the central Iberian region between the Cluniac and Caesaraugustan conventus, the northwestern region between the convents of Braga, Lugo and Astur, and the southern area between the convents of *Hispalis*, *Corduba* and *Emerita*⁷⁸.

b. Iconography and Iconology of Plural Deities

In contrast to the numerous representations of *Matres* and other related deities known in other European regions, very few of these deities have been identified in Iberian stone documents, and their attribution remains debated. One example is an anepigraphic altar from Palencia, discovered in a sacred space with dedications to the *Duillae*⁷⁹, which displays features commonly seen in continental representations: a triadic grouping, an upright position, and a

⁷³ On the debated feminine or masculine nature of some of these plural deities, and the reasons that lead us to interpret them as feminine, cf. ALEIXANDRE BLASCO 2015: LVGOBIBVS (CE 30), DVIRIS ORDAECIS (CE 45), LATTVERIS (CE 47).

⁷⁴ MARCO SIMON 1978, 44.

⁷⁵ HEICHELHEIM 1933, col. 947.

⁷⁶ RÜGER 1987.

⁷⁷ SCHAUERTE 1987, 55.

⁷⁸ ALEIXANDRE BLASCO 2024, Figure 1.

⁷⁹ HEICHELHEIM 1930, col. 2241.

frontal view⁸⁰. Another example is a seated sculptural group found in Castro Mozinho, Porto⁸¹. In terracotta, certain figurines found in Los Bañales (Uncastillo, Zaragoza)⁸² and Arucci (Aroche, Huelva)⁸³ have been proposed as representations of these deities.

This situation is partly due to the reliance on a heuristic approach limited to the general iconography or “classical typology” of *Matres* and *Matronae*, developed primarily in research on the Rhineland area of Lower Germania, an Ubii territory⁸⁴. However, variations have been identified in other regions⁸⁵. Instead, it is necessary to consider the revision led by Schauerte, who identifies three distinguishing aspects in these pieces: iconographic attributes (1), material (2), and the number of deities represented (3)⁸⁶.

The attributes (1) serve as a basis for comparison and analogy between images, particularly when they appear on stelae identifying the goddesses with maternal epithets, suggesting a shared significance in the remaining examples. The number of deities (2) highlights the predominance of triads, although both individual and grouped figures share the same attributes. Differences related to material (3) indicate that stone inscriptions are more closely tied to cult images, whereas terracotta representations exhibit greater variability and independence from these.

c. Bust-shaped Representations

Bust-shaped representations are uncommon in the iconography of *Matres y Matronae*⁸⁷. Conversely, they are characteristic of the *Proxumae* or *Proxumae*, a plural deity known exclusively in *Gallia Narbonensis*, around Nîmes, Arles, Avignon, Orange and Vaison⁸⁸. Research has classified the *Proxumae* as deities related to *Matres*, *Matronae* and *Fatae*, conceptualising them as tutelary spirits of individual fortune⁸⁹. The chthonic nature implied by the bust-shaped form led Rüger to place this appellation within the category of ancestors, suggesting that they were conceived as guardian spirits of forebears who protected the family entity⁹⁰.

Champeaux⁹¹, in turn, highlighted a parallel between this bust-shaped iconography found in these Celtic deities and that of certain representations of Italic *Fortuna*, as well as other nurturing deities in Sicily and southern Italy —such as *Demeter* and *Kore*, the nymphs, and the *Meteres* of Engyon— pointing to their *theurgic* nature⁹².

In the Iberian context, a bifrontal stela attributed to the *Matres* in Nocelo da Pena (Ourense)⁹³ could serve as an iconographic parallel due to its trinitarian composition and bust-shaped form. However, its poor state of conservation warrants omitting it as a precaution⁹⁴.

⁸⁰ BELTRÁN LLORIS, DÍAZ ARIÑO 2007; discussion *apud* ALFAYÉ 2011.

⁸¹ ALMEIDA 1980; BLANCO GARCÍA 2011-2012; discussion *apud* ALFAYÉ 2011 and 2013a.

⁸² ANDREU PINTADO 2012.

⁸³ BERMEJO 2014.

⁸⁴ HORN 1987; RÜGER 1987; GARMAN 2008.

⁸⁵ HEICHELHEIM 1933, col. 950; SCHAUERTE 1987, 58.

⁸⁶ SCHAUERTE 1987.

⁸⁷ BAUCHHENS 1997, nos. 63 and 64, respectively, Mannheim and Bonn (Germany).

⁸⁸ BUISSON 1997.

⁸⁹ DUVAL 1976, 56.

⁹⁰ RÜGER 1987, 2.

⁹¹ CHAMPEAUX 1982, 180.

⁹² CHAMPEAUX 1982, 181. For the same author, the bust form of the Prenestine Fortunes would have referred to their hierophany, conceived as a mysterious emergence from the depths of the earth.

⁹³ CE 6. Cf. RODRÍGUEZ COLMENERO 1977.

⁹⁴ *HEp* 7 1997, no. 545; ALFAYÉ 2011.

d. Groups in the Form of *Nymphae*, *Nutrix* or Venus

The individualisation of breasts is a well-known feature in the iconography of Venus, including in the Iberian Peninsula⁹⁵, and is shared by various representations of *Matres*, *Nymphs*, *Charites* or *Gratiae*, highlighting the deep connection in the Celtic sphere between healing water cults and mother goddesses⁹⁶.

The *dea nutrix* type is frequently found in stone representations of mother goddesses in groups⁹⁷, typically depicted as a seated triad of matrons, partially uncovering one of their breasts, accompanied by infants or young children⁹⁸. This typology is rarer in individual stone figures⁹⁹, whereas it is more abundant in coroplastic art, where the goddess is shown seated on a basket, dressed as a nurse, and uncovering one or both breasts depending on the number of infants.

Images of *nymphae* frequently draw on classical iconography of Venus, such as Venus *Anadyomene*, Venus *Pudica*, etc., whether depicted standing, reclining, or in a combination of both¹⁰⁰. The coexistence of the cult of *Matres* and *nymphae* in the same sanctuaries facilitated an exchange of iconographic elements, with *nymphae* alternatively adopting a triadic character and attributes such as cornucopias, baskets of fruit, or infants on their laps, while *Matres* took on features associated with the former, such as shell-shaped *aediculae*¹⁰¹.

A third key reference point is the iconography of the *Gratiae*, which follows the Hellenistic model of the *Charites*¹⁰² and was dedicated in the Roman West to the decoration of *sarcophagi*¹⁰³. The *Charites* or *Gratiae* are represented as three nude maidens, alternating between front and back views —typically with the central *Charis* facing away— creating a circular connection by placing their hands on each other's shoulders. Their dance would allegorically express the cyclical nature of their beneficent role¹⁰⁴. The figures of *Charites* or *Gratiae* are closely associated with fertility deities, particularly Aphrodite, *erotes* and *nymphae*, which explains the significance of their nudity.

None of these three models —*Matres*, *nymphae*, or *Gratiae*— precisely replicates the images from Ortigosa or Villoslada, yet they exhibit certain analogies. The upright depiction of *Matres* as *nutrices* and *nymphae*, both lacking attributes, shares points of contact with the composition of the three female figures from Ortigosa, whose silhouettes reveal only the outline of their breasts. Meanwhile, the interlinked arms of the three female figures from Villoslada suggest a possible allusion to a cyclic dance akin to that of *Charites* or *Gratiae*, with which they also share a preference for funerary monuments.

⁹⁵ PRETE MAINER 2017.

⁹⁶ GREEN 1995b, 89-92; for the Hispano-Roman context relevant to this research (Figure 6), cf. the intriguing identification of cults dedicated to mineromedicinal springs in the Highlands of Soria, *apud* GÓMEZ-PANTOJA (1997). It worth noting the documentation in Camero Viejo of a local deity, CALDO VLEDICO (El Rasillo, *ERRioha*, no. 60), whose theonym seems to allude to thermal connotations (see above).

⁹⁷ We use the term in a descriptive sense. The theonym *Nutrices* is confined to the area of *Poetovio*, in the province of *Pannonia Superior*, cf. SCHAUERTE 1987, 64.

⁹⁸ SCHAUERTE 1987, nos. 210, 55, 65, respectively: Châtillon-sur-Seine, Cirencester and London.

⁹⁹ SCHAUERTE 1987, nos. 153 and 63, respectively: Reims and Dieburg.

¹⁰⁰ SCHAUERTE 1987, nos. 46 and 47, both come from the sanctuary of *Conventina* in Carrawburgh —Northumberland, UK—.

¹⁰¹ SCHAUERTE 1987, 64, 72 and 81.

¹⁰² HARRISON 1986.

¹⁰³ SICHTERMANN 1986, 203.

¹⁰⁴ HARRISON 1986, 200; SICHTERMANN 1986, 203.

3. Iconographic Proposal

3.1. Sacred Triad on the Ortigosa Stela

OBJECT	
OBJECT TYPE	Stela
DESCRIPTION	A trapezoidal-shaped stela that has lost its upper section, possibly finished with a pediment like the others. Above the epigraphic inscription, the rectangular field is adorned with three human profiles in low relief, with only the one on the left retaining part of its face. The lower part is finished with a projection intended to be fitted into a podium or similar structure.
SUPPORT TYPE	Stone - Granite
DIMENSIONS	(59) x 36 x 19.5
STATE OF PRESERVATION	Fractured, missing top
REFERENCES	<i>ERRioja</i> , n.º 56, lám. 9; <i>HEp</i> 1, 1989: n.º 512; ESPINOSA 1989: 407, 411-412, n.º 4.

INSCRIPTION	
INSCRIPTION TYPE	Sepulchral epitaph
TEXT	<i>D(is) · M(anibus) · p(ositum) · m(onumentum) · Cor(nelia) Sextina / [- - -] o et filio Flav[i]o - - -] x[- - -] OS socer[ro - - -] / PREA[-] et Lu[- - -] Iulia / d(edi)c(avit) illis opt(imis) e(s)t t(estamento)</i>
EPIGRAPHIC FIELD (cm)	11 x 28
LETTER MODULE	1.2 - 2
PALAEOGRAPHIC FEATURES	Rustic capitals. Interpuncture

ORIGIN and DEPOSIT	
PLACE OF DISCOVERY	Found on a hill near Ortigosa
DEPOSIT	Museo de la Rioja, n.º 2.471

Figure 7. Epigraphic record of the Ortigosa stela. Source: own elaboration.

The Ortigosa stela is a funerary stela, as indicated by its epigraphic text (Figure 7), which begins with the formula *D(is) M(anibus)*. Its iconographic field (Figs. 3 and 4) suggests a certain analogy with the artistic tradition of Celtic influence seen in the decoration of certain sacred monuments, leading us to identify the image as that of a plural female deity. We put forward this proposal despite its funerary context, which makes it a *hápax*, although not without rather illustrative parallels. This hypothesis allows for two possible directions or developments:

a. The Ortigosa stela reflects an image of a cult honoured in the region. This deduction is based on the stone material, which appears to have fostered a stronger dependence on the imagery of cult centres¹⁰⁵. In this case, the Camerano stonemason would have drawn on a familiar iconography, whether from a cult image in a local sanctuary, rendered in either stone or wood¹⁰⁶.

b. The Ortigosa stela reflects images or figurines of the goddesses used in their worship.

In our view, this second possibility seems more plausible, based on various pieces of evidence. Firstly, at the regional level, there is evidence of the production and consumption of ceramic figurines featuring Venus-type iconography. The Museum of Logroño houses a ceramic mould for crafting terracotta figurines of Venus with the *Anadyomene* typology (Figure 8)¹⁰⁷. Moreover, the same Museum preserves a fragment of a ceramic statuette from *Vareia*¹⁰⁸, produced in a *Tritium* workshop using a mould similar to the previous one. Both the mould and

¹⁰⁵ SCHAUERTE 1987, 68 and 72.

¹⁰⁶ MARCO 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Ceramic mould, Venus. Logroño Museum Inv. no. 4791.

¹⁰⁸ Ceramic varnish figurine TSH, Venus. Logroño Museum Inv. no. 4821; h. 6.5 cm; w. max. 2.5 cm.

the figurine indicate their production and consumption in the region, likely in connection with *lararia* or domestic cult chapels¹⁰⁹.

As in the case of *Vareia*, a significant proportion of these terracotta figurines across Europe have been found in habitation contexts, leading to the conclusion that they were associated with domestic cults¹¹⁰. These images draw on Greco-Roman iconography —Venus, Fortuna, Diana, *Dea Nutrix*, etc.— but in many cases, they likely represented female deities of local substratum¹¹¹. Similarly, the domestic cult of the *Proxumae* is inferred from the *lararium*-shaped decoration of some of their altars¹¹², as well as that of the *Matres* in Hispania, particularly in Clunia, due to the frequent discovery of small altars (*arulae*) in habitation contexts¹¹³.

Furthermore, the association of these female figurines with funerary contexts in Celtic Europe is also documented¹¹⁴. The seamless transition of these figurines from domestic to funerary settings suggests their tutelary role as protectors of the group, extending into the mortuary sphere, safeguarding both the funerary monument itself and the afterlife¹¹⁵. Additionally, they serve as indicators not only of protection but also of lineage and identity¹¹⁶.



Figure 8. Venus-type terracotta mould and figurine. Source: Museo de La Rioja, Inv. nos. 4821 and 4791.

The general catalogue of terracotta figurines representing maternal deities¹¹⁷, which documents their production in central Gaul and the Rhineland, provides a coherent comparative framework for the *Anadyomene* type figurine from *Vareia* and the pottery mould from *Tritium*¹¹⁸ (Figure 8). Furthermore, Schauerte's association of these individual figurines

¹⁰⁹ PÉREZ RUIZ 2010 and 2012. These pieces should be added to the bronze image of the Venus of *Libia* —Herramélluri—, Logroño Museum Inv. no. 2444. Cf. PRETE MAINER 2017, 368; E. T. 48.

¹¹⁰ SCHAUERTE 1987, 90.

¹¹¹ SCHAUERTE 1985; RÜGER 1987; GREEN 1995b; MAIER 2001; GARMAN 2008.

¹¹² BUISSOT 1997. Women predominate in the dedications to the *Proxumae*.

¹¹³ GÓMEZ-PANTOJA 1999, 429.

¹¹⁴ DUGAST, 2017, 244-245.

¹¹⁵ MAIER 2001.

¹¹⁶ DUGAST 2017, 253.

¹¹⁷ SCHAUERTE 1985.

¹¹⁸ SCHAUERTE 1985, catalog, 126.

with a terracotta variant of plural deity representations¹¹⁹ is based on the ubiquity of such finds and the prevalence of the cult of *Matres*, *Matronae* and *Matrae* in the same regions. We believe that the correlation between stelae decorated with triadic groupings and monuments depicting plural female deities (Figure 6) offers a valuable interpretative perspective on the triple reiteration and the nude bust iconography that dominates the Ortigosa stela. This interpretation is further supported by the strong road connections between the Camero region and these neighbouring areas, as well as the circulation of this Venus typology in the *Tritium* pottery workshops, which may have served as a model for the Camerano stonemason¹²⁰.

Although this case is exceptional —since no other explicit representations of *Matres* or indigenous deities are known in funerary stelae— we do have an example that presents an interesting analogy. It is a funerary stela found in Úbeda (Jaén), which bears, in its first line, a dedication to *Ataecina Turibrigensis* and the *Manes*¹²¹. This piece is exceptional as it attests to the theonym of a peninsular indigenous deity in a funerary stela.

Luján Martínez makes a significant observation, noting that this is not a case of religious syncretism between *Ataecina* and *Manes*, but rather a deliberate choice by the family of *Gaius Valerio Proculinus*. They decided to associate, in this sepulchral funerary stela commemorating a deceased child, the Roman deities to whom such epigraphs were typically dedicated in the Romanised context of the find —the Roman colony of *Salaria*— alongside an indigenous deity likely worshipped within their family tradition¹²².

We suggest that the Ortigosa stela, on an iconographic level, also associates a representation of a Camerano female deity with the usual epigraphic formula dedicated to the *Manes*, without inferring syncretism between the two, but rather a tutelary role for these indigenous deities in the afterlife. In this sense, it does not seem coincidental that certain Venus figurines can be identified as a reference for the stonemason, as they may have played a role in both domestic and funerary cults of the region. However, the lack of archaeological excavations in habitation sites or cemeteries in the Camero Nuevo region prevents us from asserting whether such a cultic association existed, as we can infer in the nearby *Vareia*. In any case, the three female figures with exposed torsos represented on the Ortigosa funerary stela seem to allude to a Celtic substratum deity conceived as female and plural, whose association with the *Manes* allows us to suggest its probable tutelary, nurse-like, and identity-forming role, in line with what is known about other Celtic deities invoked in relation to the full life cycle of their followers, in this case, during the transition of death¹²³.

¹¹⁹ SCHAUERTE 1985, 115.

¹²⁰ We must regret the lack of updated studies on these coroplastic productions for the Iberian Peninsula; the specific studies on female terracottas found in Los Bañales (ANDREU PINTADO 2012) and in *Arucci* (BERMEJO 2014) are appreciated, as they suggest the use of Greco-Roman style images for Celtic-based cults in the Peninsula.

¹²¹ CILA III.1, 356; HE4, 497. We follow the re-reading proposal put forward by E. Luján Martínez (1995), who slightly corrects the development of the abbreviations in the first line: *A T D M*. While the first editors of the text interpreted the line as *AT(aecina) D(iis) Manibus*, Luján convincingly proposes: *Ataecina Turibrigensi*.

¹²² We refer to the article LUJÁN MARTÍNEZ (1995) regarding the character of the *cognomen* of the dedicant, *Proculus*, which is unusual for the Jaén region where the find was made, but common in the core territory of inscriptions dedicated to *Ataecina*: the central area of Extremadura, extending southward to the Celtic Beturia (ABASCAL 1994), whose city of *Turobriga* may have been its original centre (TOVAR 1974, 173). An inscription from *Emerita* (CIL II, 462) expresses the association of *Ataecina* with the Greek *Proserpina*, suggesting an ambivalence for *Ataecina* between agrarian and infernal attributions. This has been supported by the debated etymology of the theonym, for which cf. GONZÁLEZ ROMÁN 1991, 233. It should be noted that Celtic Beturia is also a territory where the cult of the *Matres* and other plural female deities is documented. However, there is no conclusive evidence to support the association between these and *Ataecina*; on the testimonies of plural deities in Beturia cf. ALEIXANDRE BLASCO 2024.

¹²³ SCHAUERTE 1987; OLMSTED 1994; GREEN 1995b; DUGAST 2017.

3.2. Triad of Dancers on the Villoslada Stela

The Villoslada stela (Figure 9) was carved in granite, which has preserved both its sculptural and epigraphic content in relatively good condition. The stela follows the temple-like model, with the *fastigium* decorated with a five-petaled rosette and the lateral volutes featuring a modillion. The central section is occupied by the silhouettes of three human figures of uniform size, identified as female (Figure 10) by simple hemispherical marks representing the breasts (Figure 11), a detail previously unrecognised¹²⁴.

The bodies are rendered with a highly schematic prismatic representation of the torso and upper limbs, which are extended horizontally. The heads are depicted as simple circles, with visible eye sockets and the outline of the nose¹²⁵. The funerary nature of the inscription is confirmed by the abbreviation *D(is) M(anibus)* in the first line. Identifying the remaining elements is highly complex, possibly including the anthroponym *(F)APMENVE*, the filiation *ALOIANI*, and a potential indication of the deceased's age (fifteen years).



Figure 9. Villoslada stela and detail of its sculptural field. Photograph: authors.

¹²⁴ ESPINOSA 1989, no. 6.

¹²⁵ The iconography is reminiscent of that used to identify female figures in the anthropomorphic votive busts from the Gallic-Roman sanctuary of Forêt d'Halatte (Oise, France), cf. GREEN, 1995b, 25.



Figure 10. Backlit detail of the iconographic field. Photograph: authors.



Figure 11. Detail of the epigraphic field. Artificial colour application —blue and red (Triguero, 2023), with the most visible inscription traces digitally overlaid on the Villoslada inscription. Right: restitution of the Villoslada inscription traces. Source: own elaboration and collaboration with I. Triguero and J. González (UAH).

OBJECT	
OBJECT TYPE	Stelae
DESCRIPTION	Rectangular body topped with a <i>fastigium</i> with lateral acroteria, decorated with a disc with five rays and points between them. The fields are framed with a bead molding; in the central field (16 x 32), three schematic human profiles; the epigraphic field is recessed.
SUPPORT TYPE	Stone - Granite
DIMENSIONS	78 x 44 x 25
STATE OF PRESERVATION	Fractured
REFERENCES	<i>ERRioja</i> , n.º 62, lám. 10; <i>HEp</i> 1, 1989: n.º 519; ESPINOSA 1989: 407, n.º 6.

INSCRIPTION	
INSCRIPTION TYPE	Sepulchral epitaph
TEXT	<i>D(is) M(anibus) MA(numentum) F(ecit)? / FAPMENVE / NEVOPALOLA/NI ALOESE P?² an(n)o(r)um XV</i>
EYE INSPECTION AND ARTIFICIAL COLOUR APPLICATION	<i>D · M · M · A · F F?APMENVE NE · YOP · ALOLA NI (..)O?E?SE(,)P? A?N?O?VMXV?</i>
EPIGRAPHIC SPACE (cm)	17.5 x 32
LETTER MODULE	2 – 4 cm
PALAEOGRAPHIC FEATURES	Rustic capitals. Interpunctuation with round points in line 1, possibly. Interpunctuation in the short traces in lines 2 and 3.

ORIGIN and DEPOSIT	
PLACE OF DISCOVERY	Mojón Alto area, 10 km from Villoslada.
DEPOSIT	Placed by ICONA on a podium in the original place.

Figure 12. Epigraphic record of the Villoslada stela. Source: own elaboration.

In funerary contexts, the representation of music and ritual dances is common¹²⁶, often depicted in groups of three¹²⁷. This invites us to identify a ritual dance on the Villoslada stela, considering that the depiction of the dancing women with nude torsos may have been partially inspired by the model of the *Gratae* or *Charites* (see above), particularly the crossing of the upper limbs as a reference to their circular connection.

The decoration of some altars outside the Iberian Peninsula dedicated to the *Matres* exhibits this reference to dance. In Cisalpine Gaul, where the cult is primarily directed towards the *Matronae*, several testimonies from around the first century AD¹²⁸ depict women standing and joining hands in a dance-like posture¹²⁹. Other geographically isolated documents testify to the presence of ritual dances in the cult of the *Matres*¹³⁰. Some researchers have identified these figures as the same goddesses¹³¹, while others favour the interpretation of dancing women¹³².

The iconographic ambiguity between the human and the divine in these representations may suggest the mimetic character often adopted by rituals in relation to myths, sagas, and theogonies, and specifically the sympathetic value of dance, particularly jumps and leaps,

¹²⁶ RODRÍGUEZ-LÓPEZ 2010.

¹²⁷ USENER 1903, 1-2.

¹²⁸ RÜGER 1987, 10.

¹²⁹ These female figures appear grouped in numbers of three —Pallanza (*CIL* V, 6641) and Morozzo (*CIL* V, 7703)— or five —Avigliana (*CIL* V, 7210).

¹³⁰ An altar from Kirkham, Lancashire (SCHAUERTE 1987, no. 84) combines the representation of a seated triad of *Matres* on the front face with two groups of three dancing women placed on the sides of the piece. A pillar from Escles —Vosges department, France— depicts three dancing female figures above the crowned head of a male (SCHAUERTE 1987, no. 69). A relief from Vindonissa —Windisch, Switzerland— displays three standing female figures in long garments that appear to be holding hands (BAUCHHNESS 1997, no. 57; SCHAUERTE 1987, no. 217).

¹³¹ HEICHELHEIM 1930, no. 101.

¹³² IHM 1893-1897; SCHAUERTE 1987; BAUCHHNESS 1997.

which throughout Europe are linked to rituals aimed at promoting the growth of crops¹³³. The analogy between the iconography of the *Charites* or *Gratiae* and that displayed on some altars to the *Matres* and related deities could allude to the cyclical renewal required from the goddesses.

On the Iberian Peninsula, there are two testimonies suggesting the role of dance in rituals dedicated to substratum female deities. On the one hand, there is a decoration of a stela from Tejada de Tiétar (Cáceres), dedicated to the *SELAIS DVIL(LIS)* or *Du(v)itera*, and on the other, an inscription addressed to the *Rixamae* in *Arucci* (Aroche, Huelva).

In the first case, we refer to a decorated Cáceres stela found in the natural area of the Dehesa del Boyal¹³⁴. The reading and iconographic interpretation of the piece remain subjects of debate. According to Domínguez Monedero¹³⁵, line 4 refers to the plural feminine theonym *SELAIS DVIL(LIS)*, which he links to the *DVILLIS* of Palencia. The associated anthropomorphic figure is interpreted, with numerous iconographic parallels from the Iberian Peninsula, as a dancer in a sacred ritual, possibly a *paloteo* dance, suggested by two small horizontal stripes at the top of the skirt. For Alfayé¹³⁶, the image would be more closely associated with an offering table, and the theonym could be reconstructed as referring to an individual divinity: *Du(v)itera*. We agree with the fragility of these proposals due to the poor preservation of the inscription, but we believe that the reference to an indigenous female deity and a possible allusion to dance cannot be dismissed¹³⁷.

In the forensic area of ancient *Arucci*¹³⁸, a *tabula ansata* dedicated to the *Rixamae* was found. Bermejo's study¹³⁹ links this epithet, without a theonym, to the term mentioned by Martial¹⁴⁰ in his list of the *nomina Duriora* from his native Celtiberia: *chori Rixamarum*, which has already been recognised as a probable reference to some form of Celtiberian dance or ritual¹⁴¹. The Huelva inscription, in correlation with Martial's text, seems to refer to a specific cult involving dances and rituals in honour of a plural female divinity, the *Rixamae*, whose etymology, *IE rix-* meaning 'king or royal', suggests a prominent position in the Celtiberian pantheon¹⁴².

Accepting these parallels, we identify in the Villoslada stela the depiction of a ritual dance. However, we draw attention to the absence of lower limbs, which introduces a certain ambiguity regarding the human or divine nature of the figures. In any case, the symbolism of a cyclical dance and the funerary nature of the stela seems to correspond to the role of the deities referenced in the consummation of the life cycle beyond death—symbolism that shares some parallels with the representation of a tree element on the *fastigium* of the Nieva (II) stela (Figure 5), which, in its own way, expresses the concept of regeneration.

The natural and desolate character of the location where the Villoslada piece was found raises questions about the reason for its transport to an uninhabited, high-pasture area such as Mojón Alto (1768 meters above sea level), where visual surveys conducted by Espinosa¹⁴³ and

¹³³ FRAZER 1951, 152.

¹³⁴ *HEp* 3, 1993: no. 139.

¹³⁵ DOMÍNGUEZ MONEDERO 1987-1988.

¹³⁶ ALFAYÉ 2011; ALFAYÉ *et alii* 2017.

¹³⁷ The alternative interpretation of an offering table, although viable, relies on extra-Peninsular parallels in Dacia and northern Italy, which are not fully justified by ALFAYÉ *et alii* 2017, 239.

¹³⁸ CE 51.

¹³⁹ BERMEJO MELÉNDEZ 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Mart. 4.55.16.

¹⁴¹ RAMÍIA 2017.

¹⁴² GIMENO PASCUAL, ROTHENHÖFER 2012.

¹⁴³ ERRIOJA, 62.

our own have not recorded any traces of occupation. In this case, or others like the Tejada de Tiétar stela, the sacred value and regulation of certain natural spaces or *luci* among Celts and other ancient peoples should be considered¹⁴⁴.

4. Conclusions

The testimonies recovered in the Camero Nuevo region have allowed us to identify processes of cultural survival and syncretism in a marginal sector of *Tarraconensis* that was nonetheless connected —both economically and culturally— to a vast area traversed by the valleys of the Duero and Ebro rivers. Camero Nuevo appears as a relatively independent zone, where the influences of Romanisation facilitated the transposition of indigenous beliefs into the epigraphic testimonies. This grants it value as a paradigmatic case, although we must exercise caution when extrapolating the results of this study to other areas.

We have analysed various iconographic elements, such as triadic groupings, the wheel or radiate disc, and chthonic and nurturing attributes —either depicted in bust form or indicated through the emphasis on breasts. We argue that, taken together, these elements not only express an iconological framework consistent with the Celtic sphere but also support the presence of a cult dedicated to female deities of the *Matres* type in the region. This aligns with the distribution of similar testimonies in the central areas of the Iberian Peninsula.

The identification of two triadic sets —those depicted on the stelae of Ortigosa and Villoslada— where groups of three female figures are distinguished has allowed us to propose their sacred interpretation: as sacred images in the case of Ortigosa and as dances performed by or for the goddesses in Villoslada. To this end, we have drawn upon artistic representations in funerary stelae and terracotta from Romanised Celtic Europe. The fact that these are funerary monuments does not contradict this interpretation, since, although monuments dedicated to the *Matres* and related deities are primarily votive rather than funerary, their association with domestic and funerary cults is well attested through female figurines, which can be interpreted as individual variants of the same plural divinities.

The Iberian corpus allows us to identify a case in which an indigenous female deity, *Ataecina*, was associated with the *Manes* in a funerary inscription, providing a parallel for our proposal regarding Ortigosa. We consider that the references made by the stonemason from Camero could be linked to ceramic figurines of the Venus type, which likely held special significance due to their shared role in both domestic and funerary contexts.

This aspect of sovereignty over both this life and the next would, in turn, be expressed by the Villoslada stela through a triad of women performing a dance. Beyond suggesting a possible ritual aspect in the form of dances dedicated to these goddesses —akin to Martial's *chori Rixamarum*— it would also allude to other attributes ascribed to these divinities, such as the regeneration of nature and of the deceased mentioned in the inscription.

In future studies, we aim to examine other iconographic sets from Roman Hispania, including both additional examples from the Camero region —intentionally limited in this analysis to these two specimens— and from the central Iberian area, to which this region was geographically and culturally connected in Antiquity. Our objective is to apply this methodology to progressively unravel these and other substratum religious concepts, as well

¹⁴⁴ FERNÁNDEZ-NIETO 2010. The image of three female figures dancing on a male head in the pillar of Escles (SCHAUERTE 1987, no. 69; see above) could explain this phenomenon by symbolically alluding, according to the metaphor of “hill” for “head”, to the performance of dances in honour of the goddesses on sacred promontories separated from the inhabited areas.

as to verify the deep connection between parts of Hispania and the Roman West, heir to Celtic Europe.

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Abbreviations

CILA III.1 – GONZÁLEZ ROMÁN y MANGAS MANJARRÉS 1991.

ERRioja – ESPINOSA RUIZ 1986.

ERPSO – JIMENO 1980.

Hep – *Hispania Epigraphica*.

IRMN – CASTILLO, GÓMEZ-PANTOJA y MAULEÓN 1981.

LIMC – *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Artemis & Winkler Verlag.

MvG – BAUCHHENSS, G. y NEUMANN, G. (Redaktion) 1987. *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten*.

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RE: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

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Numeral Graffiti. Analysis and Development for the Manufacture of Dressel 20 Amphorae in the Province of Baetica

Francisco Javier HEREDERO BERZOSA¹

Abstract. *One of the most common types of marks on Dressel 20 amphorae before firing, the so-called numeral graffiti, serves as a sample to analyse the production regime of this type of packaging in the Roman province of Baetica. Through this article they analyse the characteristics of these marks and their relationship with Roman numerals, taking into account their origin and evolution, to find relationships with these graffiti. Likewise, through these inscriptions, both the organization and the productive capacity of a pottery workshop are also defined by the dimensions of its drying sheds.*

Rezumat. *Unul dintre cele mai comune tipuri de marcaje pe amforele Dressel 20 înainte de ardere, așa-numitele graffiti numerice, servește ca eșantion pentru analiza regimului de producție al acestui tip de ambalaj în provincia romană Baetica. Prin acest articol, autorul analizează caracteristicile acestor marcaje și relația lor cu numerele romane, luând în considerare originea și evoluția lor, pentru a găsi relații cu aceste graffiti. De asemenea, aceste inscripții pot fi indicii atât despre organizarea, cât și capacitatea productivă a unui atelier de producție..*

Keywords: numeral graffiti, Dressel 20 amphora, drying sheds, Baetica

Introduction

The manufacture of an amphora is organized on an evolutionary process that presumably seeks constant optimization. Hence, we have different amphora typologies: Ovoide 6, Oberaden 83, Haltern 71 and later what could be called its "star product", the Dressel 20, due to the enormous diffusion it had both in Rome and in several of its provinces;² and already at the end of its chronological development, the Dressel 23 or Tejarillo.³

The archaeological and epigraphic study of the pottery of the Dressel 20 amphorae has its origin in the studies of G. Bonsor in the twentieth century, through prospections between Seville and Córdoba and later in the Genil, between Écija and its mouth in the Guadalquivir. Numerous potteries were found here, the vestiges of which have testified to the production of these amphorae. Later, M. Ponsich continued in some way the study of the amphorae and its places of production of Baetica, in a systematic survey of this region that began at the end of the 60s of the twentieth century. These researchers have been followed by the work of G. Chic,⁴ J. Remesal and more recently of Juan Solís, Juan Moros and the Barea brothers.⁵

As for the places of distribution, the excavations carried out over several decades on Monte Testaccio have been fundamental for the study of this typological development. These

¹ Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. Laboratorio TestURJC. Email: fj.heredero.2024@alumnos.urjc.es. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6887-892X>

² Through the Roman Open Data portal (<https://romanopendata.eu>), an exploratory interface developed within the framework of the European EPNet project, it is possible to geolocate epigraphic searches on a map of all the provinces of the Empire, in this case of Dr. 20.

³ BERNI 2008, 64; CESTEROS *et al.* 2024.

⁴ CHIC GARCÍA 1985; 1988; 2001.

⁵ BERNI 2008; REMESAL 2011a, 116-117; MOROS 2021; BOURGEON 2021; GONZÁLEZ TOBAR 2023.

excavations have been directed by professors Blázquez and Remesal and are a fundamental project of the CEIPAC research group and the Royal Academy of History.⁶

Subsequently, the work carried out in the prospections at the Testaccio during these years (see table in figure 1) has resulted in six publications.

The analyzed elements that have been published in these volumes are based on three core aspects resulting from different readings and analysis of their epigraphic sources. These are: stamps, *tituli picti* and graffiti, the latter being a marginal part due to the difficulty of their readings to be able to define a moderately explanatory testimony of those incisions *ante cocturam* in the Dressel 20 amphorae.

	TESTACCIO	CAMPAIGN	TOTAL, SAMPLES	IN COLLO/ BELL	IN VENTRE/IN PEDE	DATING
2001	I	1989/1990	105	9	91	S. II A.D.
2001	II	1989	294	28	92	S. II A.D.
2001	II	1991	374	59	143	220-224 A.D.
2001	II	1992	384	59	143	220-224 A.D.
2003	III	1993/1994	205	28	177	S. II A.D.
2007	IV	1995/6/97	241	77	164	246-254 A.D.
2010	V	1998/1999	358	70	247	207-223 A.D.
2014	VI	2000,2005	293	22	243	174,176,177,179 A.D.

Figure. 1 Data from the publications of the Testaccio I to VI volume series

But what has been determined about those graffiti and where the most work has been done has been to define their categorization, with a canonical division originally revealed in Rodríguez Almeida's publications: calendarial, numeral and anecdotal graffiti.⁷

Subsequently, thanks to the development of the CEIPAC database, with the final dump of the published inscriptions, the graffiti has been classified into calendarial, nominal, numeral and indeterminate, with those of the "indeterminate" type being a catch-all due to the complexity of their readings.

This new cataloguing through subsequent publications has been subdivided into other samples within each core element of the original classification.⁸

In this work, both the study of the numeral graffiti that have appeared in the Testaccio and their new proposed interpretations will be presented. The investigations that have been carried out on those incisions *ante cocturam* that have been found in many fragments of those amphorae, have generally been treated as a secondary topic of study.

Among them, numeral graffiti, an element of research from the production point of view of the workshop, since those supposed figures can possibly provide information on the methods that were used to control and account for the abundant amphora production; the rotations of material within an assembly line in its different phases, as well as the implementation of a

⁶ BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ J.M., REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 1999; 2001; 2003; 2007; 2010; 2014,

⁷ RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1981; 1984; 1989; 1993.

⁸ OZCÁRIZ, PÉREZ GONZALEZ, HEREDERO 2020.

possible inventory within a *figlina*.

The Roman cardinals

Within the logistics chain, the concept of production could be defined as the realization of a process for the transformation of resources into goods, if they are tangible products, through the application of a certain technology.⁹

Likewise, production is applicable to the definition of terms of concatenated systems; that is, through industrial development through the use of certain material and human resources (inputs), so that through a certain procedure the realization of a finished product can be achieved (outputs). This structure can be applied to the manufacture of Dressel 20 amphorae. It should be entirely feasible that within a *figlina* there is something like a medium or long-term strategic plan to develop a production plan, which would then link to a manufacturing program with a firm commitment to the completion of a given batch.

In the case of Dressel 20 amphorae, the dynamics of these processes obey what was one or more assembly lines for the manufacture of amphorae in their different stages, following the concept of the economic batch of manufacture in a chain-type organizational system, where the work is carried out continuously according to a production program already accepted without a specific prior release of work orders.

The graffiti that have appeared in different parts of the packaging gives us the idea that those processes were labelled by some accounting element before proceeding to later phases, generating sufficient reasons to be able to assess that those writings with figures, which we designate with the name of "numeral graffiti", fulfilled the function of a dynamic inventory within the *figlina*, both in semi-finished elements (casings) and with the finished product (amphorae).

In order to better understand the interpretation of the incised marks on the Dressel 20 amphorae, of which a very high percentage could be numbers, it would be necessary to look for the origin of the Roman numerals in which, through different investigations carried out, they have their origin in the Panitalic world under a special Etruscan influence.

This situation should be perfectly possible, since the influence of the Etruscans in the Roman world is obvious both in religion, art and theater and also in many other aspects, such as the alphabet, which is entirely likely to have arrived in Rome through some cultural borrowing from the Etruscan civilization.

The historian Titus Livius, writing about the events in Rome in 310 B.C., states that at that time it was customary for Roman children to be instructed under Etruscan letters, (both in literature and writing) since, as he comments, "today (in an era contemporary to the historian) they receive training in Greek".¹⁰

If there was a strong influence of Etruscan culture in the Roman world, it would be perfectly acceptable that Roman numerical symbology may have had many similarities with that of the Etruscan civilization and this is corroborated by different philologists and historians (figure 2).¹¹

There are several theories about the origin of Roman numerals. Perhaps the most pertinent

⁹ ANAYA TEJERO 2015, 110.

¹⁰ *Caere educatus apud hospites, Etruscis inde litteris eruditus erat linguamque Etruscam probe nouerat. Habeo auctores uulgo tum Romanos pueros, sicut nunc Graecis, ita Etruscis litteris erudiri solitos* (Liv. IX, 36.3).

¹¹ Among others, I would like to mention more relevant authors that I will cite later such as De la Ramée, Capelli, Mommsen, Ifrah, Zangemeister, Gordon and Keyser.

and also the most widespread is that of the mathematician Petrus De la Ramée, a scholar of Latin in the sixteenth century.¹² De la Ramée theory is based on the fact that both Etruscan and Latin numbers in parallel situations have been used as a system of counting marks and have undergone some development and abbreviation of their forms. According to De la Ramée, Latin numerals were born by joining vertical rectilinear strokes, each of which multiplied by ten the previous pictogram composed of one or more of these strokes.

If the I equals the figure 1, when another equal figure is added to it, the value is multiplied by 10 creating the X sign. In the same way, if we add one more stroke, the figure of an asterisk * with a value of one hundred would be formed, which adding another line the value is one thousand [X]. Once these numbers have been constituted through a decimal system, the intermediate values would be obtained: 5 out of 10, 50 out of 100 and 500 out of 1000 (Figure 3).

>	I	Λ	X	⋈	*,)I(, C [ϣ]	⊕, ⊗ [ϣ]	⊕		
½	1	5	10	50	100	500	1000	5000	10000

Figure. 2 Etruscan numerals. KEISER 1988, 544.

It is not the objective of this paper to delve into the origin of Roman cardinals, since as different numeral marks on amphorae are analyzed, arguments that explain it will come up for debate, citing different scholars of Roman numerals. I would just like to explain two important theories that deserve reflection. One of them by P. Borel in the seventeenth century, who proposed that the signs V and X be considered pictograms, of which the first simulated a hand with the index finger and thumb and the second the X, with the hands crossed (*deux V joints par le pointe font un X qui vaut 10*). This theory is correct in itself, which has the historiographical support of older civilizations such as the Sumerian, Akkadian and even Egyptian through its hieroglyphics, it was later taken up by Mommsen, who stated that the signs I, V and X are prealphabetical because of "the different graphic principles that prevail in them" and their resemblance to the Etruscan numerals.¹³

According to Mommsen, for the rest of the symbols, the Romans used for such signs the three Greek aspirated consonants of the Chalcidian alphabet, which they did not need to use within the Latin alphabet, such as the letter chi (Ψ = 50), zeta (Ζ = 100) and phi (Φ = 1000), where the D "halbierte D" for 500.

I	V	X	↯	C	Ɔ	(X) or ∞ or ⊕ or ⊙
1	5	10	50	100	500	1000

Figure. 3 Roman numerals. KEYSER 1988, 530

The numeral graffiti of the Testaccio

Within the basic classification of the graffiti of the Dressel 20, an important group within the four elements of this categorization (calendariar, nominal, numeral and indeterminate) has

¹² DE LA RAMÉE 1569.

¹³ MOMMSEN 1850, 19-20; 1877, 589-601; 1888, 152-156.

been established through the different campaigns on Mount Testaccio with a generic character, as "numeral graffito".

In turn, in all the publications of the Instrumenta series about the Monte Testaccio excavation, the same criterion has been assiduously used when interpreting this type of writing: numeral graffiti representing "minor figures" and "major figures" adjusting to the characteristics of a specific canon based on Roman numerals.

The millions of amphorae of Monte Testaccio have offered an unparalleled setting for researchers and archaeologists. Thanks to these data, it has been possible to apply a large quantitative analysis to the study of graffiti.

After making a selection of all the numeral graffiti of the last monographs of the excavation of the Testaccio, a corpus has been configured by means of a typological pattern of these marks, to try to establish new hypotheses when interpreting them. For example, a possible reading reveals that possibly the so-called indeterminate graffiti are abbreviated figures with signs. We could also propose the possibility that the graffiti classified as minor numerals were other types of marks, excluding the classic archetype that they have always been characterized as Roman numerals.

Starting with the largest figures, always starting from the quantity 100, a new one should be introduced: the numeral 50, which in my opinion can be confused with the graffito that we interpret as 110¹⁴ (a C divided by a secant stroke). (Figure 4).¹⁵

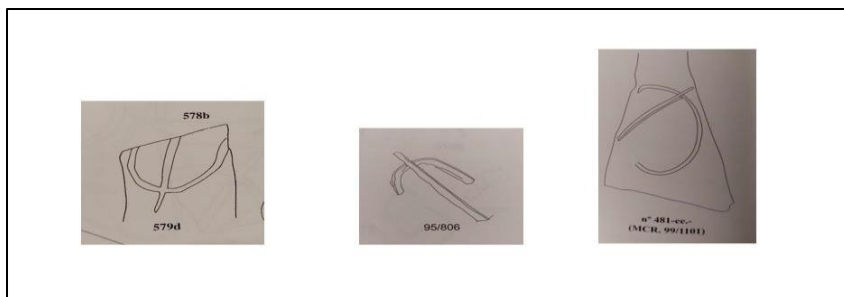


Figure. 4 Graffiti from the 1989/90 campaigns (BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 1999, 95 and 99).

Roman numerals were based on the additive system similar to the decimal based on the seven letters of the Roman alphabet (I, V, X, L, C, D and M) and to make a calculation in absolute values in the count of a supposed production (in multiples of five or ten), I believe that this number would not fit into its accounting configuration. since it is not divisible by ten. Therefore, it would be foreseeable that the numeral that we interpret as 110, according to different epigraphic records, could become the numeral 50 as represented in figure 10.¹⁶

Possibly the Roman numeral with a value of 50 has its origin from the division of an asterisk

¹⁴ REMESAL *et al.* 2007, 259.

¹⁵ Of the samples that I detail, I only expose the clearest ones since there are many of doubtful reading: REMESAL *et al.* 1999, 71, 13(a) and 13(b); REMESAL *et al.* 2007, 353, 579(d), 354, 581(a), 581(b), 581(f), 581(h); REMESAL *et al.* 2007, 273, fig 95/656, Figure. 95/604, Figure. 95/737, 274, Figure. 95/922, 95/1101, 96/341; REMESAL *et al.* 2010, 330, Figure. 481 (ee), 481(v).

¹⁶ ZANGEMEISTER 1887, 1017; CAPELLI 1928, 420; IFRAH 1981, 188; CIL I, 638, 1471, 1996. Also in CIL I2 2.585.E28, 638, 675, 676 and 677 there are examples with these signs.

in half and from that sign it underwent an evolution until it reached the letter L (figure 5), being documented the original sign seems to be from the time of Augustus.¹⁷

If we agree with a theory based on some kind of tonnage in which the count must be decimal, it seems to us that there should be a middle ground before the hundred, whole, divisible number in order to facilitate the possible computation of the industrial process.

Therefore, if we have not found the letter L (although it does appear in many laterician inscriptions) that could represent it, we could conjecture that this sign similar to the Greek letter "Ψ" could represent this figure.

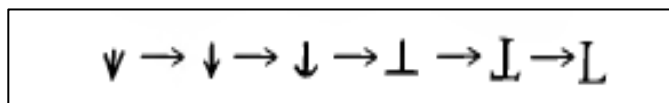
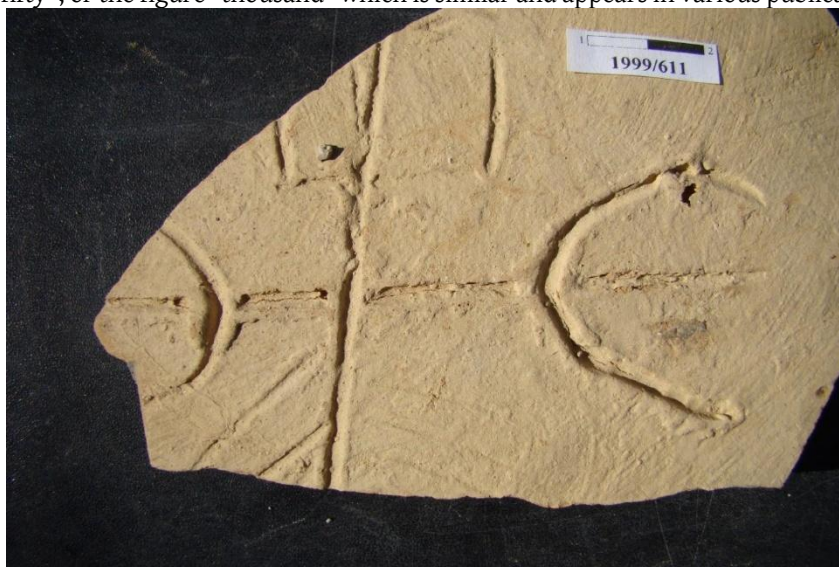


Figure. 5 IFRAH 1981, 188. (Figure. 16.27)

But it should also be stressed that, although the letter L has not appeared in any of the many pieces analysed in the excavations of the Testaccio, other types of letters related to figures have appeared if we consider them as acrophone symbols that can be, for example, C or M.

In the 1999 campaign, two double or composite graffiti were found.¹⁸ One of them, the one represented in figure 6, is composed of one or two possible figures that in the series have been catalogued as numeral graffiti.

The inscription is made up of two opposing semicircles, crossed by a perpendicular stroke, which could be, in my opinion, either the proposal put forward above of two digits with the cardinal "fifty"; or the figure "thousand" which is similar and appears in various publications.¹⁹



¹⁷ IFRAH 1981, 187-188. It is documented in CIL IV, inccr. 9934. Also on numeral 50: "The oldest known instances of the use of the letters L, D and M as numerals do not go back earlier than the first century BCE. As far as we know, the earliest Roman inscription which uses the letter L for 50 dates only from 44 BCE (CIL, I, inscr. 594). The earliest known use of the numerals M and D is in a Latin inscription which dates from 89 BCE, in which the number 1.500 is written as MD (CIL, IV, inscr. 590)".

¹⁸ BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 2010, 330, Figure. 481(y); 362, Figure. 506(j).

¹⁹ CAPELLI 1929, 421; IFRAH 1981, 188; Also in CIL X, 39.

Figure. 6 BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 2010, 362, Figure. 506 (j)

Our proposal would be that it is a representation, possibly with complementary information, which could perhaps have a different intentionality where you can see the marks of a trident and a palm leaf. These graffiti with arboriform or phytomorphic representations that we call "indeterminate", appear as *post-cocturam* marks on numerous *terra sigillata* tableware. They can have some meaning related to victory or triumph, truffled with a certain spiritual or material character that seems to have apotropaic or prophylactic purposes.²⁰

It is therefore a graffito composed of a scenario with two different interpretations: on the one hand, it can be a work or point of work determined as a day or similar in which the pictogram may also intend to represent the message by relating that quantity produced and, at the same time, manifesting itself through some identity of the operators.

We find many tridents and palms in isolation in the graffiti *ante cocturam* of the Dressel 20. It also happens with asterisks (we will try to identify and classify this pictogram later according to different interpretations). In the same way, figures also appear represented with rectilinear and curved crossed strokes in the form of reticular diagrams, etc., being noteworthy that this type of capricious marks in the Dr. 20 is a recurrent element from the writings found in the third century A.D.

Likewise, of the records that have been documented in this temporal context, this type of graffiti together with those of the numeral type begin to be more abundant with a total disappearance of the calendral ones and a sharp decrease in nominal ones.

This situation could make us reflect on a possible restructuring of the different production processes, since the identifying elements that previously marked some mark on ownership in the traceability of the process are so scarce that it seems that they end up disappearing.

Another certainly controversial Roman cardinal that is open to different interpretations is the one that corresponds to the number one hundred. There are different readings of the various campaigns in which it is represented as an acrophone sign by the letter C or double C (see table attached at the end), but through different publications, in which the evolution of Roman numerals is represented, the asterisk could also be represented on the amphorae as an accounting element interpreted as a hundred.²¹

However, just as there are documented epigraphic records with the figure fifty that can corroborate the readings of that mark, the sign does not appear in any epigraphic file that is interpreted as a figure and that corresponds to any contextual element of the Roman period. However, this writing is represented in several parietal graffiti from Pompeii, in this case having been interpreted with the symbol of the denarius.²²

Although the origin of the number 100 comes from the Etruscan numerals (see figure 7), over the centuries, there are researchers who have recognized an evolutionary process until this number is identified with the abbreviated letter C which, although it is considered an acrophone sign, there are theories that do not share it since the sign C also belonged to the Etruscan numerals.²³

²⁰ HIDALGO MARTÍN, BUSTAMANTE ÁLVAREZ 2024, 172. In his article, a similar graffito is represented in a mortuary vessel with the same characteristics.

²¹ ZANGEMEISTER 1887, 1017; KEYSER 2011, 542.

²² There are several examples that we find in CIL IV: 10042; 10106; 8203 and 4528

²³ The earliest known date for the Latin C figure is from 186 BC in CIL I (2), 2581 of Bacchanalibus, lines 9 and 18. While the Etruscan sign C = 100 is located in KEYSER (2011, 542) dated to the second century BC.

I	V	X	Ψ	*	⊗	⊗
1	5	10	50	100	500	1,000

Figure. 7 IFRAH 1981, Figure. 16.26

The asterisk sign is repeated continuously in all the campaigns of the Testaccio. In all his publications there are quite a few representations of this mark, in some more than others since those dating from the third century are more abundant (see list at the end of the article).

In our view, there are enough reasons why the reading of this pictogram in the Dressel 20 cannot be argued with a representation of the figure one hundred. Although it could have all its characteristics, this Roman cardinal as an accounting element seems to be represented by the letter C which, on the other hand, this mark seems to have a certain resemblance and possibly the same intentionality as the other graffiti of the "indeterminate" type.

The appearance of asterisks on olive oil amphorae is still an extraordinary situation in the case of graffiti before firing. Normally this type of mark is abundantly catalogued in the *post-cocturam* graffiti represented in the *sigillatas* that usually appear on fragments of tableware and we do not know if it has a different meaning than that of the Dr. 20 amphorae. The vast majority of this group of graffiti are dated at the same time as those of Dressel 20 themselves, all of which are placed within the same context of the Roman Empire of that time.²⁴

Within the graffiti that we call "major numerals" a new epigraphic mark could be introduced, the one that corresponds to the number thousand, which has always been represented by the letter M.

From my point of view, there are other types of writings that can represent this cardinal, most of them in the belly and base of the amphora, with a certainly questionable and controversial reading, which can give rise to conflicting opinions for two reasons. The first is that, if we assume that this cardinal corresponded to the heading represented by the infinity sign ∞ , no higher figures have been found (in the event that it can be a figure as an accounting element as an inventory) within a pottery workshop. The second is that, creating a strong dependence on the former, it can give us some approximation of the productive capacity of that same *figlina*.

The infinite sign, according to contributions from several researchers²⁵, seems to have had an evolution of the previous Etruscan numerals (see figures 2 and 3), having an intermediate step with the signs $\otimes$ and $\oplus$.

This type of marking, in which they are identified with a circle or semicircle, delimiting a space in which the mark of a cross or cross is written, also appears in greater quantity in the excavations of the Testaccio dated to the third century AD.

It might be tempting to interpret them with the reading of the thousand quantity, since apart from appearing on an Etruscan medallion in which an abacus with that sign is

²⁴ MEZQUIRIZ DE CATALAN 1961; MAYET 1984; LANGNER 2001; FERET, SYLVESTRE 2008; OZCARIZ, UNZU 2011; PEREZ, ARRIBAS 2016; AGUILERA 2023.

²⁵ CAPELLI 1929, 27; IFRAH 1981, 188; ZANGEMEISTER 1887, 1018; GORDON 1983, 44; GORDON-GORDON 1977, 181-182.

presented,²⁶ it is a mark that appears in many publications within the evolutionary process of this type of epigram until reaching the final M.²⁷ (Figure 8).

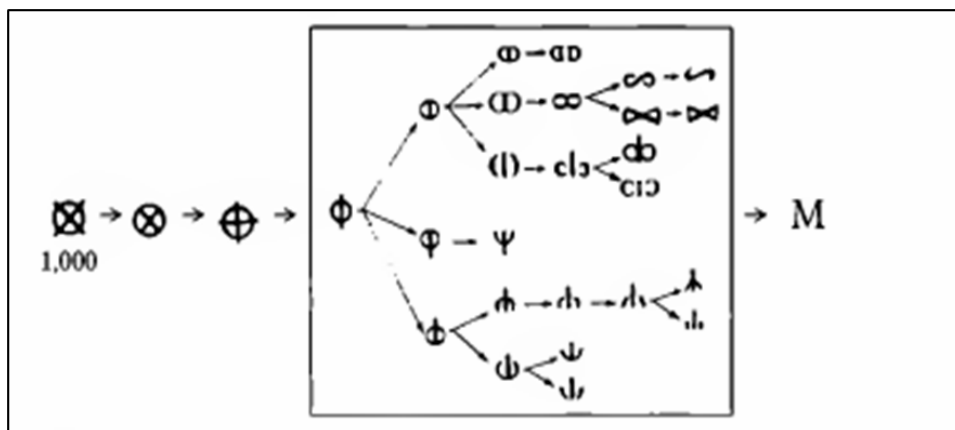


Figure. 8 IFRAH 1981, 186. (Figure 16.29)

But, as there are no epigraphic samples to corroborate it, it is not possible to know if they are figures or possibly marks as a product of certain counts in which, after there has been a first count, there has been a subsequent revision with another or other marks in strokes that may not have been simultaneous, since there is an example of graffiti of these characteristics with the *ductus* that, although it is similar, it apparently does not seem to be the same.

Returning to the sign, ∞ apart from being documented in several inscriptions (figure 9), there are several samples in different readings of the Testaccio, such as the previous marks, also from the third century,²⁸ which could be interpreted with this graffiti and with clearly defined characteristics with the figure thousand.²⁹

There are also certain situations parallel to this cardinal in the production of *tegulae*, such as that of a piece in Weissenburg (Bavaria), for which Gudea in an article proposes the following reading: *p(edales) mil(le vel milia)/cine(re vel cinerit)*.³⁰

²⁶ MENINGER 1958, 111. TORELLI, PALLOTINO 1966, 283-299, KEYSER 2011, 545.

²⁷ Among others, IFRAH 1981; BONFANFE 1983; ZANGEMEISTER 1887; GORDON, 1983; GORDON-GORDON 1957.

²⁸ Testaccio (2007), 275 (95/1+17); Testaccio (2010), 356 (502 a and 502 b)

²⁹ CIL 12 25.6. 1300; CIL VI 1251a; CIL I 594; 1853, CIL X 1019. GORDON, 1983; IFRAH 1981, 188

³⁰ WESCH-KLEIN 1990; GUDEA 1996, 475-482 esp. Figure. 1. First read by Wesch-Klein as: *P(...)/Antoni / Cin(eris)*.

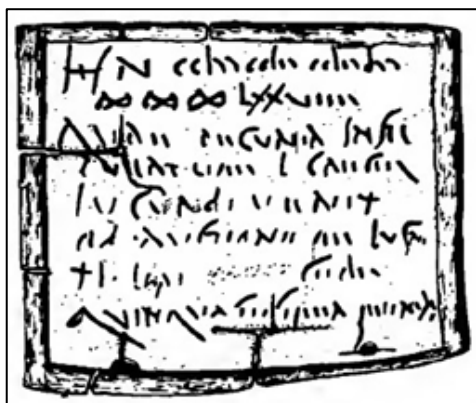


Figure. 9 Panel de Pompeya (CIL IV, 3340)

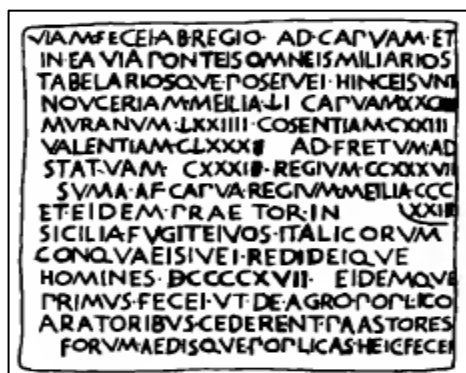


Figure. 10 CIL I, 638 in the Museo della Cività Romana (Rome)

This type of writing, which only appears both on the belly and at the base and if we consider the figure one thousand as an empirical value, has not appeared in graffiti of the Dr. 20 with a higher figure.

A question arises: Could they have this graffiti in a workshop as a reference for a batch of casing or semi-finished product for a given production? It should also be emphasized that the acronym M, within that same contextual space, has generally been found represented in inscriptions generally on the necks of amphorae, and if we ask ourselves the previous question respecting the M as the figure thousand, it could be proposed that there were two ways of counting labeled differently in two different processes; that is, first with the "infinity" sign in the production of casings and later with the acronym M in the assembly of the neck and handles.³¹

This is still a mere hypothesis, since the letter M does not have to be a number and the sign ∞ . It could have another meaning, but it is a coincidence that this number is repeated in the two parts of the process. I would like to base this interpretation on another piece of information later, based on the dimensions of the amphora drying sheds before firing in certain pottery workshops.

Another type of acronym that has appeared in the Testaccio campaigns are those that are read as B, R and D.³² These marks have been interpreted both as identifying elements on production control in workshops³³ or possibly abbreviations representing a quantity.

When reading it as an accounting element, the letter B could represent the figure three hundred according to Capelli's dictionary of abbreviations.³⁴

³¹ The word "casing" that appears in this article is used to refer to a semi-finished container in the first manufacturing process before the assembly of the amphora with the neck and handles as represented in figures 12, 13 and 19.

³² BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 1999, 67.72; BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 2001, 354, 355, 356. BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 2007, 263, 264; BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 2010, 313, 351; BLÁZQUEZ, REMESAL 2014, 528, 529, 530.

³³ MAYET, ÉTIENNE 1997, 102. In a monograph where several marks are represented *before cocturam* with letters and initials in amphorae Dr. 7-11 and Dr. 14. Also in MAYET *et al.* 1987, 79-11 with several marks also before firing when the amphora is upside down. These readings, several authors interpret as signs of ceramists or those in charge of production to control some type of batch.

³⁴ CAPELLI 1928, 413.

If an abbreviation were to be considered, making a parallel situation of pottery workshops in the province of *Tarraconensis*, initials with the letter B have appeared in a pottery of Sant Vicent dels Horts that, although they are different scenarios, the method for the manufacturing procedures should be similar, so an analogous proposal could be valid within the same cultural context of the Roman world.³⁵

Taking into account these hypotheses, as with the letter D for five hundred³⁶, a possible theory could be corroborated regarding the normalization of a "quasi-decimal" numerical system, which would be made more accessible by being represented as a standardized formula, to organize the computation of a set of elements in their manufacturing phases.

In relation to the acronym R, it also appears in Capelli's abbreviations with the figure "eighty". But possibly that acronym could perhaps have other types of connotations different from the representation of a figure.³⁷ One could suggest the origin of the letter R of the Latin word *ratio* understood as counting, which, as Ifrah proposes in his article, is posed in Roman terms from the expression *rationem putare*.³⁸

There are several citations in classical sources in which these terms are used. One of them is in a work by Plautus (*Trinnumus*, 417): *...Postquam comedit rem, post rationem putat*. Cicero also uses it in his defense of Flaccus (*Flacc. XXVII*, 69), where it is cited: *Auri ratio constat; Aurum in Aerario Est*. Finally, Cato (*Ag. 1.5*) uses the expression *pro ratione* to express it as "in proportion" using that word with an arithmetical content.

As an example to highlight among the marks that we find on the Dr. 20 in which a letter R is represented, there is a very unique one in one of the Testaccio campaigns on the belly of the amphora located next to a calendar graffito.

The interpretation of this graffito, taking into account the classic quotes above, could be assessed that in this scenario composed of these two graffiti (acronym + date), the R could be interpreted as the mark of a specific control (not as a number), of a batch or batch of a production defined at the same time by that same calendar graffito.³⁹

In this sense, establishing a correspondence from a methodological point of view and based on the *titles* δ on the trade in Baetic olive oil, we find this type of letters crossed by a horizontal line, interpreted by Dressel as *r(eceptum)*.⁴⁰ Later Chic García interprets it as *r(atio)*.⁴¹ Rodríguez Almeida also gives this letter a more administrative character, reading it as *r(ecensitum)* in such a way that it was the certification of some kind of control.⁴²

If the numerals that are considered "major figures" through epigrams or acronyms could be grouped into accounting cycles with the number with the highest value that corresponds to the quantity of fifty and establishing an increasing order: fifty, one hundred, two hundred, five hundred up to the number one thousand as the highest figure, could the figure thousand be as a certain quantity that could cover a certain lot? For the same reason, if it is proposed that they

³⁵ BERNI 2021, 42. There are several initials "B" with a huge resemblance to those that appear in the Testaccio.

³⁶ CAPELLI 1928, 414. About this number, there are several authors such as Ifrah, Zangemeister, Gordon, Keyser, etc. who demonstrate it with the evolution of signs into figures as demonstrated in previous pages on the origin of the Roman cardinals.

³⁷ CAPELLI 1928, 418.

³⁸ GERSCHEL (1960) and IFRAH (1981, 194) propose that the term *ratio* means the expression of a count by means of a corresponding mark.

³⁹ RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1989, 35 Figure. 6

⁴⁰ CIL XV 2, I, 562

⁴¹ CHIC GARCÍA 1988, 72.

⁴² RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1989, 29-30.

were based on a simple additive based on whole decimal numbers with the smallest digit with a value of fifty, the order and distribution of the product in a warehouse should have a logical and at the same time simple arrangement: the product presented in rows or rows of fifty by fifty would offer an easy understanding for an agile verification in the counting of the material displayed in the drying warehouse.⁴³

Regarding the numeral graffiti that correspond to the "minor figures", these are generally located both on the belly and foot of the amphora and on the neck, having a limited numerical space with the interpretation of their readings between cardinal one and thirty, although sometimes (especially on the belly and foot) there are graffiti whose reading is interpreted with a higher value. These figures, according to Remesal, could be linked to a series of batches or batches within the productive capacity of a ceramist in a day.⁴⁴

For this reason, it is possible that these marks could have been used to control a certain consignment by differentiating it from the others for the drying process, and as it is a large-scale production and being large pieces, it was necessary to create some type of mark or label within certain time slots of each consignment.⁴⁵

Within any pottery industry, it is established that the drying process is the most individualized operation in a ceramics workshop where the evaporation method is generally involved, eliminating approximately 35% of the water contained within the mineral particles of the ceramic containers, and that two important factors act that complement each other: the speed of diffusion and the speed of evaporation.⁴⁶

The delicate drying process in ceramics and especially of elements with thick and irregular walls, such as the clay component of Dr. 20, the rhythm must be slow and constant, in which the speed of evaporation of the water that remains on its walls is not greater than that of diffusion of water from the interior to the surface of the ceramic mass, in order to avoid breakage. If the piece were to dry quickly, the clay particles on the surface would lose the water they contain and, when contracted, would prevent the volume of water inside from escaping to the outer surface, causing it to burst during firing (the amphora would appear dry on the outside, but would have moisture inside).⁴⁷

⁴³ On the basis of the accounting calculations of the production of amphorae, a comparison could be made on the loading capacity in the furnaces of the amphorae that were to be fired by means of production units or sub-lots. MOROS 2021, 118. Also in CARRATO *et al.* 2018, 307 We find several examples that, although several criteria must be taken into account such as the size of the ovens, the shape of the amphorae and the load arrangement, give results on a calculation based on a decimal numbering system based on a standardization that estimates between a few hundred and more than 650 amphorae.

⁴⁴ REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 1977/78, 87-120.

⁴⁵ PEACOCK 1982, 66-67. According to the author, a good infrastructure was needed for the drying of amphorae so that the different shipments could be differentiated within the drying processes.

⁴⁶ STRADA, ESPINOSA DE LOS MONTEROS 1982, 327-328.

⁴⁷ The mechanism is similar in all pieces composed of different types of clays; however, factors such as the speed of drying can generate particular effects on each piece depending on its chemical nature, granulometry, its crystallographic nature and the type of treatments it received before reaching the drying phase. The main variations that occur during the drying phase are generated by the amount of residual water in the parts, their dimensions, their resistance to bending and the plasticity of the parts. The drying process works as follows: a ceramic paste is made up of clay particles divided by films of water that, when removed by evaporation, allow the particles to move. As the paste loses more moisture, these particles move closer together, causing the clay to contract until the water film is completely removed and the particles can no longer get closer. Therefore, when a piece is dried, the volume of the ceramic paste decreases proportionally to the amount of water removed, and with the removal of water, holes are formed in its structure (which are occupied by clay particles) and the piece contracts constantly until all the water has been removed. The effects of water removal are, in addition to the loss of volume and water of the parts due to

Therefore, the drying process must be controlled without leaving the part outdoors directly, since it has to be dried from the inside out slowly and through a hole as part of the manufacturing process in our case of a casing, a "chimney effect" would be created with a slow exit of water vapor from the inside to the outside (figures 12 and 13).

When the piece has lost much of its moisture, what potters call a leather hardness is created, in which its surface can be modified by scratching the irregular parts and remains that were created during turning.⁴⁸ To achieve that optimal hardness, there should be a quality control to evaluate through certain brands that the necessary standards are met to avoid possible failures or breakages before cooking.

Some minor numbers may possibly have witnessed that the drying process was being carried out correctly through continuous inspections, with various traces that were either superimposed on the previous ones or marked in adjacent spaces.

It could also be determined if they were temporary references that were taken so that both semi-finished and complete containers were exhibited in a drying warehouse, many of those graffiti with the marks X, XX or XXX and it is possible that they served to specify the number of days they needed for drying. On this assumption, there is an example of a graffito *ante cocturam* on a Dressel 20 in the region of Aosta, which could prove this hypothesis, the proposed reading of which is: *Gratus XX dies argilam*.⁴⁹

Likewise, the environmental conditions due to climatic circumstances in a *figlina*, in addition to being generally located on the bank of a river and having a higher humidity level than more distant areas, could be different depending on the time of year and it is clear that the drying time could logically vary according to the type of season and month in which the productive work was carried out.

The calendar graffiti, through the interpretation of its readings, have helped us to analyze that the production in a pottery could have an uninterrupted annual activity. For this reason, it could be deduced that there was a not very homogeneous and irregular development when applying the number of days needed for the drying of amphorae in optimal conditions: it is reasonable, therefore, to justify that possibly fewer days were needed in summer than in spring or autumn.⁵⁰

From the records that we have from Monte Testaccio on the numeral graffiti of smaller figures that have been analyzed, it would be necessary to evaluate their content and make a differentiation: those that have been found in *position in collo* (a more recurrent practice from the third century onwards) and *in campana*, and those that have been located in *ventre* and *in pede*

This appreciation is important, since in the necks of amphorae the figure usually does not exceed the X value, while in the belly and foot the figures are sometimes higher to even reach numerals greater than XXX. (Figure 11)

water evaporation, a change in the color of the paste, greater rigidity and an increase in its mechanical resistance. Data consulted in: <https://deshumificador.mx> (accessed on June 1, 2025).

⁴⁸ These reflections are the product of visits to different pottery workshop websites where the different manufacturing processes with a recurring idea about drying in which there has to be a slow development and in covered spaces. <https://www.tactodebarro.com>; <https://barroluz.com/el-secado-de-la-ceramica> (accessed on June 1, 2025).

⁴⁹ RÉMY, JOSPIN 1998, n°1.

⁵⁰ RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1984, 256; BERNI 2008, 35.

TESTACCIO			(I)	(II)	(III)	(V)	(X)	(XX)	(XXX)
I	IN COLLO/CAMPANA		2				2		
I		IN VENTRE/IN PEDE					7	3	7
II	IN COLLO/CAMPANA		19	16	3	6	21		
II		IN VENTRE/IN PEDE	10	2	1	7	34	20	10
III	IN COLLO/CAMPANA						1		
III		IN VENTRE/IN PEDE	3			1	3	2	
IV	IN COLLO/CAMPANA		10	10	2		14	1	
IV		IN VENTRE/IN PEDE		3			42	13	2
V	IN COLLO/CAMPANA		29	8	4	9	16		
V		IN VENTRE/IN PEDE	16	2	1	6	33	9	7
VI	IN COLLO/CAMPANA		4	1		5	13	1	
VI		IN VENTRE/IN PEDE	4	15	1	9	28	10	7

Figure. 11 Representation of minor numerals in the different campaigns of the Testaccio

If we evaluate the previous hypothesis of Aosta graffito, it would first have to be demonstrated that a casing with a volume of approximately 80 to 90% of its mass. For this reason, he possibly needed a number of days greater than X taking into account the season of the year. However, to dry the finished amphora with the neck and mouth upwards, even if there is less ceramic material, we must bear in mind that the drying time of the upper part needs a longer period than that corresponding to the belly. As the air circulation space was more limited, it would have to be considered that the finished amphora required a meticulous drying process with scrupulous precision to make it a sufficiently rigid body, since it had to support the weight of the wet upper part.

Therefore, it would be incongruous to take that reference due to the lack of marks with more than one X on the necks, since the drying time should be longer. It is not possible to know the reason why there are usually no numerals greater than X in the necks, but it is obvious that since there is this numerical difference between the base and a neck of the amphora there is some common point. It can be either the days of drying of each of the elements, or a routine quality control process until the necessary conditions for cooking are achieved. It is also important to evaluate that the leather hardness of the clay was possibly controlled with strokes after the first graffito until the necessary quality was achieved, since the drying time of a ceramic container is not constant due to various factors that have been mentioned above.

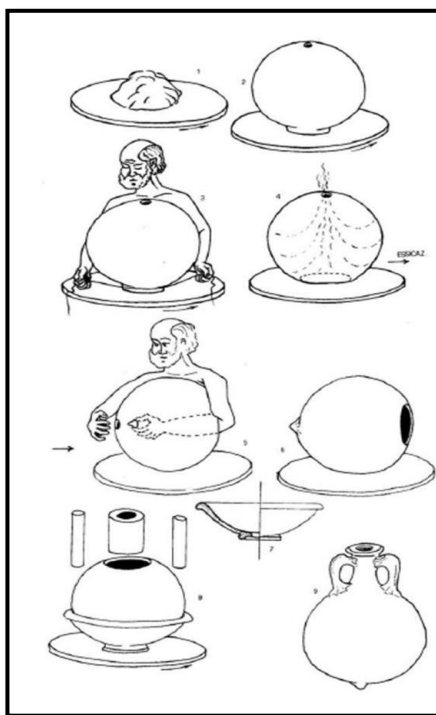


Figure. 12 Proposal for the assembly of a Dr. 20 amphora according to: RODRÍGUEZ ALMEIDA 1984, Figure. 67

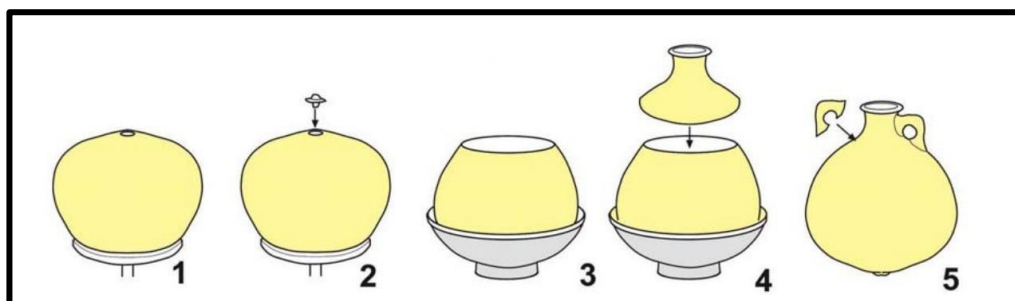


Figure. 13 Phases in the elaboration of the Dressel 20 amphora in BERNI 2008, Figure. 1

The previous interpretations have served to explore the content of numeral graffiti being argued exclusively under a numerical value both for a productive control (number of amphorae) and to mark temporal parameters (possibly days) with the function of controlling drying and supervising the quality of the production at the same time.

But of these graffiti, it has never been proposed that they could be spatial identifying marks to differentiate the different consignments of casings or amphorae inside the shelf of a drying warehouse. This new hypothesis, which could even go beyond the proposals presented above, especially to define the temporal drying processes well, may generate the idea of an

organizational situation within the drying warehouse similar to the operation of a dynamic warehouse (Figure 14).



The stock of the drying warehouse would consist of a continuous rotation, generated by two references (casing and amphora) and based on the FIFO system of incoming and outgoing material marked by a transitory and temporary system (*first in-first out*). In order to have information on the shipment of the product, such as the quantity or drying time, it is necessary that these sets of elements are properly identified, since the arrangement on the shelves sometimes requires chaotic storage where the same references are not always located. Minor numeral graffiti can possibly perform this function.

Figure. 14 Example of dynamic material infeed racking

Figure 15 shows two scenarios in which the possible material rotations of the two stored SKUs are recreated: Figure 15b for the semi-finished product (casings) and Figure 15c for the finished product (amphorae).

Based on the example in Figure 15a on a simple idea of a dynamic warehouse that, although in this case the displacement of the load is due to the effect of gravity, the idea can be similar to know the material arranged in racks.

For the first case of Figure 15b, graffiti can be of three types (X, XX and XXX) in which each inscription can be the content of a batch that corresponds to a specific number of elements. For example, graffiti X contains a certain number of product and a time reference different from XX and XXX that at the same time serves as a drying control label, and when it comes to subtracting it from the different groups for the second part of the process, it is known to be the oldest. In this way, the work could be facilitated in a simple way to establish a quality control in each batch.

In the case of Figure 15c, the graffiti that are generally known on the necks and that generally have the marks I, II and X, the process is similar but since it is a finished product, it should have another type of rotation to an external warehouse or for firing.

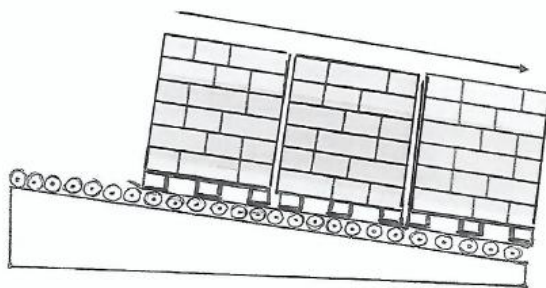


Figure. 15 (a) Dynamic storage proposal. ROUX 1997, 101

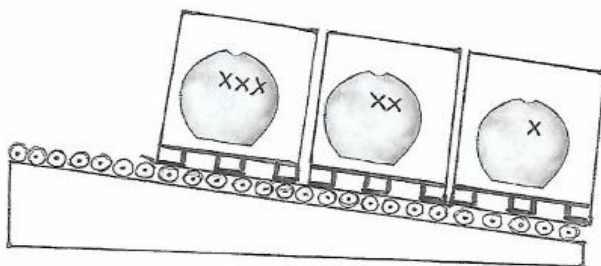


Figure. 15 (b) Dynamic storage for semi-finished products (housings) designed by the author

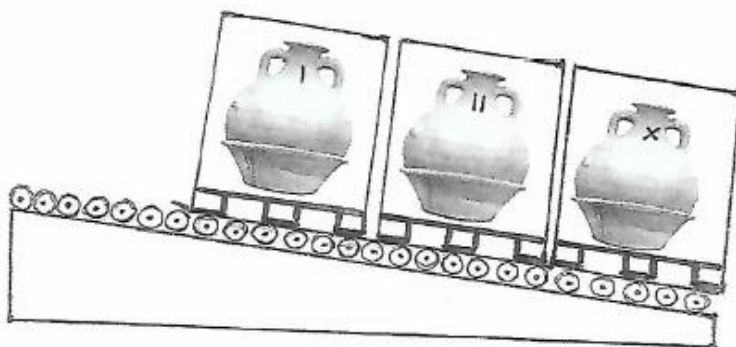


Figure. 15 (c) Dynamic storage for finished product (amphorae) designed by the author
Amphora drying warehouses

Literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources use the terms *figlina* or *navalia* that interpret concepts of what could have been an adaptable infrastructure such as the installation of a drying room within a pottery.

Therefore, as far as the *latericia* industry is concerned, we have an important sample in the content of several bricks in the museum of Zagreb, which can give us some light on the hypothesis we put forward about the drying warehouse/*navalia* relation.

In the collection of inscriptions CIL III, in inventory numbers 11378 to 11386 there is a group of graffiti on the surface of a series of bricks. Eight of them (later sesquipedales) are in perfect condition. Seven of these bricks were found in the Archaeological Museum of Zagreb and one more should possibly be in Prague, according to the CIL.

The most interesting is the text on brick No. 4 (figure 14) *III kal. Augustas Severus et Candidus in hoc navali CCCLXXX*. *Artemas et Eulymenus in alio navali CCCLXXX*), which mentions two pairs of workers and the number of 380 bricks per pair.

Here we find the phrase "*in hoc navali, in alio navali. Navalia*" which were, according to the standard meaning, "shipyards, arsenals" in the colloquial jargon of the potters of department stores, as rooms called drying sheds for the drying of *laterician* products.

The bricks had to dry for several weeks before firing, meaning those rooms had to be spacious protected from the sun and rain. These inscriptions on bricks accompanied in some way a certain amount of bricks from the workshop to the warehouses for drying. They were used to control the daily, monthly and total productivity of each of the workers or their partners and most likely the workers were paid according to the agreed quantity of products, which they were expected to deliver within a certain fixed period.⁵¹

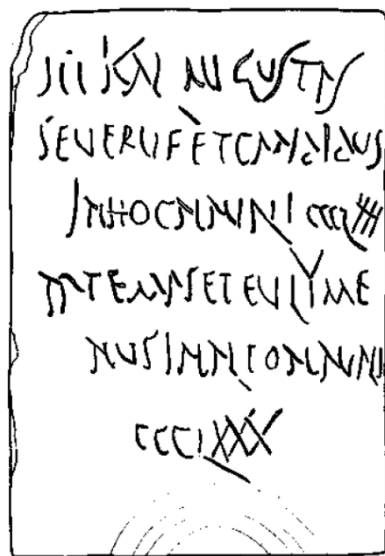


Figure. 14 CIL III 11382. Zagreb Archaeological Museum

⁵¹ MATIJAŠIĆ 1993, 127-133; MATIJAŠIĆ 1988, 203-215

It seems that, unlike the Greeks, in the Roman world, especially in the classical period, they had only one word to designate the places of shipbuilding: the *navalia*, the site where ships were built and repaired, and also the place where ships were beached (*subductae*) in dry dock to keep them in reserve until their return to port. Under the Empire, the term *naval* may have taken on by a final transformation, the general meaning of workshop like the *navalia* mentioned in the bricks of Siscia at Pannonia.⁵²

On the other hand, from the results of the research work carried out in excavations of various pottery workshops located in the western Mediterranean, it has been shown that generally these facilities had in common rectangular floors, sometimes isolated or also with another attached one forming an L and in some the same complex in the shape of an elongated and narrow U.

According to Mauné, it could have an explanation for purely artisanal reasons, since it was necessary to reconcile the need for a space for the storage of their production and the need to organize the work of the potters by subdividing the surface into cells.

These infrastructures most often served as productive hangars or for drying materials; They could also be used to house the workers if it was considered that some of them were equipped with a single floor.⁵³

As an example of the characteristics of the warehouses for the production or drying of the product, several examples of pottery excavations in both Spain and France are presented.

In the Vilaseca pottery workshop in the province of Tarragona, there are two large spaces located in the center of the workshop, active from the Augustan period until the end of the second century AD, the first measuring 12.90 x 5.80 metres and the second measuring 12.05 x 5.50 meters with a total area of 141 square metres.⁵⁴

In the excavation of the Almadra in Poblets (Alicante) several rectangular spaces of 15 x 7.6 meters have been discovered; 13 x 7.5 meters; 14.8 x 4 meters and 11.5 x 8 meters, all with an area of 362 square meters.⁵⁵

The workshop of the Collet de Sant Antoni in Calonge (Girona) together with about fifteen kilns, the floor of a possible rectangular warehouse of 44 x 9 meters has been discovered that it seems that due to these dimensions pottery was generally dedicated to producing wine amphorae.⁵⁶

Also in the excavation of Fenals in Lloret de Mar (Girona) from the Julio-Claudian and Vespasian period surrounding the pottery workshop of about 39 x 39 meters, the marks of a U-shaped plant with a length of 88 meters and a width of 7.5 meters have been identified, making

⁵²*Ephemeris Epigraphica* CIL II Supp. 927 p. 434 where he notes: *Navale similiter hic usurpatur ut portus cum in figlina Romana in CIL XV 408, 129: Op(us) dol(iare) ex pr(aediis) M(arci) Aureli Antonini Aug(usti) n(ostri) port(u) Lic(ini)*. Also in his *Variae*, Cassiodorus includes a letter from Theodoric (Var. 1.25, ca. 507-511 CE) that may refer to the repairs of the *Portus Julius*, which had been damaged (even possibly submerged) in the early sixth century: *dudum... propter Romanae moenia civitatis... portum Licini deputatis redditibus reparari iussu nostra constituit, ut viginti quinque millia tegularum annua inlatione praestaret, simul etiam portubus iunctis, qui ad illa loca antiquitus pertinebat et nunc diversorum usurpatione suggeruntur invasi*. On the *navalia* we have an interesting source from Livy in Liv VIII, 12: *Naves Antiatiarum partim in navalia Romae subductae, partim incensae, rostrisque earum suggestum in foro exstructum adornari placuit, Rostraque id templum appellatum*. And finally Vitruvius in Vit. 5, 12: *Circum enim portictus sive navalia sunt facienda sive ex porticibus aditus<ad> emporia, turresque ex utraque parte collocandae, ex quibus catenae traduci permachinas possint*.

⁵³ MAUNÉ, BORGAUT 2020, 103.

⁵⁴ ROIG 2010; MOROS 2018; MAUNÉ, BORGAUT 2020, 930.

⁵⁵ GISBERT 1987; GISBERT 1999.

⁵⁶ NOLLA et al. 2002; NOLLA et al. 2004.

an area of 660 square meters.⁵⁷ (Figure 15)

Also in the shape of a U in the excavation of a large pottery center in L'Ermedàs in Cornellà de Terri (Girona), with a total area of 1300 square metres in three possible warehouses with the following dimensions: 42 x 9 meters; 38 x 9.50 metres and 23 x 8 meters. ⁵⁸ (Figure 16)

Finally, in Clots de Raynaud in Sallèles d'Aude (France), also surrounding two ovens could be a U-shaped warehouse with dimensions of 24 x 5.50 on the side floors and 23.50 on the central floor, with an area of 390 square metres. Also a little further away are two huge L-shaped elongated warehouses with dimensions of 98 meters by 11.5 meters and the other of 71 x 5.5 meters with an area of 1380 square meters.⁵⁹

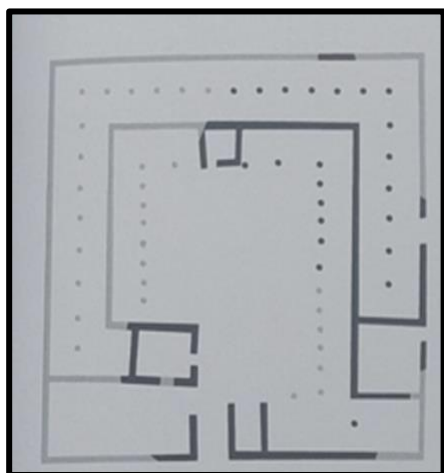


Figure. 15 MAUNÉ, BOURGAUT 2020, 107
Fenals in Lloret de Mar, (Girona)

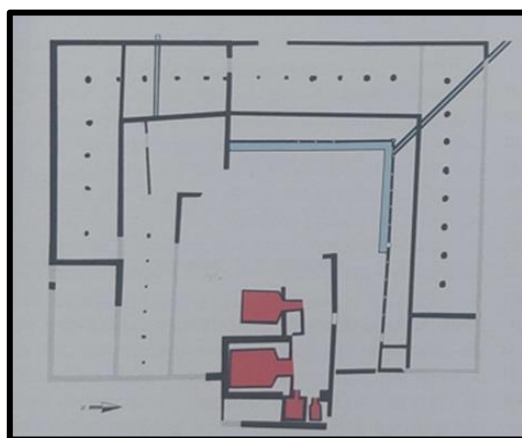


Figure.16 MAUNÉ, BOURGAUT 2020, 107
Ermendans in Cornellà de Terri (Girona).

In the valleys of the Genil and Guadalquivir rivers, remains of pottery industries with similar structures have also been found, such as the archaeological intervention in the excavation of Casilla de Malpica in Lora del Río (Seville), in which structures have been documented that constitute a complex of buildings made up of three rectangular and independent constructions. About 50 meters long with the interior pavement that must have been rammed earth. Above the presence of these bays, there is a space that presides over a channeling in the center, which seems to correspond to an open space, courtyard or street between two buildings.⁶⁰

Another similar case is found in the pottery of Las Delicias, one of the largest potteries known on the banks of the Genil. In 1997, the results of an emergency excavation led to the documentation of a large rectangular construction, measuring approximately 38 x 10 metres,

⁵⁷ TREMOLEDA 2000, 52-55; TREMOLEDA *et al.* 2017; 371 Figure. 382.

⁵⁸ TREMOLEDA *et al.* 2017.

⁵⁹ LAUBENHEIMER 2001.

⁶⁰ ARCAS *et al.* 2015.

although due to the erosive action of one of the walls its length is unknown. The structure is similar to that of the group of buildings excavated in Casilla de Malpica, with the same constructive characteristics of a building related to the manufacture and storage of different ceramic elements.⁶¹

And, finally, one of the best examples of what was the typical complex of pottery buildings for the manufacture of Dr. 20 has been revealed by the last emergency excavations at the Malpica 1 site, carried out in 2015 after the first ones carried out in 1997 (figure 18).

Due to the abundance of stamps that have been recorded from that *figlina*, it has been shown that it had a considerable size and it is recognized as an important production center between the Flavian period and the third century A.D.⁶²

At this site, the remains of a large structure composed of three elongated naves about 40 meters long and 4 meters wide were discovered, and in one of them the remains of a potter's wheel adjacent to one of the walls, possibly at the entrance of the nave, have been discovered.⁶³

These were separated by two alleys, one of them possibly being uncovered as it had a conduit for the evacuation of water. Some part of these galleries seems to be divided into compartments of about 10 square meters where they were possibly both workers' quarters and artisanal spaces for the organization of productive cells;⁶⁴ these being connected to those narrow and diaphanous warehouses, probably some of them as a drying room for the raw material that had been processed.⁶⁵

The conditions to be able to facilitate the storage of a product and that the location and extraction of any element in storage has easy access, from a rationally technical perspective, is that there must be a warehouse with an open structure and that the longitudinal space is in proportion to the material stored (I would like to give as an example, the corridors that are distributed between shelves in libraries). Therefore, it seems that it is common sense that, as in the case at hand, as it is an amphora drying warehouse, where there are different parts of the process in manufacturing when drying takes on great importance, with a continuous transfer of inputs and outputs of finished or semi-finished product, it is normal for the warehouse to be long and narrow so as not to create any impediment when selecting or subtracting any product. component for assembly.

Drying is a crucial step in the production chain of all types of ceramics since, if drying is not carried out under optimal environmental conditions, it can considerably increase the risk of cracks during firing. As explained above, the process of drying a ceramic material by evaporation has a dehumidifying mechanism by which water is removed from the clay bodies to ensure proper firing of the pieces. This is why, at the beginning of drying, the pieces should not be exposed to direct sunlight in summer. This step then had to be carried out inside buildings, in the shade and shelter from inclement weather and it was imperative that the potters scrupulously ensure themselves for a uniform drying of the products, otherwise there would be a risk of losing the entire batch and taking into account the massive nature of the Dr.

⁶¹ SÁEZ *et al.* 1997, 573. According to the authors, "the morphology of these areas allows, hypothetically, to relate them to the work of making (*cubicle*) and storing the amphorae (*horrea*). The architectural scheme that combines large naves with square-tending rooms seems frequent in artisanal pottery and has been maintained to the present day in some places in the Mediterranean".

⁶² MOROS 2024, 231.

⁶³ BOURGEON 2021, 574.

⁶⁴ GARCÍA 1998, 123; REMESAL 2000, 584.

⁶⁵ BOURGEON 2021, 584 figure 690 as a proposal for one of the bays of the drying facilities

20 amphora, It must have been a particularly slow operation.⁶⁶

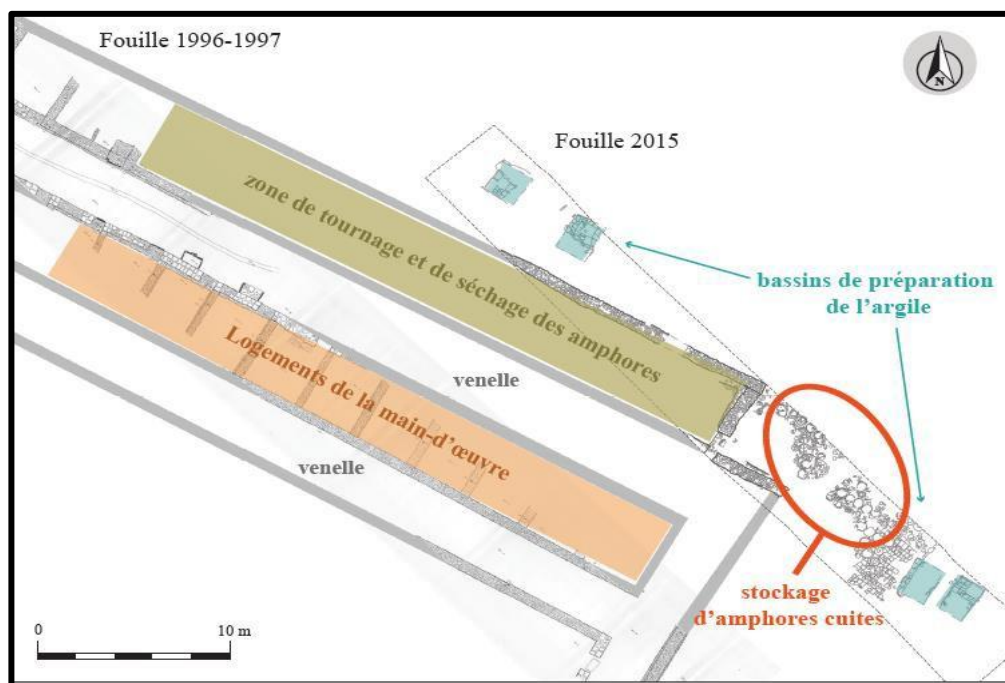


Figure 18. BOURGEON 2021, 584 Figure 690.

I would like to expose, as an example, of the results obtained in the last excavations of Malpica and with the appearance of a supposed drying room of Dressel 20 units with an approximate area of 40 x 4 meters (see figures 20 and 21), a scenario with the provision for drying of a certain number of products, in which there had to be a continuous spatial exchange of casings and finished amphorae between the workshops and the drying warehouse (see figure 19).

The arrangement of the containers is represented in certain locations in order to facilitate the work for the sake of a possible count, where the last spaces in blue could be indicative elements by means of a mnemonic system of the completion of the batch (in this case 100 units on the first floor). A situation similar to production using the KANBAN drag system, in which when the work of the last operation is finished, a signal is sent to the previous execution to inform it either of the end of the process or that it must start a new order through a labeling system.⁶⁷

If we consider two meters as the manageable height of a person to be able to control the material, especially due to the need for both hands to handle it and without the requirement

⁶⁶ BOURGEON 2021, 585.

⁶⁷ The KANBAN method was established in Japan in the 50s through a protocol for the replenishment of a stock, in which there was a communication system to generate production orders and replenishment of materials. This system arose from the replenishment rules in American supermarkets. When the products are removed from the shelves and each product is labelled and at the checkout, it collects all the references sold by issuing a replenishment order to the warehouse, which in turn sends another replenishment order to suppliers and manufacturers. ANAYA 2015, 128.

of auxiliary elements to access higher areas; With the distribution in successive adjoining openings to deposit the ceramic elements with a width of 75 centimeters and a height of 1 meter, our proposal is that the optimal arrangement for their storage would be through the placement of shelves to store two floors of amphorae and in this case, the capacity of the drying warehouse being 200 units (figures 20 and 21).⁶⁸

This calculation could be used as a frame of reference and, due to the capacity of a drying warehouse, can be documented as the justification of an artisanal testimony and at the same time serve as a suggestion to shed some light on the volume of what the production could cover in a *figlina*. As an example of any industrial exploitation, there had to be a total synchrony between the pottery, its manufacturing volume and the warehouse to deposit a stock for drying.

For the same reason, it is suggested that one of the conditions that the stamping in the amphorae was not generalized in all units, because the capacity of that drying warehouse already indicated the number of elements contained in a given batch and if it was not necessary to count the production one by one, for the same reason an individualized stamping would not be needed either.⁶⁹

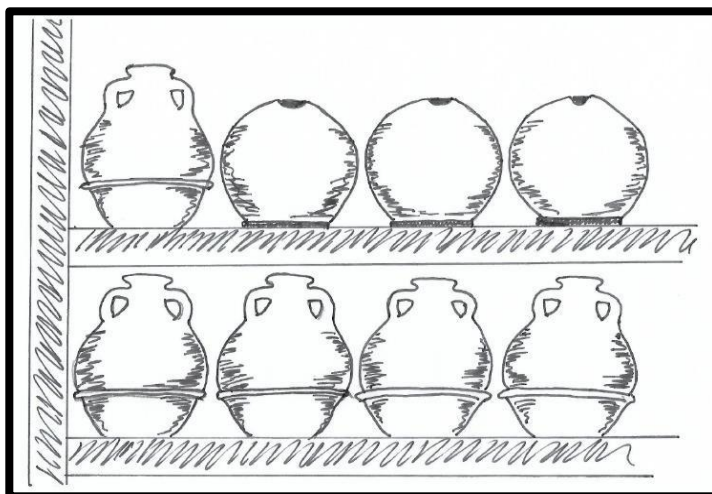


Figure 19. Possible location of semi-finished (casing) and finished (amphorae) products on the shelf of a drying warehouse. The amphorae (approx. 30 kilos) with the basin, as they weigh more, occupy the lower part of the shelf to prevent detachment (own elaboration).

⁶⁸ In CARRATO *et al.* 2018, 313, a detailed study is carried out on the capacity of amphorae in an oven in Las Delicias (191 units) in which there is a certain similarity in the number of amphorae proposed for a drying warehouse of these dimensions. Possibly this is a coincidence, but a new hypothesis could also be supported about the cause-effect relationship between the capacity or batch of amphorae in an oven and a drying warehouse.

⁶⁹ MOROS 2021, 112.



Figure 20.
Elevation
corresponding to one
of the walls of the
warehouse with a two-
metre-high shelf on
two levels in which
semi-finished product
(casings) and finished
product (amphorae)
are interspersed

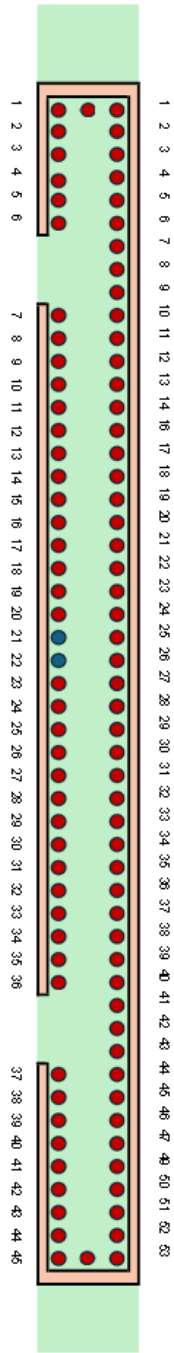


Figure 21.
Floor of a 40 x 4
meter drying
warehouse for
Dressel 20
amphorae with a
space between
each element of
75 centimeters
for a capacity of
100 units

It is relevant to note that already at that time the potter's trade and especially to know how to make this type of amphorae, should be a very specialized profession, with a very integral and truly exhaustive knowledge of the way of working in an artisan environment that is not very permeable, having created a school in a production linked to a nucleus possibly with a certain family structure, where knowledge was passed down through generations.

This trade, which was supposedly created by itinerant crews⁷⁰, which moved from *figlina* to *figlina* throughout the area, over the years had to improve and perfect its *modus operandi* under the control of a volumetric norm and marked by standards on the morphology of the containers, which at the same time created an industrial base, a patent that was developed over decades.⁷¹

By means of tests with current methodologies, such as experimental archaeology, we have tried to understand the dynamics of that group that could well be the origin of the creation of a guild such as stonemasons, wickers, boatmen, etc. that, although we know that this type of corporation arose from the Middle Ages, they were already outlined since Antiquity with the existence of several professional levels within each workshop.

Although the slave regime entailed other nuances in the functioning of the *officinae*, it could already be configured in a system imposed by categories with the supposed hierarchy formed by a master or foreman, journeymen and apprentices.

Conclusions

In this article, we have tried to find new interpretations of certain incisions in the Dr. 20 amphorae before firing, which can possibly be figures comparing them with the Roman cardinal ones, while at the same time demonstrating their origin from the Etruscan numerals.

With this hypothesis, it has been attempted to demonstrate that, if in the Roman world the numbering system of the Latin alphabet (I, V, X, L, C, D, M) was used to represent figures similar to the current decimal system, there are certain signs such as those that correspond to the amount "fifty" or "thousand" that could determine a remittance or the computable element of the development of an industrial transformation for the creation of Dr. 20.

On the other hand, the amount "one hundred" represented by the sign of an asterisk as an accounting unit has been rejected, as no epigraphic record from the Roman period has been found to corroborate it. Regarding the acronyms C, D and M it seems that they could correspond to figures, while the acronym R in my opinion, the conditions are met for it to possibly be an element of control.

With regard to graffiti that are called minor numerals, usually with one or more digits with the X mark, a new interpretation has been developed apart from the previous ones, which can be all their readings concatenated in the same process marked by the following parameters: quantity control-quality control-temporality control.

Regarding quantity control, authors such as Remesal have positioned themselves by interpreting this type of graffiti as a quantity derived from a productive phase, for example, a working day.

But new hypotheses are also opened about these graffiti. In one of them, it is proposed that they do not have to be figures but marks to testify to the finish and hardness of the clay by

⁷⁰ REMESAL 2011b.

⁷¹ COTO SARMIENTO 2019, 139-140.

means of a random procedure, which can determine the drying process through quality control.

Our reasoning has been based on the fact that, if in the bellies of the casing there are many cases of figures greater than X, in the necks and mouths of the amphorae most of the cases are only represented by graffiti with a single X (they also appear with a V or an II, but I think it is a similar situation since it can be an unfinished X).

Another scenario is that they can mark a temporary reference within the stock of a drying warehouse to control the inflows and outflows of stocks by means of a dynamic pushing system of both the semi-finished material (casings) and the finished product (amphorae).

The storage of a *figlina* that exercised the functions of a drying room, clearly should be the *Sancta Sanctorum* of a pottery workshop, where all the work carried out in the manufacture of the Dr. 20 had to be compensated under a slow drying process, to avoid possible fractures in the amphorae when they were going to be fired.

The drying warehouses, as has been demonstrated in various excavations, should be long and narrow for easy handling and possibly a standardization of their production capacity.

In other words, due to the dimensions of the drying warehouses of a pottery, with an orderly and logical arrangement of the elements displayed on shelves, it would be possible to discern how much volume of manufacture could come out of that workshop.

By way of conclusion, the *graffiti* that we call numerals or indeterminate must have been established, to mark the different processes within the manufacturing field in the manufacture of amphorae of a *figlina*.

Those incisions in the ceramic objects, which were made during the different stages before and during the drying process, should possibly be labels or slogans within a common language among that artisan collective, which does not have any identity element and is very difficult to find out what many of them could represent.

Consequently, there were groups of people (*figuli*) within this type of fairly specialized associations, made up of either *servi* or people in freedom, possibly a large majority of whom had no knowledge of writing or knew how to count.

These crews have been stipulated by previous studies that they were presumably itinerant. They should be exclusive and unique with the application of some kind of communicative agreement between them, with the transmission of their professional knowledge through a certainly corporatist language of incised marks on the amphorae; in very varied and recurrent graffiti representing ties, wavy, reticulated lines, etc. that to date have not been could be clarified.

The leaders or ringleaders of those crews may have received the order and ordered the lot for a limited time under the supervision of the *offinator*, who with an absolute command of writing should have a superior power or command in the activity of the workshop. While in the *figlina*, there should always be a permanent staff for the preparation and supply of materials such as clay or other types of raw materials, also for the maintenance of the facilities, monitoring of drying and preparation of the ovens for firing.

The pottery industrial activity, especially from the third century A.D. onwards that developed in the valleys of the Genil and Guadalquivir, left us a very specialized cultural landscape within the productive context of the Dr. 20 amphorae; where its actors communicated through graffiti that have raised many lucubrations when it comes to making them. It is important to continue researching, as there is still much to be done.

Annexes

Summary of the data from the different Testaccio campaigns

TESTACC	CAMPAÑA	TOTAL	IN COLLO/	IN VENTRE/IN	DATACIO	NOMINAL	CALENDARIA	NUMERALES	NUMERALES	SIGLAS	SIGNC	INDETERMINA
20X I	1989/1990	1	9	9	S. II	4	2	2	6	7	0	5
20X I	1	2	2	9	S. II	1	0	6	0	10 (B,R)	2	1
20X I	1	3	5	1	220-224	1	0	1	2	13 (B,R)	2	1
20X I	1	3	5	1	220-224	1	0	1	2	13 (B,R)	2	1
20X II	1993/1994	2	2	1	S. II	3	5	1	7	0	1	1
20X I	1995/6/97	2	7	1	246-254	1	0	6	2	1	3	7
20I V	1998/1999	3	7	2	207-223	2	1	9	1	2	4	2
20I V	2000,2005	2	2	2	174,176,177,1	3		1	4	4	2	1

TESTACCIO	CAMPAÑA	TOTAL MUESTRAS	IN COLLO/ CAMPANA	IN VENTRE/IN PEDE
I	1989/1990	105	9	91
	CODIGO IDENT.	PAGINA	FIGURA	POSICION
ASTERISCO	11 (e)	70	9	ventre/pede
	11 (f)	71	10	ventre/pede
SIGLA B	17 (c)	72	11	ventre/pede
	17 (e)	72	11	ventre/pede
	17 (a)	71	10	ventre/pede
C PARTIDA (50)	13 (b)	71	10	ventre/pede
	13 (a)	71	10	ventre/pede
SIGLA M	18	72	11	ventre/pede
II	1989	294	28	92
II	1991	374	59	143
II	1992	384	59	143
	CODIGO IDENT.	PAGINA	FIGURA	POSICION
ASTERISCO	559 (a)	346	61	collo/campana
	577 (e)	352	67	ventre/pede
	577 (g)	352	67	ventre/pede
SIGLA C	561	347	62	collo/campana
	578 (a)	353	68	ventre/pede
	578 (c)	353	68	ventre/pede
C PARTIDA (50)	579 (d)	353	68	ventre/pede
	581 (a)	354	69	ventre/pede
	581 (b)	354	69	ventre/pede
	581 (f)	354	69	ventre/pede
	581 (h)	354	69	ventre/pede
CÍRCULO CON (X)	581 (c)	354	69	ventre/pede
	581 (d)	354	69	ventre/pede
	602 (b)	358	73	ventre/pede
	606 (b)	361	76	ventre/pede
SIGLA B	584 (d)	355	70	ventre/pede
TRAZOS ONDULADOS	603 (a)	359	74	ventre/pede
	603 (n)	359	74	ventre/pede

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TESTACCIO	CAMPAÑA	TOTAL MUESTRAS	IN COLLO/ CAMPANA	IN VENTRE/IN PEDE
IV	1995/6/97	241	77	164
	CODIGO IDENT.	PAGINA	FIGURA	POSICION
ASTERISCO	95/1189	282	33	<i>in pede</i>
	95/166	276	27	<i>in pede</i>
	95/350	276	27	<i>in pede</i>
	96/464	276	27	<i>in pede</i>
	95/644	276	27	<i>in pede</i>
SIGLA C	95/652	273	24	<i>in pede</i>
	95/830	273	24	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/882	273	24	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/921	273	24	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/1271	273	24	<i>in pede</i>
C PARTIDA (50)	95/656	273	24	<i>in pede</i>
	95/604	273	24	<i>in pede</i>
	95/737	273	24	<i>in pede</i>
	95/806	273	24	<i>in pede</i>
	95/922	274	25	<i>in pede</i>
	95/1101	274	25	<i>in ventre</i>
	96/341	274	25	<i>in ventre</i>
Círculo con (X)	95/1172	265	16	<i>in collo</i>
	96/410	265	16	<i>in collo</i>
	95/847	274	25	<i>in pede</i>
	96/76	274	25	<i>prope pedem</i>
	96/816	274	25	<i>in pede</i>
	97/29	274	25	<i>in ventre</i>
	97/113	274	25	<i>in pede</i>
	95/242	280	31	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/465	280	31	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/920	281	32	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/967	281	32	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/1088	281	32	<i>in pede</i>
	97/145	281	32	<i>in pede</i>
	97/149	281	32	<i>in pede</i>
SIGLA R	95/97	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/388	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/519	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/853	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
TRAZOS ONDULADOS	95/554 a+b	277	28	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/520	277	28	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/575	277	28	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/738	277	28	<i>in ventre</i>
	95/1259	277	28	<i>in pede</i>
LAZOS	95/79	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/188	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	85/214	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/970	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/484	264	15	<i>esp. interansal</i>
	95/113	265	16	<i>esp. interansal</i>
SIGLA M	95/83	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/243	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/478	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	96/505	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/1078	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/1109	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
SIGLA R	95/97	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/388	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/519	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
	95/853	264	15	<i>in collo</i>
INFINITO	95/1+17	275	26	<i>in ventre</i>
SIGLA D	95/1071	263	14	<i>in collo</i>

TESTACCIO	CAMPAÑA	TOTAL MUESTRAS	IN COLLO/ CAMPANA	IN VENTRE/IN PEDE
V	1998/1999	358	70	247
	CODIGO IDENT.	PAGINA	FIGURA	POSICION
ASTERISCO	461 (a)	313	36	<i>in labro</i>
	461 (b)	313	36	<i>in labro</i>
	498(a)	354	77	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	498(d)	354	77	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	498(c)	354	77	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	498(e)	354	77	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	498(f)	354	77	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	498(g)	355	78	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA C	477 (c)	325	48	<i>in ventre</i>
	477 (d)	325	48	<i>in ventre</i>
C PARTIDA (50)	481 (ee)	330	53	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (y)	330	53	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
CÍRCULO CON (X)	481 (e)	326	49	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (b)	327	50	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (f)	327	50	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (g)	327	50	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (o)	328	51	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (r)	329	52	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	480 (u)	329	52	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	481 (v)	329	52	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	482 (w)	330	53	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	506 €	361	84	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA R	460 (a)	313	36	<i>in collo</i>
LAZOS	462 (a)	313	36	<i>in collo</i>
	499 (a)	355	78	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	499 (b)	355	78	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA B	495 (a)	351	74	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	495 (b)	351	74	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA CC	486 (a)	333	56	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	486 (d)	333	56	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	486 (b)	334	57	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	486 (c)	334	57	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	486 (e)	334	57	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
INFINITO	502 (a)	356	79	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	502 (b)	356	79	<i>in ventre in pede</i>

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TESTACCIO	CAMPAÑ	TOTAL MUESTRAS	IN COLLO/ IN CAMPANA	IN VENTRE/ IN PEDE
V	2000,2005	29	2	24
	CODIGO	PAGIN	FIGUR	POSICIO
ASTERISCO	1148 (14)	52	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA C	1144 (2)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1144 (6)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1144 (7)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1144 (11)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1144 (9)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1144 (10)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
CÍRCULO (X)	1148 (1)	51	1	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
CÍRCULO CON (I)	1173 (1)	53	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1173 (2)	53	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1173 (3)	53	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA R	1170 (2)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1170 (3)	53	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1170 (4)	53	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1170 (6)	53	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA B	1167 (1)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1167 (4)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1167 (5)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1167(7)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1167(9)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1167(10)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA D	1168 (1)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1168 (4)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
	1168 (2)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>
SIGLA M	1169 (1)	52	2	<i>in ventre in pede</i>

TESTACCIO	CAMPAÑA	TOTAL MUESTRAS	IN COLLO/ CAMPANA	IN VENTRE/IN PEDE
I	1993/1994	2	2	1
ASTERISCO	CODIGO IDENT.	PAGIN	FIGU	POSICI
	99	3	5	<i>prope pedem</i>
SIGLA C	944 (b)	3	4	<i>in</i>
	945	3	4	<i>in</i>

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Ein *beneficiarius consularis* in Dakien
aus dem Jahre 163 AD. / A *beneficiarius consularis* in Dacia in 163 AD

Ioan PISO¹

Abstract. The starting point for the discussion is a newly discovered inscription from Abrud in the 'Golden Quadrangle' of the Western Carpathians, recently published by G. Cupcea, F. Marcu and A. Rustoiu. The most important piece of news is that the dedicant, a *beneficiarius*, refers to himself as a *beneficiarius consularis* in 163, whereas according to general opinion this title only seems to have been known in Dacia from 168/170 onwards. The author attempts to explain how the title *bf. cos.* came to be used in a praetorian province. The result is the redating of several *beneficiarius* inscriptions, including those from Alburnus Maior.

Zusammenfassung. Ausgangspunkt der Diskussion ist eine kürzlich von G. Cupcea, F. Marcu und A. Rustoiu veröffentlichte neu entdeckte Inschrift aus Abrud im „Goldenen Viereck“ der Westkarpaten. Die wichtigste Neuigkeit besteht darin, dass sich der Dedikant, ein *Beneficiarius*, im Jahr 163 als *Beneficiarius Consularis* bezeichnet, während dieser Titel in Dakien laut allgemeiner Meinung erst ab 168/170 bekannt zu sein schien. Der Autor versucht zu erklären, wie es zu dem Titel *bf. cos.* in einer prätorischen Provinz gekommen ist. Die Folge davon ist die Umdatierung mehrerer *Benefiziarier*-Inschriften, darunter jener von Alburnus Maior.

Rezumat. Punctul de plecare al discuției îl reprezintă o inscripție recent descoperită de la Abrud în „Patrulaterul de Aur” al Carpaților Occidentali, publicată recent de G. Cupcea, F. Marcu și A. Rustoiu. Cea mai importantă noutate este că dedicantul, un *beneficiarius*, se desemnează ca fiind *beneficiarius consularis* în 163. Totuși, după opinia generală, acest titlu pare să fi fost cunoscut în Dacia doar din 168/170 îndeace. Autorul încearcă să explice modul în care titlul *bf. cos.* a ajuns să fie folosit într-o provincie pretoriană. Rezultatul este redatarea mai multor inscripții menționând *beneficiarii*, printre care și cele de la Alburnus Maior.

Keywords: *Dacia, Dacia Superior, Alburnus Maior, Ampelum, Abrud, legio XIII Gemina, beneficiarius legati, beneficiarius consularis, legatus Augusti pro praetore, Antoninus Pius.*

Ein Altar oder Statuenbasis aus Kalkstein wurde vor kurzem während der Restaurierung der unitarischen Kirche von Abrud entdeckt. Die heutige Ortschaft Abrud liegt im "Goldenen Viereck" der Westkarpaten, wo in römischer Zeit vom römischen Fiskus intensiv Gold abgebaut wurde². Das Vorhandensein eines römischen Kastells ganz in der Nähe von Abrud dürfte daher kein Zufall sein³.

Das Denkmal misst 77 x 36,5 x ... cm (Tiefe nicht angegeben) und ist in der Mitte des Inschriftenfeldes quer durchgebrochen; die Zeile 6 war auf die Plinthe geschrieben; trotz der Beschädigungen ist der Text gut lesbar; Buchstaben: 5,5 - 3 cm.

¹ „Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, Center for Roman Studies; piso_ioan@yahoo.com.

² Zur Verwaltung der dakischen Goldbergwerke siehe jetzt PISO 2013, 335-355.

³ Zu diesem wenig bekannten Holz-Erdemauer *kastellum* siehe CUPCEA, MARCU, RUSTOIU 2024, 129.

Die drei Herausgeber, G. Cupcea, F. Marcu und G. Rustoiu, lasen den Text wie folgt⁴:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
P(ublius) Ae(lius) Lon-
ginian[u]-
s b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) ex*

5 *voto posuit
Pastore co(n)s(ule).*

Die Inschrift ist auf das Jahr 163, unter dem Konsulat von M. Pontius Laelianus und A. Iunius Pastor L. Caesennius Sospes zu datieren⁵. Bemerkenswert ist, dass für die Datierung nur das Cognomen des zweiten Konsuls verwendet wurde⁶. Zum einen dürfte der Name des zweiten Konsuls dem Dedikanten und der Gemeinde von Abrud besser bekannt gewesen sein, zum anderen bedeutete die Widmung des *beneficiarius* keineswegs einen streng offiziellen Akt. Außerdem ist eine kleine Ungenauigkeit in der Datierung nicht als ein *vitium* im religiösen Sinne zu werten.

Die drei Herausgeber schließen zu Recht, dass P. Aelius Longinianus in das *officium* des Statthalters aus der *legio XIII Gemina*, der einzigen Legion in Dacia Superior, abkommandiert wurde⁷, und dass der Statthalter einer prätorischen Einlegionenprovinz über ein einziges statthalterliches *officium* verfügte und nicht gleichzeitig auch über ein zweites, das ihm als Legionslegaten zugestanden hätte⁸. Für die Jahre 163-167 sind unsere Kenntnisse über die prätorischen Statthalter von Dacia Superior etwas dürftig; im Jahre 163 könnten wir es mit P. Calpurnius Proculus Cornelianus oder mit Ti. Iulius Flaccinus zu tun haben⁹.

Gegen die Lektüre der neuen Inschrift und die entsprechenden Erläuterungen ist also nichts einzuwenden. Dennoch bedarf der erste Beleg eines genau datierten *beneficiarius consularis* vor der Umorganisation Dakiens weiterer Kommentierung. Dies gilt umso mehr, als die Autoren im Titel ihres Beitrages dem *beneficiarius consularis* die Bemerkung «ahead of his time» anhängen. Sie vertreten sodann die wohl anzunehmende Auffassung, dass ab einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt das *officium legati* zum *officium consularis* geworden ist, ohne dass der Rang des senatorischen Statthalters weiter beachtet worden wäre¹⁰.

Während bis in die erste Hälfte des 2. Jahrhunderts der Amtsbezeichnung eines *officialis* der Name des Statthalters beigefügt wurde, trat unter den Antoninen die neue Mode

⁴ CUPCEA, MARCU, RUSTOIU 2024, 130-131, 138, Taf. 1/1-2 (Photo, Zeichnung); wiederholt in der jährlichen epigraphischen Chronik von Rumänien von PETOLESCU, MATEI-POPESCU 2024, 251-252, Nr. 2504.

⁵ DEGRASSI 1952, 46.

⁶ Es kommt recht häufig vor, dass statt zwei Konsuln nur einer genannt wird; siehe zum Beispiel ILJug I 278 (Taurunum): *Pisone co(n)s(ule)*, a. 175; AE 1994, 1406 (Sirmium): *Anullino II co(n)s(ule)*, a. 199; CIL III 1042 = IDR III/5, 145 (Apulum): *Victorino co(n)s(ule)*, a. 200; CIL III 3515 = TitAq I 380 (Aquincum): *Agricol(a) co(n)s(ule)*, a. 230 usw.

⁷ Siehe zu der Organisation der drei dakischen Provinzen zwischen 119/120 und 168/170 PISO 1993, 32-41.

⁸ Die gegenteilige Auffassung geht auf eine Bemerkung von SPEIDEL 1977, 697, über den Gouverneur von Arabien zurück; gefolgt von OTT 1995, 26-27, der auf zwei Missverständnissen aufbaut. Zum einen handelt es sich bei dem *leg(atus) leg(ionis) III Cyr(enaicae)* aus IGLS XIII/1, 9176 = CBI I 724 und bei dem *co(n)s(ularis)* aus IGLS XIII/1, 9199 um denselben Statthalter prätorischen Ranges von Arabien; zweitens darf uns die Bezeichnung *b(ene)ff(iciarius) leg(ati)* aus CIL VIII 2569 a-b = CBI I, 776, CIL VIII 18067 = CBI I 777 und AE 1913, 12 = CBI I, 785 aus Numidien nicht in die Irre führen. Es handelt sich um denselben *legatus Augusti pro praetore* der *legio III Augusta*, der praktisch die Statthalterchaft über Numidien ausübte; siehe THOMASSON 1982, 15-17, 22-26.

⁹ Siehe PISO 1993, 75-79.

¹⁰ CUPCEA, MARCU, RUSTOIU 2024, 132.

auf, den Namen des Statthalters durch den Titel *cos.* im Genitiv zu ersetzen (bf. *cos.*), unabhängig davon, ob der Statthalter konsularischen oder nur prätorischen Rang hatte¹¹. Hier sind nur die Statthalter der kaiserlichen Provinzen gemeint, denn *beneficarii proconsulis* sind unbekannt¹². Ist es nur eine Vereinfachung des Titels¹³ oder steckt mehr dahinter?

Nach A. v. Domaszewski soll die Tatsache, dass die prätorischen Statthalter regelmäßig zum Konsulat gelangten, darauf bewirkt haben, dass die *beneficarii* der senatorischen Statthalter stets als *beneficarii consularis* bezeichnet wurden¹⁴. Im Anschluss an A. v. Domaszewski behauptete B. Rankov, dass durch *consularis* einfach Statthalter zu verstehen ist, ohne dass die Bekleidung des Konsulats eine Rolle gespielt hätte¹⁵. Dies ist unter dem Gesichtspunkt des *ius publicum* schwer zu akzeptieren, wenn sich der Genitiv, streng genommen, auf die Person des Statthalters bezieht. Es wäre der einzige Kontext, in welchem ein *vir praetorius* den Titel *consularis* usurpiert hätte. Dass dies nicht der Fall war, geht am besten aus den senatorischen Laufbahnen hervor. Im *album senatorium*, im ordentlichen Senatsbetrieb und in der Ämtervergabe war die Grenze zwischen den *viri praetorii* und den *viri consulares* streng gezogen¹⁶. Dass eine solche Verwechslung gerade bei den Kommandostellen auftrat, dürfte einen bestimmten formalen Grund haben.

Man hat richtig bemerkt, dass bis um die Hälfte des II. Jahrhunderts der Titel *beneficiarius* vom Namen des Provinzstatthalters begleitet war, was darauf schließen lässt, dass die Beziehung zwischen dem Offizier und seinem Vorgesetzten eher persönlicher Natur war und mit der Statthalterschaft endete¹⁷. Von jetzt an sollen die *beneficarii* als *beneficarii consularis* umbenannt worden sein, unabhängig von der Person des Statthalters, in dessen *officium* sie abkommandiert wurden¹⁸. Die Frage, warum ein *beneficiarius* im *officium* eines prätorischen Statthalters als *beneficiarius consularis* bezeichnet wurde, ist allerdings noch nicht hinreichend geklärt.

Die *beneficarii* waren Legionäre, die von einem Statthalter in das eigene *officium* oder in das *officium* des Statthalters einer benachbarten Provinz abgeordnet wurden. Verwaltungstechnisch gehörten sie jedoch weiterhin zu den Legionen, die der Autorität des jeweiligen Statthalters unterstanden¹⁹. Es ist leicht verständlich, dass in den Einlegionsprovinzen die *beneficarii* des Statthalters aus der eigenen Legion rekrutiert wurden, wahrscheinlich ohne dass es dafür eine Regel gab²⁰.

¹¹ Nützliche Zusammenstellungen der wichtigsten Etappen in der Geschichte der *beneficarii* im *officium* der Statthalter bei RANKOV 1999, 15-32; NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 115-126; CUPCEA 2014, 42-48.

¹² Siehe dazu den treffenden Kommentar zu Tac., Hist. IV, 48 von NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 62-63, 106.

¹³ NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 78.

¹⁴ v. Domaszewski 1967, 32; siehe noch V. DOMASZEWSKI, RE III/1 (1897), 271: «Gelangt der prätorische Statthalter während seiner Amtszeit zum Konsulat, so heißen seine *beneficarii* ebenfalls *beneficarii consularis*, z. B. in Numidien». Gerade dieser Punkt kommt in Frage.

¹⁵ Cf. RANKOV 1999, 20: «By the Antonine period, however, it becomes common to replace the governor's name with the simple term *consularis*, used as a noun in the genitive and meaning 'of the governor', regardless of whether he was of consular or praetorian rank»; siehe auch 20-21, Anm. 39, wo die ältere Literatur darüber zu finden ist.

¹⁶ Das *album senatorium* dürfte unter dem Prinzipat ähnlich geordnet gewesen sein wie das *album decurionum* (Ulp., Dig. 50, 3, 1); siehe MOMMSEN 1887, III 853, mit Anm. 1; O'Brien Moore, RE, Suppl. VI (1935), 765-778.

¹⁷ MIRKOVIĆ 1991, 255.

¹⁸ DISE 1997b, 285; MIRKOVIĆ 1991, 255.

¹⁹ Siehe V. DOMASZEWSKI 1967, 32-33; OTT 1995, 27-32.

²⁰ Siehe NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 82. Manchmal wird dies wörtlich erwähnt, wie in Pannonia Inferior (CIL III 10429 = CBI I 379): --- *b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) II Adi(utricis)* (a. 210); Raetia (CIL III 5575 = CBI I 214 (Stöttham): *b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) II Ital(icae) p(iae) f(elicis) Severianae*), siehe noch CBI I, S. 187-191; Noricum (CIL III 5189 = WINKLER 1969, 126, Nr. 5 = CBI I 230 (Celeia): --- *b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) II Ital(icae) p(iae) f(elicis)*,

Es gibt kein Beispiel für die Entsendung von *beneficarii* aus prätorischen Provinzen nach Dalmatien, in eine konsularische Provinz ohne Legionen. Hierfür wurden nur Legionäre aus den benachbarten Zweilegionenprovinzen rekrutiert²¹. Angenommen, der Statthalter einer Zweilegionenprovinz wie Germania Superior oder Germania Inferior einen Legionär aus seinem konsularen Heer in das *officium* des prätorischen Statthalters von Belgica schickte, die keine Legionen besaß²². Es entstand ein Dilemma. Sollte der Titel des Offiziers in einem solchen Fall den Rang des Gouverneurs, zu dem er abkommandiert worden war, oder den Rang des Gouverneurs, der die Autorität über die Legion besaß, der er weiterhin angehörte, enthalten?²³ Letzterer dürfte sich aufgrund seines höheren Ranges durchgesetzt haben. Wir müssen nur noch einen Schritt weiter gehen. Um solchen oder ähnlichen bedenklichen Situationen vorzubeugen, wurde beschlossen, dass alle *beneficarii* der senatorischen Statthalter den Titel *b(ene)ff(iciarius) consularis* führen sollen. Mit den *beneficarii* des Generalstabes der wenigen Einlegionenprovinzen, die aus der eigenen Legion stammten, hat man keine Ausnahme gemacht. Die Erklärung dafür scheint zu sein, dass sich dieser Titel nicht mehr auf den Rang des Statthalters, sondern nur noch auf die Aufgabe des Offiziers bezog, selbst wenn dafür der Genitiv *co(n)s(ularis)* verwendet wird²⁴. Diese Neuerung war deswegen machbar, weil die *beneficarii* schlicht einem statthalterlichen *officium* und nicht dem *officium* eines bestimmten Statthalters zugeordnet waren²⁵. Man ging aber nicht so weit, um den *beneficarii* im *officium* der Präsidial- oder der Finanzprokuratoren den gleichen Titel zu verleihen, auch wenn diese ebenfalls aus den von konsularischen oder prätorischen Statthaltern befehligten Legionen abkommandiert wurden. Es musste der Anschein gewahrt werden, dass das Reich durch den Senatorenstand und den Ritterstand getrennt verwaltet wurde²⁶.

Es wurde zu Recht darauf hingewiesen, dass die Änderung des Formulars irgendwann unter den Antoninen erfolgte. Eine genauere Zeitbestimmung ist durchaus möglich. Das späteste Beispiel für diese frühere Phase findet sich unseres Wissens in Germania Superior: Q. Fabius Saturninus, *b(ene)ff(iciarius) Caeserni(i) Statianni co(n)s(ularis)* im Jahre 150²⁷. Eine solche

siehe noch CBI I, S. 192-130; Numidia (CIL VIII 10717 = 17628 = CBI I 755 (Vazaivi): *b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae)*).

²¹ Siehe CBI I, S. 346-391; NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 84-85.

²² Wir beziehen uns auf CIL XIII 3620 = CBI 23 (Namur): --- Victorio Victorino *b(ene)ff(iciario) co(n)s(ularis)* ---; siehe auch CIL II 491 = CBI I 831 (Emerita Augusta / Lusitania): --- L(ucius) Maelonius Aper vet(eranus) *leg(ionis) VI Vic(tricis) p(iae) f(idelis)* --- *b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)* ---; CBI I 832 - Emerita Augusta): --- Geminus Gargilianus *mil(es) leg(ionis) VII G(eminae) b(ene)ff(iciarius)*.

²³ Treffend ist die Bemerkung von NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 83: «La situation administrative des légionnaires placés dans l'*officium* du gouverneur d'une province *inermis* demeure ambiguë puisqu'ils sont d'une certaine manière rattachés à deux provinces, celle de la troupe dans laquelle ils ont été enrôlés, et celle du gouverneur auprès duquel ils ont été détachés. Serait-ce la raison pour laquelle ils n'insistent pas sur les détails de leur rattachement?».

²⁴ Das erkennt man am besten in CIL XIII 6807 = CBI I 118 (Mogontiacum): *Cl(audio) Aelio | Pollioni | leg(ato) Aug(usti) | pr(o) pr(aetore) G(ermaniae) S(uperioris) | praesidi | integerrimo | b(ene)ff(iciarii) co(n)s(ularis) | G(ermaniae) S(uperioris)*; siehe NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 78.

²⁵ Trefflich NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 79-81.

²⁶ Zu diesem Prinzip siehe ALFÖLDY 1981, 173-182.

²⁷ CIL XIII 5609 = AE 1961, 239 = CBI I 176 (Pontauiller-sur-Saône / Germania Superior). Trotz der Änderung des Formulars, hinterließ die persönliche Beziehung zwischen Statthalter und Offizier auch später noch Spuren, wie 210 im Falle eines *b(ene)ff(iciarius) Subatiani(i) Proculi, leg(ati) Augg[[g(ustorum)]] pr(o) pr(aetore) co(n)s(ulis) desig(nati)* (CBI I 759 - Cuicul), im III. Jh. --- M(arco) Aurelio Cominio Cassiano *leg(ato) Aug[[g(ustorum)]] pr(o) pr(aetore) c(larissimo) v(iro) praesidi beneficarii eius* --- (AE 1917-1918, 72 = CBI I 768 - Lambaesis) oder nach 206 bei einem *beneficiarius* [*Sene*]cionis[*co(n)s(ularis)*] (CIL III 1783 = CBI I 495 - Naronia).

Formel sollte nicht zu der Annahme verleiten, dass die Abkommandierung der *beneficarii* in irgendeinem zeitlichen Zusammenhang mit dem Statthalteramt stand²⁸.

Schon im Jahre 155 finden wir in Moesia Inferior einen Ulpius Alexander als *b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)*²⁹, gefolgt in Pannonia Inferior von einem M. Ulpius Valens, *b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) miss(us) honest(a) mission(e) Barb(aro) et Regulo co(n)s(ulibus)*³⁰; das heißt im Jahre 157, wobei wir nicht wissen, ob sich das Jahr auf die Aufgabe oder auf die *honesta missio* bezieht - eher aber auf die zweite. Mit dem neuen Fund aus Abrud ist in Dacia Superior ein *b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)* für das Jahr 163 belegt. So dürfte die Änderung unter Antoninus Pius, zwischen 150 und 155 erfolgt sein³¹. Es besteht auch die Möglichkeit, dass sich die neue Formel mit dem Beginn der gemeinsamen Herrschaft von Mark Aurel und Lucius Verus und mit dem Ausbruch des parthischen Krieges allgemein durchgesetzt hat.

Da in Dakien bisher kein *b(ene)ff(iciarius) c(on)s(ularis)* vor 168/170 nachgewiesen werden konnte, pflegte man alle solche Offiziere in die Zeit nach 170 zu datieren. Die Mode der anderen Provinzen sei also nicht auch in Dakien eingeführt worden. Ich selbst habe alle Inschriften aus Apulum, in denen nur *b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)* stand, einfach «ab 168/170» datiert, leider ohne mindestens «wahrscheinlich» hinzuzufügen³². Dank des neuen Fundes ist nun die Annahme gerechtfertigt, dass ab 161, wenn nicht schon ab 151, bis zur Umorganisation Dakiens 168/170, die *beneficarii* im Stab des Statthalters von Dacia Superior *b(ene)ff(iciarii) c(on)s(ularis)* hießen. Die Liste dieser Offiziere in Dakien ist also revisionsbedürftig geworden³³. Besonders vielversprechend könnte die Wiederaufnahme jener Inschriften sein, die im selben "Goldenen Viereck" gefunden wurden, in erster Linie jene von Alburnus Maior (Roşia Montană). Es sind vier:

WOLLMANN 1985-1986, 260-261, Nr. 2 = PETOLESCU 1988, 403-404, Nr. 418 = AE 1990, 828 = CBI I 544; ILD I 360; CIONGRADI 2009, 64, Nr. 54: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | C(aius) Calpurnius | Priscinus | b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) |^s v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

WOLLMANN 1985-1986, 274-276, Nr. 15 = PETOLESCU 1988, 406, Nr. 431 = AE 1990, 840 = CBI I 546; ILD I 373; CIONGRADI 2009, 39, Nr. 2: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | C(aius) Calpurnius | Priscinus | b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) |^s v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

WOLLMANN 1985-1986, 271-272, Nr. 12 = PETOLESCU 1988, 405, Nr. 428 = AE 1990, 837 = CBI I 545; ILD I 370; CIONGRADI 2009, 65, Nr. 56: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | C(aius) Iucundius Verus | b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) |^s v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

WOLLMANN 1985-1986, 259-260, Nr. 1 = PETOLESCU 1988, 403, Nr. 417 = AE 1990, 827 = CBI I 547; ILD I 359; CIONGRADI 2009, 48-49, Nr. 21: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | Q(uintus) Marius | Proculus | b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) |^s v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

In den insgesamt 35 Inschriften, die in Alburnus Maior im Heiligtum von Hăbad gefunden wurden³⁴, findet sich neben den Namen der *beneficarii*³⁵ nur ein einziger römischer

²⁸ Mit Recht, NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 84; anders DISE 1997a, 275.

²⁹ CIL III 7449 = CBI I 643 (Montana).

³⁰ AE 1994, 1400 = MIRKOVIĆ 2017, 164, Nr. 57 (Sirmium).

³¹ Siehe auch MACMULLEN 1963, 68.

³² IDR III/5, passim; siehe noch PISO 2019 b, 199.

³³ Die Liste der *beneficarii consularis* in Dakien, in CBI I, S 392-434, Nr. 501-568; CUPCEA 2014, 29-30, 36, 41; ergänzt von PISO 2019 a, 109-129 = PISO 2023, 369-381; PISO 2019 b, 197-199 = PISO 2023, 383-386.

³⁴ WOLLMANN 1985-1986, 263-295; COCIŞ, URŞUŢIU, COSMA, ARDEVAN 2003, 149-191; ARDEVAN, COCIŞ, COSMA, URŞUŢIU 2007, 67-72; hinzu weitere zwei Altäre, BEU-DACHIN 2003, 187-193.

Name³⁶; ansonsten haben wir es nur mit peregrinen illyrischen Namen oder illyrischen *kastella* zu tun. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass das Heiligtum in der ersten Hälfte des II. Jahrhunderts oder nicht viel später in Betrieb war. Aufgrund der Überzeugung, dass die *beneficarii consularis* in Dakien erst nach der Umorganisation von 168/170 auftauchen, wurden die Beneficiarierinschriften von Alburnus Maior erst nach diesem Datum datiert, was die Datierung der gesamten Anlage nach sich zog³⁷. Diese späte Datierung passt jedoch nicht gut zu den lokalen onomastischen und archäologischen Gegebenheiten.

Die Serie der Wachstafeln von Alburnus Maior endet mit der Wachstafel vom 29. Mai 167³⁸, was zur Theorie führte, dass der große Markomannenangriff auf Dakien bereits im Jahr 167 stattfand³⁹. Dies ist jedoch nicht zwingend und wird durch die allgemeine Entwicklung an der Donaufront nicht gestützt⁴⁰. Außerdem wurden, soweit die Siedlungen von Alburnus Maior bekannt sind, nur sehr wenige Brandspuren und im Bereich von Hăbad überhaupt keine Brandspuren gefunden. Die Ursache für die Aufgabe eines Areals in einem Goldvorkommen könnte weniger dramatisch gewesen sein. Möglicherweise war eine Goldader erschöpft, so dass die ganze Gemeinde weiterziehen musste⁴¹. Die Errichtung der vier Altäre in Alburnus Maior nach 168 durch die *beneficarii consularis* passt nicht in das Gesamtbild.

Wie auch P. Aelius Longinianus in Abrud, widmeten die *beneficarii consularis* von Alburnus Maior die Altäre *Iovi Optimo Maximo*. Dem höchsten Gott des römischen Pantheons zu huldigen, war auch eine praktische und einfache Art, seinen religiösen Pflichten nachzukommen⁴². Warum errichtete aber C. Calpurnius Priscinus zwei fast identische Altäre für denselben Jupiter? Hatte er sich etwa verrechnet? Keineswegs, denn er errichtete einen ersten Altar bei seiner Ankunft in die *statio*⁴³ und einen zweiten vor seiner Abreise⁴⁴. Die *beneficarii* von Alburnus Maior haben es versäumt, ihre Widmungen zu datieren, der *beneficiarius* in Abrud jedoch nicht. Diesem Umstand ist es zu verdanken, dass nun auch die Tätigkeit der *b(ene)f(iciarii) c(on)s(ularis)* in Alburnus Maior mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit in

³⁵ Es ist durchaus möglich, dass, wie es V. WOLLMANN behauptete (261, Anm. 10), ein in Micia bezeugter *b(ene)f(iciarius) c(on)s(ularis)* Priscinus mit dem Priscinus aus Alburnus Maior identisch ist, AE 1930, 11 = 1931, 119 = 1933, 9 = IDR III/3, 86 = CBI I, 563: I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | Cl(audius) Saecula[r]is b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) pro se et [?] Priscino | col(lega) v(otum) s(olvit); siehe auch FRANCE, NELIS-CLÉMENT 2014, 131, Anm. 52, 133, Anm. 63. Dies wäre ein weiterer Grund, auch diese beiden in IDR zwischen 170 und 270 datierten *b(ene)f(iciarii) c(on)s(ularis)* in die Zeit vor 168/170 zu verlegen. Eine weitere Schlussfolgerung ist, dass die *b(ene)f(iciarii) c(on)s(ularis)* als *collegae* zu zweit in einer *statio* auftreten konnten; RANKOV 1999, 28, geht von einer *statio* mit zwei oder drei *beneficarii* aus; cf. Lieb 1965, 141-142, der mit einem einzigen rechnet; ebenso CUPCEA 2014, 45.

³⁶ Nasidius Primus, bzw. Nassidius Primus, in AE 1990, 829-830.

³⁷ WOLLMANN 1985-1986, 261; PISO 2004, 279-283, 302 = PISO 2023, 16-19, 31; CIONGRADI 2009, 64-65; zweite Hälfte des II. Jhts; cf. S. 39, 49: ab der Mitte des II. Jhts. (?), diesmal nicht aufgrund der Inschrift, sondern der Typologie der Altäre; PISO 2019 b, 199.

³⁸ CIL III, S. 949, TabCer XII = IDR I, TabCer XII.

³⁹ Siehe, unter anderen, NOESKE 1977, 336-337; BIRLEY 1987, 151.

⁴⁰ Siehe PISO 1993, 97-99.

⁴¹ Siehe die ganze Diskussion bei PISO 2004, 300-303 = PISO 2023, 31-32.

⁴² Zu den in den *stationes beneficiorum* begegneten Gottheiten siehe NELIS-CLÉMENT 1994, 252; NELIS-CLÉMENT 2000, 32-41; FRANCE, NELIS-CLÉMENT 2014, 173-184.

⁴³ Es war LIEB (1965, 142-143), der die Dauer der Aufgabe eines *beneficiarius consularis* in einer *statio* auf sechs Monate erkannt hat; siehe noch dazu MIRKOVIĆ 1991, 252-256; OTT 1995, 105-106; PISO 2019 A, 116 = PISO 2023, 374-375; Relativierung, eher zu Unrecht, durch DISE 1997b, 285-294. Über die Herkunft und Entwicklung dieser *stationes* siehe FRANCE, NELIS-CLÉMENT 2014, 125-128; CUPCEA 2014, 44-45.

⁴⁴ CUPCEA, MARCU, RUSTOIU 2024, 133, nahmen an, dass C. Calpurnius Priscinus zweimal in der *statio* von Alburnus Maior tätig war.

den Zeitraum 150/155-168/170 datiert werden kann. Der von einem M. Ulpius Vitalis, *b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)*, in Teregova [*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)*] errichtete Altar, der von I. Piso⁴⁵ und C. C. Petolescu⁴⁶ nach 168/170 datiert wird, könnte ebenso gut vor diesem Datum entstanden sein. Die Form und das Formular ähneln denen der Inschriften von Abrud und Alburnus Maior.

Das Auftreten von *b(ene)f(iciarii) c(on)s(ularis)* in einem Goldbergbauggebiet, das zum kaiserlichen Fiskus gehörte, ist nicht zu verwundern⁴⁷. Hier verrichteten sie als Gesandte des Statthalters und in dessen Namen bestimmte Tätigkeiten, die sowohl der inneren Sicherheit als auch, wie es in Grenznähe notwendig war, der Informationsbeschaffung dienten⁴⁸. Ihre Stellung war im höchsten Maße eine Vertrauensstellung, so dass sie ein hohes Maß an Selbstständigkeit genossen⁴⁹. All dies ging über den Kompetenzenbereich des *procurator aurariarum* und seiner eigene *beneficarii* hinaus⁵⁰.

Es ist davon auszugehen, dass die *stationes* der *beneficarii consularis* im Goldbergbauggebiet innerhalb des Fiskusareals, in den dort entstandenen *vici*, lagen, an Orten, an denen sie ihre Autorität sowohl gegenüber den lokalen Militärbehörden als auch gegenüber dem Prokurator behaupten konnten⁵¹. Die *stationes* bestanden aus einem Heiligtum, von dem eine *area sacra* abhing, Verwaltungsgebäuden, Höfen usw. und waren mit den wichtigsten Straßen verbunden⁵². Die genaue Lage der *stationes* von Abrud und Alburnus Maior bleibt leider unbekannt.

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⁴⁵ PISO 2019 B, 197-198 = AE 2022, 971.

⁴⁶ PETOLESCU 2021, 222, Nr. 2212.

⁴⁷ Siehe RANKOV 1999, 28.

⁴⁸ Siehe RANKOV 1987, 246-247; AUSTIN, RANKOV 1995, 195-204, bes. 199; neulich PISO 2019 A, 117-118 = PISO 2023375-376.

⁴⁹ OTT 1995, 30.

⁵⁰ Zwei *beneficarii procuratoris* sind in Ampelum (Zlatna) belegt, CIL III 1289 = 7833 = IDR III/3, 300 = CBI I 565; CIL III 1295 = IDR III/3, 310 = CBI I 566. In Ampelum hatte der *procurator aurariarum* seinen Sitz; siehe NOESKE 1977, 277-278; OTT 1995, 152; zur Verwaltung der dakischen Goldbergwerke siehe noch PISO 2013, 335-352. Nicht zufälligerweise erscheint in Ampelum auch ein *beneficiarius consularis* (AE 1971, 381 = IDR III/3, 297 = CBI I 567), der hier im Namen des Statthalters spezifische polizeiliche Aufgaben erfüllte, siehe CUPCEA 2014, 27.

⁵¹ Siehe für diesen Aspekt PISO 2019 A, 119 = PISO 2023, 376-377.

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Notes on Valentinian I's Death, Valentinian II's Elevation, and the Localization of Murocincta

Péter KOVÁCS¹

Abstract: *In his paper, the author studies the problem of the identification of the late Roman imperial villa in Pannonia called Murocincta that has been several times identified with villa unearthed in Bruckneudorf, Austria. According to Ammianus Marcellinus' account the future emperor, Valentinian II and his mother stayed in this villa when Valentinian I died in Brigetio in November, 375. According to the historian, the villa lied in a distance of 100 Roman miles from the place where the council was held about the elevation. As the young Valentinian II was proclaimed in Aquincum, the author came to the conclusion the council was held here that is why the identification of Murocincta is uncertain and all fenced (muro cincta) imperial villae in Valeria and Pannonia prima must be considered. The author examines the events of the year 375 as well, with a special regard to the places where Valentinian I stayed (in chronological order: Carnuntum, Aquincum, Savaria and Brigetio).*

Rezumat. În studiul său, autorul analizează problema identificării vilei imperiale romane târzii din Pannonia, denumită Murocincta, care a fost de mai multe ori asociată cu vila descoperită la Bruckneudorf, Austria. Conform relatării lui Ammianus Marcellinus, viitorul împărat Valentinian al II-lea și mama sa au locuit în această vilă în momentul în care Valentinian I a murit la Brigetio, în noiembrie 375. Potrivit istoricului, vila se afla la o distanță de 100 de mile romane de locul unde a avut loc consiliul privind succesiunea imperială. Întrucât tânărul Valentinian al II-lea a fost proclamat la Aquincum, autorul ajunge la concluzia că aici s-a desfășurat consiliul, motiv pentru care identificarea vilei Murocincta rămâne incertă, fiind necesar a se lua în considerare toate vilele imperiale fortificate (muro cincta) din Valeria și Pannonia Prima. Totodată, autorul examinează și evenimentele anului 375, cu o atenție specială acordată locurilor în care a poposit Valentinian I (în ordine cronologică: Carnuntum, Aquincum, Savaria și Brigetio).

Keywords: Classics, History of Late Antiquity, Valentinian I, History of Roman Pannonia, Roman villas

In the research of the late Roman history of Pannonia, based on A. Mócsy's study published decades ago², it has become a generally accepted view that Valentinian I and his family, who wanted to punish the incursion of the Sarmatians and Quadi in 374, would have stayed in the Roman villa of Bruckneudorf near Carnuntum in the summer and autumn of 375. Following the death of the emperor in November, his son, the future Valentinian II, would have been taken from here to Brigetio to be proclaimed emperor as well. The story and the name of the villa are recorded in Ammian's detailed account³, according to which the villa was called Murocincta. This criterium is fulfilled by the villa in Bruckneudorf too as it is surrounded by a wall (Figure1). In the present study, I intend to gather the arguments for and, above all, against this view, mainly on the basis of written sources. I deal in detail with the death of Valentinian and the circumstances and place of his son's election too.

¹ Pázmány Péter Catholic University; kovacs.peter@btk.ppke.hu; ORCID 0000-0002-8727-1588

² MÓCSY 1970. I wish to thank András Bődöcs for his help.

³ AMM. XXX.10.4

Valentinian I, seeking to avenge the Sarmatian-Quadian incursion of 374, left Treveri for Pannonia in the early spring of 375 in a fast march⁴. He was certainly still in the city in early April⁵, and Zosimus⁶ could not have been much mistaken, who says that Valentinian stayed in Pannonia for nine months. On his way, he met with a delegation of the Sarmatians, but he wanted to investigate their affairs on the spot⁷. If there was no available imperial palace in the near, the rulers had to stay mainly in the *praetoria* of governors and duces⁸: as in the case of Carnuntum and Aquincum (in the late Roman period, the *dux*), which were located near the legionary fort (*ad legionem* or *castra/hiberna legionis*⁹), while in the case of Brigetio the place of residence of the commander of the legion (*praefectus*) within the fort is the most plausible choice¹⁰. In these cases, the ruler, as commander-in-chief of the army, sought accommodation close to the troops, as Ammianus clearly emphasised in the case of Carnuntum¹¹. Here, Valentinian's accommodation was most likely in the area of the *canabae*, as the civilian town (and the *canabae*) was gradually abandoned following an earthquake¹², the text is clear: *cumque exinde Carnuntum Illyriorum oppidum* (i.e. not in the camp) *introisset*¹³. He found his summer lodging in Carnuntum¹⁴, which was considered deserted and neglected (*desertum quidem nunc et squalens, sed ductori exercitus perquam opportunum*). His residence, according to Ammianus' text, can be localized clearly in the military town (*canabae*, or rather in the legionary fort, which already housed civilians, and was therefore already *oppidum* (as he names it twice)¹⁵, and not in a nearby imperial villa, especially not 15 km away (like Bruckneudorf)¹⁶. This villa can hardly have been suitable to house the whole court or to deal with the affairs cited below. The *praetorium* identified in Carnuntum, east of the legionary fort, was indeed an office building and did not serve the governor's residence¹⁷. On the other hand, the recently identified building complex with a central courtyard to the south of *praetorium* and the *castra singularium* could have been¹⁸. The emperor held the aforementioned inquiry into Pannonian affairs in Carnuntum, which was feared by local officials, and not without reason¹⁹. Despite these fears, even Maxentianus dux (Maximianus' son), who was responsible for the outbreak of the war, got

⁴ AMM. XXX.5.1: *Pubescente iam vere Valentinianus a Treveris motus*.

⁵ COD. THEOD. XII.6.16.

⁶ Zosimus IV.17.2.

⁷ AMM. XXX.5.1

⁸ FITZ 1993, 1189–1193.

⁹ AÉP 1964, 118.

¹⁰ Summarily see KOVÁCS 2018. See also EGGER 1966, 5–10, esp. 44; PISO 1993–1994; HAENSCH 1997, 349–352; NÉMETH 2011; SCHÄFER 2014. See also LAVAN 1999; LAVAN 2001.

¹¹ AMM. XXX.5.2: *ductori exercitus perquam opportunum*

¹² HUMER, MASCHEK 2007, 45–55.

¹³ AMM. XXX.5.2; see DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 105–107.

¹⁴ COD. THEOD. IX.1.12, AMM. XXX.5.2, 11.

¹⁵ AMM. XXX.5.2, 11; see GUGL 2011, 517–520.

¹⁶ The preposition *apud* together with a placename must be translated as 'in' in Ammianus' historical work (and in other late Latin works): GLARE 1968, 155–156.

¹⁷ EGGER 1966, 44.

¹⁸ GUGL, WALLNER, HINTERLEITNER, NEUBAUER 2021, 3009–3031.

¹⁹ AMM. XXX.5.3: *Et quamquam terrori cunctis erat ...*

away with it²⁰, and even Equitius²¹ and Probus PPO²² did not escape the attack. Together with the emperor, the court moved to Carnuntum only for the summer months, where he received various delegations, such as the Epirus²³, and where it also enacted laws, e.g. Faustinus notary, a relative of Viventius, was sentenced to death²⁴, and even issued decrees here²⁵. During this time (the three summer months: *per continuos tres menses aestivos*), he collected provisions for the army and he himself intended to march against the Quadi, who, he held responsible for the invasions of the previous year²⁶. At the end of the summer, Valentinian's two experienced generals, Merobaudes (magister peditum: PLRE I, Merobaudes 2 cf. Zos. IV.17.1) and Sebastianus (comes rei militaris: PLRE I, Sebastianus 2, who had already been given a similar mission by Julian the Apostate: Amm. XXIII.3.5, XXV.8.7, 16) were sent forward with the infantry to the Barbaricum, while Valentinian himself marched to Aquincum²⁷. His campaign having been unsuccessful because the enemy had fled, the emperor intended to winter in the province.

The emperor had a pontoon bridge built near the legionary fort²⁸, yet not here, but he crossed the Danube north of Aquincum, via Szentendre island²⁹. Nowhere did open battle take place, as the Quadi fled to the mountains, and the campaign turned into a virtually fruitless show of force³⁰, so Valentinian soon returned to Aquincum and stayed (*moratus*) here for a while. As autumn progressed (*autumno praecipiti*), his men could find no suitable winter quarters (*commoda hiberna*) in the near, so he had to choose the centre of Pannonia prima, Savaria. Here, the governor's palace was in relatively good condition, although Ammianus described the city itself as similar to Carnuntum³¹. The constant plagues hardly fit the barbarian invasion of 374, so the observation of L. Balla, who associated the bad situation of Savaria with the strict fiscal activities of Petronius Probus in Illyricum, is probably correct³². There is a break in Ammianus' account here, as the ruler, who was moving rapidly along the Danube, and who had in the meantime fortified the *castra* and *castella* along the river, arrived at Brigetio³³, then the historian began to list the portents of Valentinian's death³⁴: 1. comet, 2. lightning in the centre of Sirmium (burning of the *palatium*, the *curia* and the *forum*: the latter also appears in Zosimus, who in turn mentions an earthquake³⁵), 3. owl at the baths of Savaria, 4. obstacle at the city gate on his departure from Savaria, 5. in his dream his wife appears in mourning. 6. the mounting of his horse. The last events clearly show that Valentinian visited the city of Savaria, but the chronology is uncertain (or the question word *unde*, which city it refers to). First,

²⁰ AMM. XXX.5.3: *neque in Gabinii regis inquireret necem neque inusta rei publicae vulnera, quo sinente vel agente segnius evenissent, accuratius vestigaret.*

²¹ AMM. XXX.6.2, EPIT. DE CAES. 45.10, ZOS. IV.19.1; Marcellianus belonged to the *potiores duces* mentioned in AMM. XXX.9.1, that is why Illyricum is mentioned too: *potiorum ducum flagitia progredi sinebat in maius, ad querelas in eos motas aliquotiens obsurdens: unde Brittannici strepitus et Africanæ clades et vastitas emersit Illyrici.*

²² AMM. XXX.5.4-7.

²³ AMM. XXX.5.8.

²⁴ AMM. XXX.5.11-12.

²⁵ COD. THEOD. IX.1.12; see CLAUS 1985.

²⁶ AMM. XXX.5.11.

²⁷ AMM. XXX.5.13.

²⁸ This suggests that the archaeologically attested bridge at Aquincum was already not in use: NÉMETH 1999, 141-159.

²⁹ AMM. XXX.5.13.

³⁰ AMM. XXX.5.13-14.

³¹ AMM. XXX.5.14: *invalida tempore adsiduisque malis adflicta.*

³² HIER. 246f, AMM. XXX.5.6; see BALLA 1963.

³³ AMM. XXX.5.15.

³⁴ AMM. XXX.5.16-19.

³⁵ Zosimus IV.18.1.

Valentinian travelled along the limes road (It. Ant. 266,8-13, or on the Aquincum-Brigetio diagonal road (It. Ant. 245,7-246,4)) to Brigetio³⁶, and from there to the centre of Pannonia I on the Brigetio-Savaria road (It. Ant. 262,9-263,2) (as the fortification of the forts would suggest), or on the Aquincum-Savaria road (It. Ant. 26,3-9), first to Savaria and from there to Brigetio again, as it seems more likely³⁷. It is not clear either which way Valentinian departed from Savaria: the northern gate, i.e. the Amber Road to Carnuntum, or the eastern one to Brigetio. The latter is the more likely, since the historian says that he also arrived by this route, but the fact is that he had to use the another because of the fallen gate leaf³⁸. Ammianus himself mentions that he set out on the campaign (*procinctus*), i.e. to Brigetio, from the city mentioned above³⁹, i.e. from Savaria⁴⁰. The historian's account also provides valuable topographical data on the topography of Sirmium (forum, imperial palace, curia)⁴¹ and Savaria (ruined northern or eastern city gate, palace with baths)⁴². Several scholars speculate that Ammianus' expression *regium lavacrum* (royal baths)⁴³ should prove the existence of an imperial palace in the city. According to this hypothesis, it should be identified with the unearthed building complex that was initially a governor's palace, but later, it would have been converted into an imperial palace⁴⁴. However, the situation is not so clear. According to Herodian's account, when the young Commodus intended to return from Pannonia to Rome and wanted to abandon the war against the Marcomanni and Quadi in 180 A.D., Pompeianus told him, ἐκεῖ τε ἡ Ῥώμη, ὅπου ποτ' ἂν ὁ βασιλεὺς ᾖ, Rome is where the emperor is'⁴⁵. In this sense, any house/palace/villa where the ruler stays becomes a *basileion*. According to Herodian's account⁴⁶ Pescennius Niger's own house in Antioch became the imperial palace following his elevation in 193⁴⁷. In the light of these sources, it becomes clear why Cassius Dio found it necessary to explain the meaning of the word Palatium/basileion: 'The royal residence is called Palatium, not because it was ever decreed that this should be its name, but because Caesar dwelt on the Palatine and had his military headquarters there, though his residence gained a certain degree of fame from the mount as a whole also, because Romulus had once lived there. Hence, even if the emperor resides somewhere else, his dwelling retains the name of Palatium' (LIII.16.5-6 translation by E. Cary)⁴⁸. Ammianus must have used the adjective *regius* in this sense. Based on the adjective used by the historian, we can hardly assume the existence of an imperial palace/palatium in Savaria. The bath, *lavacrum*, used by Valentinian, became *regium* because of the latter fact. Similarly, the same historian used the word *regia* in the context of the palace of the usurper Silvanus (earlier

³⁶ The mere mention of the fortifications along the limes does not confirm a Savaria-Carnuntum-Brigetio route, as a much longer route would have been illogical for the ruler in a hurry to negotiate with the Quadi.

³⁷ SEECK 1919, 246, DITTRICH, 1984, 115 Anm. 120 DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 131.

³⁸ AMM. XXX.5.17.

³⁹ AMM. XXX.5.16.

⁴⁰ AMM. 5.17: *cum ab urbe praedicta tenderet ad procinctum*.

⁴¹ POPOVIĆ, 1971, 119-133, esp. 125-129.

⁴² TÓTH 2008, 672-673.

⁴³ AMM. XXX.5.16.

⁴⁴ TÓTH 2011, 66; 2012, 259-265; ISZTIN, TÁRCZY, TÓTH 2014, 137-155.

⁴⁵ HER. I.6.5; See MAYER 2002, 1.

⁴⁶ HER. II.8.6.

⁴⁷ HER. II.8.6 ... καὶ ἐς τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν καθιστᾶσιν, οὐκέτι αὐτὴν ἰδιωτικὴν ἀλλὰ βασιλεῖον αὐλὴν νομίζοντες, πᾶσι κοσμήσαντες ἔξωθεν βασιλικοῖς συμβόλοις: ALFÖLDI 2011, 47-53.

⁴⁸ LIII.16.5 καλεῖται δὲ τὰ βασιλεία παλάτιον, οὐχ ὅτι καὶ ἔδοξε ποτε οὕτως αὐτὰ ὀνομάζεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐν τῷ Παλατίῳ ὁ Καῖσαρ ὤκει καὶ ἐκεῖ τὸ στρατῆγιον εἶχε, καὶ τίνα καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Ῥωμύλου προενοίκησιν φήμην ἢ οἰκία αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ παντὸς ὅρου ἔλαβε· 6 καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶν ἄλλοθι· που ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ καταλύη, τὴν τοῦ παλατίου ἐπὶ κλησιν ἢ καταγωγὴ αὐτοῦ ἴσχει: Millar 1992, 20, 33, 41.

MP) in Agrippina (obviously identical with the *praetorium*⁴⁹ (cp. Greg. Tur. V, patr. 6, 2 used the term *aula regia*)), where he was elected and then killed (XV.5.15 (*agens apud Agrippinam*), 31 *caesis custodibus regia penetrata Silvanum extractum aedicula*), so we need not to assume the existence of an imperial palace in Cologne either⁵⁰. Indeed, the richly decorated palace of the governor in Savaria, was apparently also the occasional residence of PPO Probus⁵¹. Apart from Sirmium, it may indeed have been the only residence worthy of an emperor in the province, but it is difficult to accept that this would have been its sole function.

Ammianus does not seem to answer the question of why he left in such a hurry for Brigetio after taking up his winter quarters. The reason can most probably be found in the following chapter: he had hardly planned to launch a campaign in the second half of November, but he received the envoys of the Quadi in Brigetio⁵², with whom he intended to conclude a truce for the winter, i.e. the sudden arrival of the envoys may have been the reason for his sudden journey. His residence in Brigetio must certainly be located within the camp, and not in the civilian town, which had been abandoned long before. Ammianus added that the building had a reception hall (*consistorium*⁵³) (obviously with an apse) and several internal living quarters with beds (*lectus*) (based on the term *conclave intimum*⁵⁴), since the dying emperor was taken there. This building can hardly be identified with the recently unearthed one⁵⁵, which had indeed an apsed room, but it was too small, therefore the emperor was obviously accommodated in the much larger (yet unexplored) building of the legionary prefect.

Ammianus does not mention, but it is clear from the context that Merobaudes and his infantry troops remained in the Barbaricum following the autumn campaign (they obviously planned to winter there), and he had to be recalled quickly after the emperor's death⁵⁶. The mission of Sebastianus further afield (*longius*) from the feint (with an unknown reason⁵⁷) also shows that the fighting did not cease. Merobaudes's troops clearly stationed in the available Roman forts in the Barbaricum. Nor can it be ruled out that during their stay, the troops began to build new fortifications. Nor can we completely rule out such an interpretation in the case of unfinished fort at Göd, but its construction was probably the *casus belli* of 374⁵⁸. As for the whereabouts of Merobaudes, we can draw conclusions from Ammianus' earlier description⁵⁹ and from the Quadian envoys who apologized to Valentinian⁶⁰. The Roman troops crossed the land of the Quadi north of Aquincum, while the enemy fled to the nearby mountains (obviously to the Mátra and Börzsöny). According to the Quadian envoys, 'unlawful acts were committed by some robbers who were far away and near the river' (*per extimos quosdam latrones amnique confines evenisse*). The *latrones*, i.e. the enemy who invaded in peacetime (i.e. not yet as *hostes*), were most likely the mixed German tribe *Transiugitani*, who lived between the Quadi and

⁴⁹ SCHÄFER 2014.

⁵⁰ ECK, HEIL, KIENAST 2017, 307–308.

⁵¹ cf. COD. THEOD. XII.6.15

⁵² AMM. XXX.6.2.

⁵³ AMM. XXX.6.2.

⁵⁴ AMM. XXX.6.3.

⁵⁵ BARTUS, BORHY, JOHÁCZI, SZÁMADÓ 2018, 542–544.

⁵⁶ AMM. XXX.10.2: see the ablative absolute *reverso Merobaude*.

⁵⁷ AMM. XXX.10.3.

⁵⁸ see Ammianus' detailed account XXIX.6.2; see MRÁV 2003.

⁵⁹ AMM. XXX.5.13.

⁶⁰ AMM. XXX.6.2.

Sarmatians⁶¹. The whereabouts of the commander-in-chief will play a decisive role in determining the location of the council preceding the election of the new ruler (see below).

We have no information whether Valentinian planned some sort of campaign against the Sarmatians in the following year, but, as the incursion of the *Sarmatae liberi* into Moesia shows, the defence of the Sarmatian envoys (especially that they were not even aware of it) can hardly have been entirely true. Moreover, one could not enter Pannonia secunda without their support. According to Ammianus (because of the approaching winter and the lack of food), the emperor himself probably wanted to make a truce (*indutiae*) with the Quadi for winter⁶². The continuation of the campaign could be taken for granted, since the emperor set out *ad procinctum*⁶³, Roman troops were stationed in the territory of the Quadi⁶⁴. The campaign itself, as Ammianus and other sources emphatically mention, was interrupted, i.e. unsuccessful⁶⁵. It is not by chance that *Sarmaticus* is not mentioned among the *cognomina* of the ruler(s)⁶⁶.

The ancient sources also record precisely the date of Valentinian's death (and his age and the regnal years), 17 November 375⁶⁷. Besides Ammianus⁶⁸, others give the circumstances and reason of his death as well, i.e. he died of apoplexy during receiving the Quadian delegation (Hier. Chron. 247h, Ep. 60.15.3, Epit. de Caes. 45.8, Ruf. H. E. XI.12, Oros. VII.32.14, Socr. IV.31.6 (the Byzantine sources regularly mention Sarmatians instead of the Quadi, which can be traced back to this passage, while Sozomenus placed the location in Gaul⁶⁹), Soz. VI.36.4, Zos. IV.17.2-18.1, Jord. Rom. 209, Malalas XIII.32, Theoph. Conf. Chron. p. 61 AM 5867 (wrongly placing the site in Gaul), Symeon Logothetes Chron. 92.6, Georg. Cedr. Compend. hist. p. 547.1-10, Georg. Mon. Chron. breve 688.11 (the latter three also mention the place as Gaulish))⁷⁰. Valentinian's body of the emperor was embalmed for transport to Constantinople⁷¹, a journey which, according to the Consularia Constantinopolitana, lasted nearly a year (28 December 376⁷²), where he was buried in the Apostoleion similarly to other emperors⁷³, though only years later (21 February 382⁷⁴).

As was customary at this time (at least in Ammianus' work), the most important men at the court of Brigetio were assembled and, fearing a mutiny of the Western army staying in Pannonia⁷⁵, in the absence of Gratian who stayed at Treveri, Valentinian's youngest son,

⁶¹ AMM. XVII.12.12; see DITTRICH 1984, 131 Anm. 6; KOVÁCS 2016, 106.

⁶² AMM. XXX.6.2.

⁶³ AMM. XXX.5.17.

⁶⁴ AMM. XXX.10.2.

⁶⁵ AMM. XXX.7.10 (*res seria imperfecta*); HIER. EP.60.15.3 (*inulta patria*); OROS. VII.32.14; RUF. H. E. XI.12.

⁶⁶ ARNALDI 1980.

⁶⁷ AMM. XXX.6.6, SOCR. IV.31.6, PHILOST. IX.16, CHRON. MIN. I p. 242, 292, 459, II p. 153, THEOPH. CONF. CHRON. p. 61 AM 5867; see SEECK 1919, 246; ECK, HEIL, KIENAST 2017, 313.

⁶⁸ AMM. XXX.10.6.3-5.

⁶⁹ As usually, Sozomenos misinterprets the text of Socrates, in this case the phrase ἐν φρουρίῳ ᾧ προσωνημία Βεργιτίων as Gaulish.

⁷⁰ HEERING 1927, 56-57; NAGL 1948, 2187; HUGHES 2013, 137; DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 141-147.

⁷¹ AMM. XXX.10.1; see JOHNSON 1991, 501-502.

⁷² CHRON. MIN. I p. 242.

⁷³ CHRON. MIN. I p. 61.

⁷⁴ CHRON. MIN. I p. 243.

⁷⁵ AMM. XXX.10.1, 3 (also Merobaudes); The latter is much more likely than the barbarian incursion reported by Zosimus (IV.19.1).

Valentinian, who was nearby with his mother, was nominated as emperor⁷⁶. According to the written sources, Equitius, Probus, Cerealis (*tribunus stabuli*: PLRE I, Cerealis 1) and above all the recalled Merobaudes⁷⁷, and Philostorgius even emphasizes the role of his mother, Iustina as well⁷⁸. It was Merobaudes' ruse to send Sebastianus to far away from the army with a special mission as he was a good military commander and suitable for the throne (that is why he was asked by Valens before Hadrianople in 378: Amm. XXXI.11.1 cf. Eun. Frag. 34, 47⁷⁹) (XXX.10.3)⁸⁰.

Ammianus only reports us that the future emperor was taken into the legionary fort by his uncle Cerealis on the 6th day after Valentinian's reign, i.e. 23 November, on his litter⁸¹, where the troops proclaimed him by legitimate ruler (*legitime*⁸²): XXX.10.5 *Cerealis avunculus eius ocus missus eundem puerum lectica inpositum duxit in castra sextoque die post parentis obitum imperator legitime declaratus Augustus nuncupatur more sollemni*

. From the context, we should obviously think of the legionary fort at Brigetio⁸³, but according to the official court tradition of Constantinople, Aquincum was the place and exact date of the proclamation⁸⁴, Socrates. IV.31.7 (on the other hand, Aquincum was placed in Italy)⁸⁵, which could give rise to much unnecessary discussion⁸⁶. The bulk of the army must have wintered in the vicinity of Aquincum, which is probably why the proclamation took place there. There was also a legionary fort in Aquincum, with a palace of the legionary prefect and tribunal, suitable for the proclamation of a ruler. Emperors Valens and Gratian, who did not know of the appointment and Valentinian's death for weeks, and especially in the case of Gratian, who was only 16, the court chiefs, especially the rival PPO Galliarum Maximinus, also from Pannonia, were clearly resentful at the beginning (which could have lasted for months⁸⁷) of the appointment of a co-emperor without their permission. Merobaudes kept his position, but two

⁷⁶ AMM. XXX.10.1-6, AMBR. DE OBITU VAL. 59, EPIT. DE CAES. 45.10, CHRON. MIN. I p. 242, 459, II p. 153, RUFINUS XI.12, SOCRATES. IV.31.7, SOS. VI.36.5, PHILOST. IX.16, CHRONICON PASCHALE p. 559, ZOS. IV.19.1, THEOPH. CONF. CHRON. p. 61 AM 5867, THEODORUS LECTOR EPIT. III.211, ZON. XIII.17 83, GEORG. MON. CHRON. BREVE 689.1; see PLRE I, Valentinianus 8; SEECK 1919, 246; SEECK 1921, V, 38-39; ENSSLIN 1948, 2207-2208; STEIN 1959, 183; PASCHOUD 1979, 369-370 n. 139; SZIDAT 1989; GIRARDET 2004; RAIMONDI 2001, 171-173; LENSKI 2002, 357; HUGHES 2013, 137; KELLY 2013; DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 193-207.

⁷⁷ AMM. XXX.10.2-3, 5, EPIT. DE CAES. 45.10, RUFINUS XI.12, GEORG. MON. CHRON. BREVE 689.1.

⁷⁸ Philost. IX.16, Theoph. Conf. Chron. p. 61 AM 5867.

⁷⁹ LENSKI 2002, 336, DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 127.

⁸⁰ DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 201.

⁸¹ εἰς τὰ βασιλεία according to Zosimus IV.19.1.

⁸² SZIDAT 1989.

⁸³ See DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 204. Among the ancient sources, only Theophanes Confessor places it at the place of Valentinian's death, without a specific place name (and following Sozomenus, he places it in Gaul): Chron. p. 61 AM 5867: ἐν τῷ τόπῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐτελεύτησεν.

⁸⁴ CHRON. MIN. I p. 242; see BECKER, BLECKMANN, GROSS, NICHBAKHT 2016, 124.

⁸⁵ Chronicon Paschale p. 559; see WHITBY, WHITBY 1989, 49 n. 149. The latter one gives exactly the date and place Valentinian's death, but he transfers the date to the year of 378 when Valens died: *ibid.*, n. 152.

⁸⁶ SEECK 1919, 246; SEECK 1921, V, 39, 439; PATSCH 1929, 28; ENSSLIN 1948, 2207; STEIN 1959, 183; NAGY 1962, 62 n. 443; MÓCSY 1962, 577; PASCHOUD 1979, 369 n. 139; GIRARDET 2004, 121; RAIMONDI 2001, 171; KELLY 2013, 362; DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 204; ECK, HEIL, KIENAST 2017, 321. If the date of the elevation given in the Cons. Const. that used official documents is correct, the place must also be accepted.

⁸⁷ Following GIRARDET 2004 and KELLY 2013. Cf. ILS 777, 5592; Αἴρ 1965, 15b (?); RIC IX p. 276 Nr. 17 (Antiochia), Cod. Theod. IX.1.13 (11 February) where only two emperors are mentioned instead of three and Valens is the sole consul (Valentinian II is omitted). In his speech called *Eroticus* (Or. XIII) held before senate in Rome at the beginning of 376, Themistius does not mention Valentinian II either (e.g. 169b, 177b). He was acknowledged earliest 8 April 37: ILS 4268. Valentinian was the consul of 376 together with Valens: The final reconciliation is probably linked to the deposition and execution of Maximinus PPO in the spring of 376: KELLY 2013, 374-377 (Amm. XXVIII.1.57; Symm. Or. IV.10-11; Ep. 10.2.2; Them. Or. XIII.15 174a).

other powerful men, Petronius Probus and Equitius, lost their long-held offices at this time⁸⁸. The division of power was apparently quite simple, as in previous cases Valentinian II "inherited" the central praefectura with Italy, Africa and Illyricum⁸⁹ under the supervision of the senior augustus, Gratian⁹⁰.

Further examination of Ammianus' account may further help to identify the site. They suggest that not one, but two councils were held after emperor's death. The first was certainly still in Brigetio without Merobaudes. It was here that the following decisions were taken:

1. to postpone the military campaign (XXX.10.1)⁹¹,
2. the demolition of the bridge at Aquincum (XXX.10.2)⁹²,
3. the secret recall of Merobaudes (XXX.10.2)⁹³.

The latter one was to be followed a few days later by a second one in the presence of Merobaudes. This could have taken place in Brigetio, but then it would be incomprehensible why the proclamation of Valentinian II happened in Aquincum. It is more likely, therefore, that the members of the council went to Merobaudes at Aquincum and that the council was held here in the presence of the majority of the troops. It was at this time that the decision to elect the infant Valentinian was taken⁹⁴. Earlier interpretations had suggested that this would have taken place at Brigetio⁹⁵, but this is not mentioned explicitly by Ammianus himself, but the location has been argued for mainly on the grounds that the ruler died here, but the proximity of Quadi has also suggested this. This, however, as we have seen, is wrong. The site is of crucial importance for the localisation of Murocincta.

The question of Murocincta and the Roman villa at Bruckneudorf (Figure 1)

Ammianus Marcellinus XXX.10.4 *Reverso itaque Merobaude, altiore cura prospectum, expedito consilio Valentinianus puer defuncti filius tum quadrimus, vocaretur in imperium cooptandus, centesimo lapide disparatus degensque cum Iustina matre in villa, quam Murocinctam appellant. 5 hocque concinenti omnium sententia confirmato Cerealis avunculus eius ocus missus eundem puerum lectica inpositum duxit in castra sextoque die post parentis obitum imperator legitime declaratus Augustus nuncupatur more sollemni.*

XXX.10.4 Accordingly, after Merobaudes turned back, the matter of succession was carefully considered and the plan was unfolded that the boy Valentinianus, son of the deceased emperor and then four years old, should be summoned and given a share in the rule. He was at the time a hundred miles distant, living with his mother Justina at the country house called Murocincta (translation by J. C. Rolfe).

Ammianus' account of the four-year-old (future) Valentinian II and his mother Iustina being called from the imperial villa of Murocincta, 100 MP from Brigetio, or as we have seen,

⁸⁸ AMM. XXX.10.6, SOCRATES. IV.31.8-9, SOS. VI.36.5, EUN. FRAG. 42, PHILOST. IX.16, ZON. XIII.17 (only the last two mention the punishment of Gratian; see SEECK 1921, V, 39-40; ENSSLIN 1948, 2207; PASCHOUD 1979 370-371 n. 140; GIRARDET 2004; LENSKI 2002, 358-359; KELLY 2013; DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 205-207.

⁸⁹ ZOS. IV.19.2, EUN. FRAG. 42, Valens resented precisely this division.

⁹⁰ AMM. XXX.10.6.

⁹¹ DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 197.

⁹² The building of a bridge at Brigetio would have been illogical, as the emperor intended to conclude a truce with the Quadi, the previous fighting took place much further east, and Ammianus himself mentions only one bridge at Aquincum (XXX.5.13).

⁹³ DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 200.

⁹⁴ AMM. XXX.10.4.

⁹⁵ DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 201-203.

rather from Aquincum (the distance is of course to be calculated along the roads and not as the crow flies)⁹⁶, might have been too bold in its identification. The villa, which by its name may have been a villa complex surrounded by a fence wall (and ditch), known in many places in the province⁹⁷, was attempted to be identified with the villa complex at Bruckneudorf⁹⁸, as the distance roughly corresponds to the distance given (It. Ant. 246.4-247.4, Tab. Peut. Seg. IV.3-4: Mócsy calculated with a distance 85 MP between Brigetio and Carnuntum, plus 13 MP to the villa in Bruckneudorf: the total would be 98 MP, but the exact length of the route between Bruckneudorf and Carnuntum is 13 km, 9 MP, therefore one must calculate with a distance around 94 MP), and Valentinian's summer residence at Carnuntum is sought here too. Besides Bruckneudorf, there is a number of richly decorated fenced *villae* in Northern Pannonia (such as Baláca, Donnerskirchen, Deutschkreutz, Šmarje-Grobelce, Szabadbattyán⁹⁹, Szakcs¹⁰⁰, Tokod¹⁰¹) which are at a reasonable distance from Brigetio or Aquincum¹⁰². Before the Mócsy's identification, it was also suggested that the villa of Bruckneudorf could have been the site of the imperial summit at Carnuntum in 308¹⁰³, but this is refuted by the mid-4th century reconstruction of the building. More recently, it has been emerged that the late Roman governor's office building might replace the abandoned praetorium of Carnuntum¹⁰⁴.

In favour of identifying the villa of Bruckneudorf with Murocincta, besides the distance¹⁰⁵, it has attempted to confirm the identification with the following arguments¹⁰⁶:

1. the existence of an enclosure wall and a ditch with access roads and gates.
2. the existence of a central building with an apsed aula.
3. the later insertion of a Bellerophon inscription in the mosaic of one of the halls (the reception hall, according to this theory). The mythological figure would personify the ruler Valentinian himself.
4. at the northern gate, two rows of buildings defined as barracks along the access road.

However, there are several counterarguments against this identification:

1. If my hypothesis is correct, then the distance from Aquincum should be measured at 100 MP.
2. The excavator H. Zabehliczky has already noted the low percentage of Valentinian coins in the circulation of the villa and the complete absence of stamped bricks made under the reign of the emperor¹⁰⁷.
3. The central building itself, with its 40x45 m dimensions with its towers and the large apse-shaped reception hall, does not stand out at all among the Pannonian villas, and only acquired its final form after the mid-4th century rebuilding of the early imperial villa. Its dimensions are not reminiscent of imperial villa. Apart from the mosaics, there is no evidence for other

⁹⁶ AMM. XXX.10.4.

⁹⁷ THOMAS 1964, 389–390; SZABÓ 2020, 219–224.

⁹⁸ MÓCSY 1970, DEN BOEFT, DRIJVERS, DEN HENGST, TEITLER 2015, 123. For the villa see ZAHBELICKY 2009; ZAHBELICKY 2011, 89–99; GROH, SEDLMAYER 2022.

⁹⁹ NÁDORFI 2012, 112–138. On the other hand, the building was destroyed in 374.

¹⁰⁰ The site cannot be interpreted as a Roman municipium anymore because it looks like a late Roman villa complex with a huge palatium with a wall/fence: BERTÓK 2000, 101–112. Our hypothesis is confirmed by the recent archaeological excavations too: BERTÓK 2021.

¹⁰¹ KELEMEN 2010 (2012), 69–93.

¹⁰² DITTRICH 1984, 110 Anm. 100.

¹⁰³ SARIA 1966.

¹⁰⁴ ZABEHLICZKY 2011.

¹⁰⁵ see MÓCSY 1970.

¹⁰⁶ GROH, SEDLMAYER 2022.

¹⁰⁷ ZABEHLICZKY 2011, 94–95.

imperial luxury (e.g. the use of marble or porphyry). Their use was almost obligatory for a royal villa, even in the Danubian provinces¹⁰⁸.

4. The newly reconstructed plan of the building complex is based mainly on aerial photographs, esp. the reconstructed triple gate system, but it is questionable how these relate to each other chronologically, e.g. whether they were used at the same time. The function of the roadside buildings, which resemble military barracks excavated near the northern gate, is, however, noteworthy¹⁰⁹.

5. The depiction of Bellerophon sitting on Pegasus and stabbing Chimaera became particularly popular in the Empire¹¹⁰, and in Pannonia, from the reign of Constantine onwards, it appeared on mosaics, on a medallion of Constantius II, on contorniates, on casket covers, on belt buckles and belt plates and on disc brooches¹¹¹. The figure of the Greek mythological hero was of course depicted with royal attributes (e.g. purple), since Bellerophon, the son of Poseidon, was a Herod and royal offspring (himself a Lycian king). Only one of possible explanations of the scene is that it may indeed refer to the ruler triumph over the enemy (in the case of Constantius II DEBELLATORI HOSTIVM's circular gold medallion of 354, the reigning Magnentius) in general¹¹², but its pagan (Bellerophon symbolizing the sun, Chimaera the winter) and Christian interpretations (symbolising Christ's victory over the evil) were also popular. On this basis, the theory that the mosaic of the villa of Bruckneudorf would surely refer to Emperor Valentinian and his campaign against the barbarians is hardly plausible, as is the case for other emperors. This assumption has not been seriously considered in relation to any mosaic depiction of Bellerophon before (total number is below 30, but they were very popular in Britain)¹¹³, including the two mosaics of the *villae* of Bruckneudorf and Poetovio in Pannonia¹¹⁴. For all these reasons, this kind of interpretation of the mosaic and what goes beyond (i.e. the room as a reception hall) can hardly be accepted as an argument for identifying the villa at Bruckneudorf with Murocincta.

For these reasons, the distance of the Pannonian walled villas from Aquincum, mentioned earlier, should be taken into serious consideration. First of all, we cannot exclude the possibility that Murocincta may be identical with Caesariana, certainly a large imperial estate, which lay on the Savaria-Aquincum road 84 MP from Aquincum (It. Ant. 263,6-9), whether or not it is identical with the villa of Balácsa¹¹⁵. A much more serious possibility is the walled villa farm of the Late Roman village of Szakcs (Figure 2), whose large building with a central courtyard and lobby strongly resembles the villa in Szabadbattyán. The latter can indeed be defined as a palace. The presence of a porticoed access road, clearly visible on aerial photographs, may also confirm the site's presence. The villa must have been well protected by the unit stationed in the inner fortress of Alsóhetény, which probably received its large circular towers during the rebuilding after 374¹¹⁶. The importance of the site of Szakcs is increased by the fact that it is

¹⁰⁸ See for instance BÜLOW, ZABEHLICZKY 2011.

¹⁰⁹ See also KARWOWSKI 2023, 24–45.

¹¹⁰ LOCHIN 1994, 214–230, 7,2, 142–171; HILLER 1970, 66–92.

¹¹¹ According to this theory, all the silver (and bronze) belt plates (and buckle) with Bellerophon, known mainly from the Danubian provinces but also in the West and Asia, would have belonged to Valentinian's inner court officers, which is clearly an untenable or unprovable hypothesis. See OLIVÉR, VADAY 2021.

¹¹² GNECCHI 1912, 29 Tav. 10/9.

¹¹³ HENIG M 2012, 137–152; BEESON, NICHOL, MASSEY 2022, 185–225.

¹¹⁴ VERZÁR-BASS 2011, 1389–1394.

¹¹⁵ *Balácsai Közlemények* 1–10, 1989–2008.

¹¹⁶ TÓTH 2009, 67–71.

probably located near the Iovia road station (former municipium?) on the Sopianae-Brigetio road (It. Ant. 264,8)¹¹⁷. According to this information, the distance of the site from Aquincum can be easily calculated from the Itinerarium Antonini, which indicates that there were two routes to Aquincum. The town was 90 MP from the villa on the Iovia-Floriana-Aquincum route and 95 MP on the Iovia-Herculua-Aquincum route (Figure 3):

It. Ant.	Station	Distance (MP)	It. Ant.	Station	Distance (MP)
264,9	Fortiana	XXV	264, 9	Fortiana	XXV
265,1	Herculua	XX	265,1	Herculua	XX
265,2	Floriana	XV	264,5	Iasulonibus	XXV
263,9	Aquincum	XXX	264,6	Aquincum	XXV
Total		XC			XCV

It is also noteworthy to study the distance of the site from Brigetio, but the last station after Floriana, probably *Mogiones* is certainly omitted (its estimated distance is 32 MP¹¹⁸):

It. Ant.	Station	Distance (MP)
264, 9	Fortiana	XXV
265,1	Herculua	XX
265,2	Floriana	XV
lacuna	Mogiones? ¹¹⁹	XXXII
265,3	Brigetio	VIII
Total		C

as well as the one in Bruckneudorf are serious possibilities.

Summarily, we can come to the conclusion that the events in Pannonia in 375, such as the death of the emperor and the circumstances of his son's proclamation, can clearly be reconstructed on the basis of the written sources. However, the identification of Murocincta with the villa at Bruckneudorf is much less certain. The current paper intended to argue against this hypothesis, especially if the second council was indeed held at Aquincum. Based on my argumentation, other possibilities, in particular the late Roman villa of Szakcs that lies in a similar distance (nearly 100 MP) from Brigetio and Aquincum too, must be considered as well.

Appendix – The relevant antique sources

Sources for Valentinian's death

Hieronymus Chronicon 247h *Valentinianus subita sanguinis eruptione quod Graece 'apoplexis' vocatur Brigitione moritur, post quem Gratianus adsumpto in imperium Valentiniano fratre cum patruo Valente regnat.*

¹¹⁷ TÓTH 1987-1988, 56-57.

¹¹⁸ TÓTH 2006, 91-93.

¹¹⁹ Based on the Roman milestone AÉp 2020, 992 the early principate municipium *Mogiones* was *caput viarum* and it can be localized in the area of the late Roman inner fortifications in Környe. The missing road station can obviously be placed here. On the other hand, in this case the distance between *Mogiones* and Brigetio given as MP VIII must be corrected to XVIII based on the distance between Környe and Brigetio. In this case, the correct distance between Iovia and Brigetio is MP CX.

Ep. 60.15.3 *Valentinianus vastato genitali solo et inultam patriam derelinquens vomitu sanguinis extinctus est.*

Epit. de Caes. 45.8 *Valentinianus apud Bergentionem legationi Quadorum respondens, anno aevi quinto et quinquagesimo impetu sanguinis voce amissa, sensu integer, exspiravit. 9 Quod quidem intemperantia cibi ac saturitate, qua artus diffuderat, accidisse plures retulere.*

Rufinus H.E. XI.12 ... *ibi vixdum coepto bello, aegritudine suo ita oppressus diem obiit ...*

Ammianus XXX.6.3 *ad haec imperator ira vehementi percussus, et inter exordia respondendi tumidor, increpabat verborum obiurgatorio sonu nationem omnem ut beneficiorum inmemorem et ingratam. paulatimque lenitus et ad molliora propensior, tamquam ictus e caelo vitalique via voceque simul obstructa, suffectus igneo lamine cernebatur; et repente cohibito sanguine, letali sudore perfusus, ne laboretur spectantibus et vilibus, concursu ministrorum vitae secretioris ad conclave ductus est intimum. 4 ubi locatus in lecto, exiguas spiritus reliquias trahens, nondum intellegendi minuto vigore, cunctos agnoscebat adstantes, quos cubicularii, nequis eum necatum suspicaretur, celeritate maxima conrogarant. et quoniam viscerum flagrante conpage laxanda erat necessario vena, nullus inveniri potuit medicus hanc ob causam, quod eos per varia sparserat, curaturos militem pestilentiae morbo temptatum. 5 unus tamen repertus, venam eius iterum saepiusque pungendo, ne guttam quidem cruoris elicere potuit, internis nimietate calorum ambustis, vel, ut quidam existimabant, arefactis ideo membris, quod meatus aliqui, quos haemorrhoidas nunc appellamus, obserati sunt gelidis frigoribus con crustati. 6 sensit immensa vi quadam urgente morborum, ultimae necessitatis adesse praescripta, dicereque conatus aliqua vel mandare, ut singultus ilia crebrius pulsans, stridorque dentium et brachiorum motus velut caestibus dimicantium indicabat, iam superatus liventibusque maculis interfusus, animam diu conluctatam efflavit, aetatis quinquagesimo anno et quinto, imperii, minus centum dies, secundo et decimo.*

Orosius VII.32.14 *bellum in eos parans apud Brigitionem oppidum subita effusione sanguinis, quod Graece apoplexis vocatur, suffocatus et mortuus est.*

Socrates H. E. IV.31.6 *Καὶ οὕτως αἵματος ἐκδοθέντος τελευτᾷ ἐν φρουρίῳ ᾧ προσωνομία Βεργιτίων, μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν Γρατιανοῦ τὸ τρίτον καὶ Ἐκυτίου περὶ τὴν ἑπτακαίδεκάτην τοῦ Νοεμβρίου μηνός, ζήσας ἔτη νδ', βασιλεύσας ἔτη ια'.*

Philostorgius H. R. IX.16 *Ὅτι Οὐαλεντινιανὸς τελευτᾷ, βασιλεύσας ἔτη δυοκαίδεκα ...*

Sozomenus H. E. VI.36.4 *ἐπὶ πολὺ δὲ χαλεπαίνοντος καὶ τοιάδε βοῶντος, ὑπὸ ἀμέτρου διατάσεως παραχθέντων αὐτῷ τῶν ἔνδον, φλέψ ἅμα καὶ ἀρτηρία ἐρράγη, καὶ ἀναδοθέντος αἵματος ἐν φρουρίῳ τινὶ τῆς Γαλλίας ἐτελεύτησε τὸν βίον, ἔτη μὲν ἀμφὶ τὰ πεντήκοντα τέσσαρα γεγονώς, τρισκαίδεκα δὲ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ εὖ μάλα καὶ λίαν ἐπισήμως διαγενόμενος.*

Chronica Gallica Chron. min. I p. 644 494 *Valentinianus cum fratre Valente ann. XIII mens. V. hic ex Pannonia Cibali fuit.*

Laterculus imperatorum ad Iustinum I Chron. min. III p. 422

Obiit in castello Vergione.

Consularia Constantinopolitana Chron. min. I p. 242 *post cons. Gratiani et Aequitii Et ipso anno diem functus Valentinianus senior XV kal. Dec. in castello Virgitione.*

Consularia Italica Chron. Min. I p. 296 (Barbarus Scaligeri)

292 et eo anno Valentinianus in bello mortuus est VII Idos Octobris.

Prosper Tiro Chron. min. I p. 459

1155 *Valentinianus subita sanguinis eruptione quod Graece 'apoplexis' vocatur Brigitione moritur...*

Cassiodorus Chronica Chron. min. II p. 153

1124 *His cons. Valentinianus apoplexi Brigitione moritur*

Zosimus IV.17.2 *Τοῦ δὲ χειμῶνος παρὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς ἐκταθέντος, ἔστελλον πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Κουάδοι πρέσβεις λόγους ὑπὲρ τὸ μέτρον φέροντας, ἐφ' οἷς Οὐαλεντινιανὸς ἀγανακτήσας, καὶ*

ὑπὸ τῆς ἄγαν ὀργῆς παραφορᾶς οὐ πόρρω γενόμενος, αἵματος κάτωθεν ἀναχθέντος ἐπὶ τὸ στόμα συσχόντος τε τὰς τῆς φωνῆς ἀρτηρίας ἐξέλιπεν, ἐν μὲν Ἰλλυριοῖς ἐννέα μῆνας, ἔλλειπουσῶν ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν, διατρίψας, εἰς δωδέκατον δὲ ἐνιαυτὸν τῆς βασιλείας προελθών.

18.1 Τούτου τελευτήσαντος ἐμπεσὼν τῷ Σιρμίῳ σκηπτὸς τὰ βασιλεία κατέφλεξε καὶ τὴν ἀγοράν, ἔδοξε τε τοῖς τὰ τοιαῦτα κρίνειν δεινοῖς οὐκ αἷσιον τοῖς κοινοῖς πράγμασιν εἶναι τὸ τέρας· καὶ σεισμοὶ δὲ ἔν τισι συνηνέχθησαν τόποις.

Jordanes Romana 309 *sed apoplexia subito et sanguinis eruptione Bregitione defunctus est.*

Ioannes Malalas XIII.32 Ὁ δὲ θειότατος Βαλεντινιανὸς νόσω βληθεὶς μετὰ χρόνον ἐτελεύτα ἐν καστελλίῳ Βιργιτινῶν, ὧν ἐνιαυτῶν νέ'.

Theophanes Confessor Chronographia p. 61 AM 5867 Τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει Οὐαλεντινιανὸς ὁ μέγας ἐτελεύτησεν ἐτῶν πδ', βασιλεύσας ἔτη ια', τρόπῳ τοιῷδε· ... ἐκ δὲ τῆς διατάσεως καὶ τοῦ κρότου 62 τῶν χειρῶν φλεβὸς ῥαγείσης καὶ πλείστου ἀναδοθέντος αἵματος, ἔν τινι φρουρίῳ Γαλλίας θνήσκει μηνὶ Δίῳ ιζ' ἰνδικτιῶνος γ'.

Fredegarius II.46 *Valentinianus subito a sanguine eruptione, qui Graecia eproploxia vocatur, Brivione moritur.*

Theodorus Lector Epit. III.210 Σαυρομάται Οὐαλεντινιανῷ ἐπανάστησαν. ἡττηθέντες δὲ πρέσβεις ἔπεμψαν ἐξαιτοῦντες εἰρήνην· οὓς Οὐαλεντινιανὸς θεασάμενος ἤρετο εἰ πάντες Σαυρομάται τοιοῦτοι τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες τὰ σώματα· τῶν δὲ εἰπόντων ὅτι τοὺς παρ' αὐτοῖς ἀρίστους ἀπέστειλαν, ἀνακράζας μέγα, δεινὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων βασιλείαν εἶπεν ὑπομένειν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐλθοῦσαν, εἰ Σαυρομάται, ὧν οἱ ἄριστοι τοιοῦτοι, Ῥωμαίοις τολμῶσι πολεμεῖν. ἐκ δὲ τῆς διατάσεως φλεβὸς ῥαγείσης καὶ πλείστου ἀναδοθέντος αἵματος ἔν τινι φρουρίῳ Γαλλίας ἐτελειώθη, ἐτῶν ὑπάρχων πεντήκοντα τεσσάρων, βασιλεύσας δὲ ἔτη ιγ'.

Symeon Logothetes Chron. 92.6 καταπολεμήσας δὲ τοὺς Σαυρομάτας, πρέσβεις ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἰδὼν ἐλθόντας, ἠρώτησεν εἰ τοιοῦτοι εἶεν Σαυρομάται· καὶ μαθὼν ὡς οἱ ἄριστοι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἦκασι, πλησθεὶς θυμοῦ καὶ πρηνεῖ τῇ χειρὶ τὸν μηρὸν πλήξας ἔφη “δεινὰ Ῥωμαίοις, εἰ τοιοῦτοι ὄντες πρεσβεύειν ἀξιοῦσιν.” ἐκ δὲ τοῦ θυμοῦ φασὶ ἀναστομωθῆναι φλέβα καὶ ἀρτηρίαν διαρραγῆναι, καὶ αἵματος πολλοῦ ἐκχυθέντος τελευτῆσαι τὸν αὐτὸν βασιλέα Οὐαλεντινιανόν.

Georgius Cedrenus Compend. hist. p. 547.1–10 Τῷ ια' ἔτει Οὐαλεντινιανὸς ὁ μέγας ἐτελεύτησε, βασιλεύσας ἔτη ια', τρόπῳ τοιῷδε. οἱ Σαυρομάται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἡττηθέντες πρέσβεις πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔπεμψαν αἰτοῦντες εἰρήνην. αὐτοῦ δὲ τούτους ἐρωτῶντος εἰ πάντες οἱ Σαυρομάται τοιοῦτοὶ εἰσιν ἀκρότατοι, καὶ αὐτῶν εἰπόντων ὅτι τοὺς κρείττονας πάντων ὧδε ἔχεις καὶ ὀρᾷς, ἀνακράζας βιαίως ἔφη “δεινὰ Ῥωμαίων ἡ βασιλεία ὑπομένει εἰς Οὐαλεντινιανὸν λήξασα, εἰ Σαυρομάται τοιοῦτοι ὄντες οἰκτρότατοι Ῥωμαίοις κατεξανίστανται.” ἐκ δὲ τῆς τάσεως καὶ τοῦ κρότου τῶν χειρῶν φλεβὸς ῥαγείσης καὶ πλείστου ἀναδοθέντος αἵματος, ἔν τινι φρουρίῳ Γαλλίας θνήσκει.

Georgios Monachos Chron. breve 688.11 Ἐν δὲ τῷ μεταξὺ, ἐπὶ τῶν πολέμων τῶν Σαυρομάτων, Οὐαλεντινιανὸς ὁ μέγας ἐκ τῶν μερῶν τῆς Γαλλίας εἰς τὸ Ἰλλυρικὸν ἐλθεῖν βουλόμενος καὶ τοῦ πολέμου ἀρχὴν λαβόντος, ἀρρώστια αἰφνιδίῳ συσχεθεὶς ἐτελεύτησε. πρέσβεις γὰρ Σαυρομάται ἐξαπέστειλαν ἐξαιτούμενοι εἰρήνην· οὓς Οὐαλεντινιανὸς θεασάμενος ἤρετο εἰ πάντες Σαυρομάται τοιοῦτοι τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες τὰ σώματα· τῶν δὲ εἰπόντων, ὅτι τοὺς παρ' αὐτοῖς ἀρίστους ἀπέστειλαν, ἀνακράζας μέγα, δεινὰ τὴν βασιλείαν Ῥωμαίων ὑπομένειν, εἰ Σαυρομάτων οἱ ἄριστοι τοιοῦτοι Ῥωμαίους τολμᾶσθαι πολεμεῖν. Ἐκ δὲ τῆς διατάσεως τοῦ θυμοῦ φλεβὸς ῥαγείσης καὶ αἵματος πολλοῦ ἐκχυθέντος, τελευτῆσαι αὐτὸν ἔν τινι φρουρίῳ Γαλλίας.

Sources for Valentinian II's elevation

Ambrosius De obitu Valentiniani 59 *Electus est filius meus, cum post mortem patris parvulus adsisceretur imperio.*

Epitome de Caesaribus 45.10 *Itaque eo mortuo Valentinianus adhuc quadriennis auctore Equitio ac Merobaude e propinquo, ubi cum matre fuerat, allatus creatur imperator.*

Consularia Constantinopolitana Chron. min. I p. 242 post cons. Gratiani et Aequitii et levatus est Valentinianus iunior Aug. filius Aug. Valentiniani ab exercitu in tribunali die X kal. Dec. **in civitate Acinco.**

Rufinus H. E. XI.12 ... relictis haeredibus in imperio filiis, Gratiano Augusto, Valentinianoque admodum parvulo, et nondum regiis insignibus initiato. Quem tamen necessitas eorum, qui tanquam vacuum imperii locum conabantur invadere, compulit, etiam absente fratre, purpura indui, Probo tunc praefecto fideliter rem gerente.

Ammianus XXX.10.1 Post conclamata imperatoris suprema corpusque curatum ad sepulturam, ut missum Constantinopolim inter divorum reliquias humaretur ... 2 cum negotium in his esset angustiis et tamquam in eadem navi futuri periculatorum, si accidissent, participes, omnes eadem formidarent: sedit summatum consilio, avulso ponte, quem compaginarat ante necessitas, invadens terras hostilis, ut superstitis Valentiniani mandato Merobaudes protinus acciretur. 3 hocque ille ut erat sollertis ingenii, quod evenerat ratus, aut forte doctus ab eo, per quem vocabatur, rupturum concordiae iura Gallicanum militem suspicatus, missam ad se tesseram finxit redeundi cum eo ad observandas Rheni ripas quasi furore barbarico crudescente: utque erat secrete mandatum, Sebastianum principis adhuc ignorantem excessum longius amendavit, quietum quidem virum et placidum sed militari favore sublatum, ideo maxime tunc cavendum. 4 Reverso itaque Merobaude, altiore cura prospectum, expedito consilio Valentinianus puer defuncti filius tum quadrimus, vocaretur in imperium cooptandus, centesimo lapide disparatus degensque cum Iustina matre in villa, quam Murocinctam appellant. 5 hocque concincenti omnium sententia confirmato Cerealis avunculus eius ocius missus eundem puerum lectica inpositum duxit in castra sextoque die post parentis obitum imperator legitime declaratus Augustus nuncupatur more sollemni.

Eunapios Frag. 42 (Excerpta de leg. 6) Καὶ γὰρ ὑπὴν τι ζηλοτυπίας αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς συμβασιλεύοντας, οἱ παῖδες μὲν ἦσαν ἀδελφοῦ (καὶ γέγραπται οὕτω πρότερον), τὴν βασιλείαν δὲ διηρῆσθαι κατὰ σφᾶς ἐδόκουν, τὴν διανομὴν οὐκ ἀνενεγκόντες ἐπὶ τὸν θεῖον.

Socrates H. E. IV.31.7 Τελευτήσαντος οὖν Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ οἱ κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν στρατιῶται ἕκτη ἡμέρᾳ μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν τὸν ὁμώνυμον τῷ πατρὶ Οὐαλεντινιανόν, νέαν ἄγοντα κομιδῇ τὴν ἡλικίαν, βασιλέα ἀνηγόρευσαν **ἐν Ἀκίγκῳ πόλει τῆς Ἰταλίας.**

Sozomenus H. E. VI.36.5 ἕκτη δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς αὐτοῦ τελευτῆς ἀναγορεύεται βασιλεὺς ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ὁ νεώτερος καὶ ὁμώνυμος αὐτοῦ παῖς.

Philostorgius H. E. IX.16 κατέλιπεν δὲ καὶ ἐτέρους δύο παῖδας, Γάλλαν τε θυγατέρα καὶ Οὐαλεντινιανόν, τέτταρά που γεγονότα ἔτη ὃν αὐτίκα ἢ τε μήτηρ Ἰουστῖνα καὶ ὁ κατὰ Παιονίαν στρατὸς βασιλέα ποιεῖ.

Chronicon Paschale p. 559 Ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ὑπάτων ἐπήρθη Οὐαλεντινιανὸς νέος Αὐγουστος μηνὶ δίῳ πρὸ ε' καλανδῶν δεκεμβρίων **εἰς πόλιν Ἀκυγκον.**

Prosper Tiro Chron. min. I p. 459 1155 post quem Gratianus adsumpto in imperium Valentiniano fratre cum patruo Valente regnat.

Cassiodorus Chronica Chron. min. II p. 153 1124 post quem Gratianus adsumpto imperio Valentiniano fratre cum patruo Valente regnat.

Zosimus IV.19.1 Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ δὲ τελευτήσαντος ὁρῶντες οἱ ταξίαρχοι Μεροβαύδης καὶ Ἐκτίος Οὐάλεντα καὶ Γρατιανὸν πόρρω που διατρίβοντας (ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἔτι κατὰ τὴν ἐφῶν ἦν, ὁ δὲ ἐν τοῖς ἐσπερίοις Γαλάταις παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπολελειμμένος), ὑφορώμενοι μὴ ποτε συμβῇ τοὺς ὑπὲρ τὸν Ἰστρον βαρβάρους ἀνάρχους ἐπιπεσεῖν τοῖς πράγμασι, παῖδα Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ νέον, ἐκ γαμετῆς αὐτῷ τεχθέντα τῆς πρότερον Μαγνηντίῳ συνοικησάσης, **οὐ πόρρω που μετὰ τῆς**

μητρός ὄντα μεταπεμψάμενοι παράγουσι μετὰ τῆς ἀλουργίδος εἰς τὰ βασίλεια, πέμπτον ἄγοντα μόλις ἐνιαυτόν. 2 Διελομένων δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς Γρατιανοῦ καὶ Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ τοῦ νέου τὴν βασιλείαν, ὡς ἐδόκει τοῖς περὶ αὐτοὺς τὰ πράγματα κρίνουσιν (αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἱ βασιλεῖς οὐκ ἦσαν κύριοι διὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν), Γρατιανῷ μὲν τὰ Κελτικά φύλα καὶ Ἰβηρία πᾶσα καὶ ἡ Βρεττανικὴ νῆσος ἀπεκληροῦτο, Οὐαλεντινιανὸν δὲ ἐδόκει τὴν Ἰταλίαν τε καὶ Ἰλλυριοὺς καὶ τὴν ὅλην ἔχειν Λιβύην.

Theophanes Confessor Chronographia p. 61 AM 5867 Γρατιανοῦ δέ, τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, μὴ εὐρεθέντος ἐκεῖσε, καὶ Οὐάλεντος ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ διάγοντος, τὸ εὐρεθὲν στρατόπεδον **ἐν τῷ τόπῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐτελεύτησεν** Οὐαλεντινιανὸς ὁ μέγας, Οὐαλεντινιανόν, τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἐτῶν δ' ἀνηγόρευσαν Αὐγουστον, συμπαρούσης καὶ Ἰουστίνης, τῆς μητρός αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῇ Πανονίᾳ.

Theodorus Lector Epit. III.211 Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ τελευτήσαντος οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ στρατιῶται ἔκτη μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν ἡμέρᾳ βασιλέα ἀναγορεύουσιν Οὐαλεντινιανόν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ. Zonaras XIII.17.83 ὅτε δὲ ὁ Οὐαλεντινιανὸς ἐτελεύτησεν, οὐ παρῆν οὗτος ἐπὶ τῷ θανάτῳ τῷ τοῦ πατρός. ἡ γοῦν στρατιὰ τηνικαῦτα τὸν νέον Οὐαλεντινιανόν βασιλέα ἀνείπε τετραετὴ τότε τυγχάνοντα. ἐπανελθὼν δ' ἐκ τῆς ἀποδημίας Γρατιανὸς τοὺς μὲν στρατιώτας ἐκάκισε καὶ τινας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐκάκωσε, κολάσας τοὺς τῆς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ πρωτουργοὺς ἀναρρήσεως, ὡς ἄτερ γνώμης αὐτοῦ βασιλέως ὄντος ἄλλον ἀναγορεύσαντας. τὸν δὲ ἀδελφὸν αὐτὸν συνάρχειν οὐ παρητήσατο, ἀλλὰ κοινῶν τῆς βασιλείας προσείλετο.

Georgius Monachus Chron. breve 689.1 Ὁρθοδοξότατος ὦν καὶ δοῦλος Κυρίου κληρονόμους καταλείπει τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ Γρατιανόν, τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, Αὐγουστον ὄντα, καὶ Οὐαλεντινιανόν, νέον κομιδῇ τυγχάνοντα καὶ μήπω τῶν βασιλικῶν συμβόλων καταξιωθέντα, ὃν ἡ ἀνάγκη τῶν ἐπιχειρούντων τὸν τόπον τῆς βασιλείας ἀφαρπάζειν, ὡς σχολάζοντα, παρεσκεύασεν αὐτὸν καὶ, ἀπόντος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, τὴν πορφύραν ἐνδύσασθαι, Πρόβου τῷ τηνικαῦτα πιστῶς τὸ πρᾶγμα μεταχειρισαμένου.

Cf. Orosius VII.32.15, Chron. Min. I p. 647, II p. 14, 153, 469.

Aquincum as place of Valentinian II's elevation

Chron. min. I p. 242 *post cons. Gratiani et Aequitii*
et levatus est Valentinianus iunior Aug. filius Aug. Valentiniani ab exercitu in tribunali die X kal. Dec. in civitate Acinco

Chronicon Paschale p. 559

Ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ὑπάτων ἐπήρθη Οὐαλεντινιανὸς νέος Αὐγουστος μηνὶ δίῳ πρὸ ε' καλανδῶν δεκεμβρίων εἰς πόλιν Ἀκυγκον.

Socrates IV.31.7 Τελευτήσαντος οὖν Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ οἱ κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν στρατιῶται ἔκτη ἡμέρᾳ μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν τὸν ὁμώνυμον τῷ πατρὶ Οὐαλεντινιανόν, νέαν ἄγοντα κομιδῇ τὴν ἡλικίαν, βασιλέα ἀνηγόρευσαν ἐν Ἀκίνκῳ πόλει τῆς Ἰταλίας.

Abbreviations

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RIC. Roman Imperial Coinag., London.

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Figures

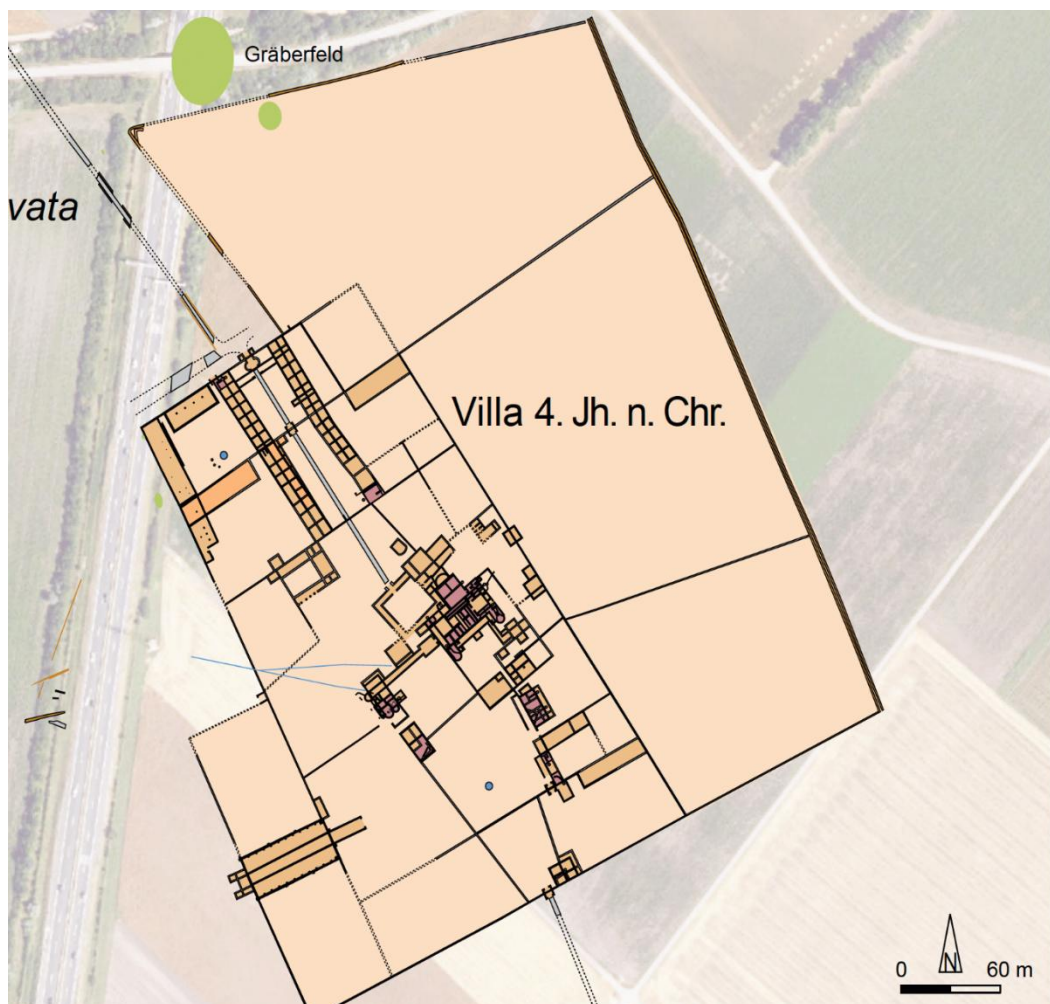


Figure 1. The Roman villa in Bruckneudorf in the 4th century (by S. Groh)



Figure 2. Aerial photo of the villa of Szakcs (by G. Bertók)

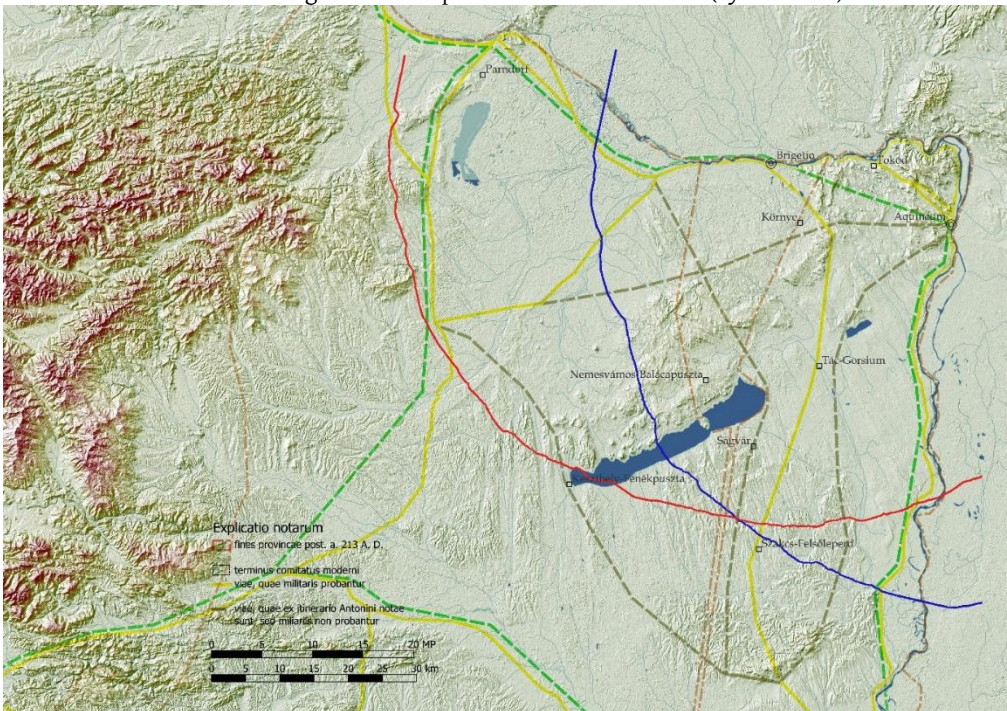


Figure 3. Roman villas in Northern Pannonia near the 100 MP distance from Brigetio and Aquincum (by A. Bödöcs and P. Kovács)

The Acts of the Church Synods of Orange (441) and Vaison (442) and the Role of the Bishop in Late Antique Gaul

Martin ŠENK¹

Abstract. *This article examines the role of the Gallic episcopate in responding to the social and political crises of the fifth century, particularly through the lens of two early synods held in Orange (441) and Vaison (442). While the period was marked by the collapse of Roman administrative structures and the increasing vulnerability of local populations, the Gallic Church – and especially its bishops – began to assume key social functions that had been previously managed by the imperial state. The synodal canons from Orange and Vaison reveal early and systematic efforts by bishops to protect the poor and assert ecclesiastical authority over both spiritual and material realms. In particular, the acts emphasise episcopal responsibility for safeguarding Church property and the rights of the vulnerable, especially through the institution of ecclesiastical asylum. Canon 4 of the Synod of Vaison, which condemns those who withhold bequests to the Church as “murderers of the poor,” illustrates the moral and rhetorical strategies used to legitimise episcopal power. These developments are interpreted within the broader framework of Bischofsherrschaft (or “episcopal rule”) understood as a gradual and context-specific process.*

Rezumat. *Prezentul articol investighează rolul episcopatului galic în gestionarea crizelor sociale și politice din secolul al V-lea, cu precădere prin intermediul a două sinoade timpurii desfășurate la Orange (441) și Vaison (442). Într-un context istoric marcat de dezagregarea structurilor administrative romane și de vulnerabilitatea accentuată a comunităților locale, Biserica galică – și, în mod special, corpul episcopal – a început să își asume funcții sociale esențiale, anterior atribuite aparatului statal imperial. Canoanele sinodale de la Orange și Vaison evidențiază eforturi incipiente și sistematice ale episcopilor de a proteja categoriile defavorizate și de a consolida autoritatea ecleziastică asupra domeniilor spirituale și materiale deopotrivă. În mod particular, actele accentuează responsabilitatea episcopală privind ocrotirea patrimoniului bisericesc și garantarea drepturilor celor vulnerabili, mai ales prin instituția azilului ecleziastic. Canonul 4 al Sinodului de la Vaison, care îi denunță pe cei ce refuză transmiterea legatelor către Biserică drept „ucigași ai săracilor”, constituie o ilustrare grăitoare a strategiilor morale și retorice prin care se legitima puterea episcopală. Aceste transformări sunt interpretate în cadrul mai amplu al conceptului de Bischofsherrschaft (sau „domnia episcopală”), înțeles ca un proces gradual și dependent de context.*

Keywords: Gaul, migration period, church synods, episcopal rule, Gallic episcopate

Introduction

During the fifth and sixth centuries, the population of Gaul faced a series of crises. Following the incursion of the Alans, Suebi, and Vandals into Gaul in 406, the region experienced the expansion of the Franks, Burgundians, and Visigoths, uprisings of the rural population (the so-called Bagaudae revolts), and campaigns led by Hunnic tribal confederations. The inhabitants of Gaul also suffered the effects of climatic change associated with the onset of the Late Antique Little Ice Age. Of course, not all regions of Gaul were in a

¹ Institute of Auxiliary Historical Sciences and Archive Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University; martin.senk@phil.muni.cz

state of constant crisis during this time. Some areas, for instance, were spared the immediate devastations of the Migration Period, only to be afflicted later during the Merovingian civil wars in the latter half of the sixth century – and vice versa.

In describing developments in Gaul, what matters is not so much a catalogue of individual conflicts and disasters, but rather the structural perspective. At the beginning of the fifth century, the Roman state abruptly lost its ability to intervene effectively in Gallic affairs – the imperial centre could no longer reliably maintain even basic administration, and in military terms, the Gallic population was left to fend for itself. As a consequence, the wealthy class of Gallic landowners and aristocrats was compelled to respond to unfolding events independently of Roman central governance, while simultaneously needing to legitimise its leadership and administrative role in the various regions without recourse to Roman structures of legitimation. The Gallo-Roman aristocracy sought to make the best of the situation by preserving its power within the cities and, from there, maintaining control over the surrounding countryside. This gave rise to a unique trajectory of development in Gaul, unmatched elsewhere in the crumbling Western Roman Empire. The traditional Gallo-Roman elite turned to the only functioning alternative administrative structure available – that of the Christian Church, and above all, the authority embodied in the office of the Christian bishop. By securing control of episcopal sees, the Gallo-Roman aristocracy was able to govern local regions effectively and to establish urban centres for economic distribution. In the Gallic context, bishops from the fifth century onward increasingly assumed functions once held by Roman civil administration – organising aid for the poor and needy, overseeing construction and urban maintenance, defending cities, or managing land improvement. A significant number of Gallic episcopal seats were occupied by members of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy (in some cases, the episcopal office appears almost hereditary), making the bishopric from an early point a highly lucrative position endowed with substantial influence and authority. This transformation contributed significantly to the alliance between the Franks and the Gallic Catholic Church, which would become one of the main pillars of Frankish governance and power in Gaul. Since the 1970s, scholarship has interpreted this specific development of the Gallic episcopate through the concept of *Bischofsherrschaft*². It is precisely through the lens of *Bischofsherrschaft* that the surviving acts of the Gallic synods of Orange (441) and Vaison (442) may be contextualised and analysed – texts that, unlike the synodal conclusions from the Merovingian period, have received comparatively little scholarly attention³.

The Acts of the Synods of Orange (441) and Vaison (442) as a reflection of the changing role of the bishop in Gallic society

Our understanding of the role of Gallic bishops in society and the evolving ideal of the episcopal office is informed by a wide range of sources – from the chronicle of Gregory of Tours to various collections of letters, poems and panegyrics, hagiographic writings, and even

² The debate was opened by F. Prinz with a thought-provoking article PRINZ 1973. F. Prinz was soon followed by a number of authors who further developed his theses – cf. in particular HEINZELMANN 1976; GASSMANN 1977; KAISER 1981; HEINZELMANN 1988; KAISER 1988; PRINZ 1988; 1989; BAUMGART 1995. A fundamental revision and revival of the concept then came with JUSSEN 1995. More recently, see ANTON 1996a; 1996b; PATZOLD 2010; 2014 (who is highly critical to the concept, especially to the alleged senatorial origin of the majority of Gallic bishops); DIEFENBACH 2013; ŠENK 2021; ZIMMERMANN 2022.

³ The editions were published by MUNIER (ed.) 1963, 74–93; 94–104, but in both cases without taking into account all manuscripts. The latest editions are presented by SCHOLZ 2022, 30–45; 46–59, who improved and corrected the editions.

epigraphic evidence. A particularly intriguing corpus of sources on this topic is the acts of Gallic church synods. However, it is important to bear in mind that numerous synods took place in the Gallic context whose acts have not survived; we know of them only indirectly through other sources, or, in some cases, not at all. It can therefore be assumed that the topics discussed below were addressed at a greater number of synods than can be attested on the basis of the extant records.

Here, attention is first given to the acts of the Gallic episcopal synod held in 441 at Orange, presided over by the metropolitan bishop Hilary of Arles. The synod convened at a critical moment in Gallic history – during the episcopates of prominent bishops such as Germanus of Auxerre, Lupus of Troyes, and Anianus of Orléans, who were compelled to engage actively in diplomatic negotiations and to protect their congregations from a range of threats. Both the diplomacy and the challenges of the turbulent Migration Period also left a marked impact on the episcopate of Hilary of Arles himself⁴. A close reading of the synodal acts from this period – a time marked by Bagaudae uprisings and incursions of barbarian forces into Gallic territory – offers an important complement to the image of the era otherwise shaped primarily by episcopal hagiographies and the fragmentary testimony of late Roman authors.

The proceedings of the Synod of Orange culminated on 8 November, when the bishops signed the synodal acts. From these acts we learn, above all, that the synod was attended by seventeen bishops, along with several other clerics. Except for one bishop from Hispano-Galician territory, the synod represented a gathering of bishops from the south-eastern region of Gaul⁵. This area had, in the preceding years, been the scene of considerable upheaval. In the 430s, the region around Arles and Narbonne had repelled several Gothic assaults. Following the collapse of the Burgundian kingdom on the Rhine in 435 or 436, the south-eastern frontier of Gaul was plunged into further instability – especially as Roman military attention was attracted by Bagaudae uprisings in the north. The situation escalated in 443, when Aëtius ceded the territory of “Sapaudia”, near Lake Geneva, to the Burgundians. The local Gallic bishops now found themselves confronted with the proximity – and soon the dominance – of Burgundian power⁶.

On the eve of the Burgundians' settlement near Lake Geneva, a synod convened in south-eastern Gaul – a gathering that can reasonably be assumed to have responded, in certain respects, to the challenges of a time of crisis. The synodal acts contain twenty-eight, or in some manuscripts thirty, canons (the numbering of the canons varies across manuscript traditions). Two of these canons – numbers 5 and 6 (7) – offer particularly striking insight into the role of the Church during this turbulent period, as they address the issue of ecclesiastical asylum. According to these canons, individuals who seek refuge in a church are not to be surrendered, but are to be protected, both on account of the sanctity of the place (the church itself) and through the intercession of ecclesiastical authority. Anyone who believes they can lay claim to slaves belonging to clergy after these slaves have sought sanctuary in the church is to be subjected to the severest ecclesiastical condemnation⁷. Likewise, any individual who attempts

⁴ For a basic summary of sources and historical information, see, for example, GASSMANN 1977, *passim*; BAUMGART 1995, *passim*.

⁵ SCHOLZ 2022, 44.

⁶ A basic overview, including references to sources and further literature, is provided, for example, by HALSALL 2007, 242–254; MEIER 2019, 441–444.

⁷ “Eos qui ad ecclesiam confugerint tradi non oportere, sed loci reuerentia et intercessione defendi. Si quis autem mancipia clericorum pro suis mancipiis ad ecclesiam confugientibus crediderit occupanda, per omnes ecclesias districtissima damnatione feriat.” SCHOLZ 2022, 34, canon 5.

to reduce to slavery, subjugate, or otherwise bind into servile dependence those who were freed within a church or entrusted to the Church through testamentary provision is also to be punished by ecclesiastical penalty⁸. These two canons thus reveal an increase in the role of the Gallic Church in offering protection to the lowest classes of society. As S. Esders has noted, the church now claimed protective power not only over the former slaves who had been entrusted to it by will, but also over those who had been manumitted under its auspices⁹.

The active protection of society's most vulnerable members became, in the sixth century, a defining feature of the ecclesiastical and episcopal ideal¹⁰. The canons of the Synod of Orange suggest, however, that the first systematic steps in this direction had already been taken in the early 440s. This is hardly in doubt, for already in 442, a synod was convened at Vaison, whose acts are even more explicit in this regard.

The acts of the synod, comprising ten canons, were approved by twenty-three attending bishops on 23 November 442. The synod once again took place in south-eastern Gaul, in a diocese under the metropolitan authority of Arles, and all episcopal participants came exclusively from this south-eastern Gallic region. It remains uncertain whether the synod was presided over once more by bishop Hilary of Arles (as local metropolitan) or by bishop Auspicius of Vaison, who is listed first among the signatories¹¹.

From the perspective of the issue under examination, two canons are of particular interest: canon number 6, in which the participants of the Synod of Vaison sought to reinforce the authority of bishops within their episcopal cities¹², and especially canon number 4, which merits considerable attention. In this canon, the bishops introduced a new argument concerning the protection of Church property. According to canon number 4, those who withhold gifts (offerings) made by deceased believers and delay in handing them over to the Church are to be excluded from the ecclesial community as unbelievers. Such behaviour, the synodal acts argue, runs counter to divine mercy and ultimately leads to the collapse of faith itself. For in depriving the dying of the fulfilment of their vows and the poor of nourishment and essential sustenance, these individuals undermine both charity and piety. Indeed, those who seize Church property are, according to this canon, to be regarded as murderers of the poor and as people who do not believe in the judgment of God¹³.

The Synod of Vaison thus advanced the theory that those who plunder Church property deprive the poor of the means of their support and sustenance – and are therefore to be regarded as murderers. The intention to protect not only ecclesiastical assets but also the poor and needy is made fully explicit here. As has long been recognised in scholarship, the Church – and, at its head, the Gallic episcopate – increasingly assumed the responsibilities of social care and the maintenance of civic peace as Roman municipal administration gradually lost the

⁸ “*In ecclesia manumissos, uel per testamentum ecclesiae commendatos si quis in seuitutem uel obsequium uel ad colonariam conditionem imprimere tentauerit, animaduersione ecclesiastica coercebitur.*” SCHOLZ 2022, 36, canon 6 (7).

⁹ ESDERS 2010, 34–35.

¹⁰ See, for example, BAUMGART 1995; ZIMMERMANN 2022.

¹¹ SCHOLZ 2022, 56; 58.

¹² SCHOLZ 2022, 52; 54, canon 4.

¹³ “*Qui oblationes defunctorum fidelium detinent et ecclesiae tradere demorantur, ut infideles sunt ab ecclesia abiiciendi, quia usque ad exinanitionem fidei peruenire certum est hanc pietatis diuinae exacerbationem, qua et fideles de corpore recedentes uotorum suorum plenitudine et pauperes collatu alimoniae et necessaria sustentatione fraudantur. Tales enim quasi egentium necatores nec credentes iudicium Dei habendi sunt unius quoque patrum in hoc, quam scriptis suis inseruit, congruente sententia qua ait: amico quidpiam rapere furtum est, ecclesiam fraudare sacrilegium.*” SCHOLZ 2022, 52, canon 4. See also ZIMMERMANN 2022, 138–139.

capacity to provide for the indigent¹⁴. The acts of the Synod of Vaison strongly reinforce this interpretation. This hypothesis can further be supported by examining the reception of this particular canon: the synod's conclusions regarding care for the poor entered wider ecclesiastical consciousness, as evidenced by an explicit reference to them in the acts of the Synod of Arles, held between 490 and 502¹⁵. They were also taken up and expanded upon by the Synod of Agde in 506¹⁶, which adapted the principle to questions concerning the sale and lease of property – with particular emphasis placed on the role of the bishop in overseeing such activities¹⁷.

Conclusion

Gaul has long been regarded as an example of a successful response to the crises of the Migration Period. For several decades, scholarship has emphasised the active role of the Gallic Church – and in particular of the Gallic episcopate – as a decisive factor in this success. The role of the bishop in society is also reflected in the acts of Gallic synods. While these texts do not offer a vivid picture of episcopal involvement in diplomacy or military defence of dioceses, they do, in various respects, illuminate the practical dimensions of episcopal office. As the analysis of the synodal acts reveals, in a time marked by emerging social and political instability, bishops directed their efforts toward aiding the most vulnerable members of society. Both synods, held in south-eastern Gaul, indicate that bishops had become acutely aware of their new responsibility for the poor and helpless Christian population – and that they took the first systematic steps toward its protection. There was no doubt many motives behind this program, but one may reasonably conclude that, in effect, care for those in need became a key argument for Gallic bishops in asserting their authority and legitimising their control of Church property. Indeed, the acts of the Synod of Vaison show clearly that anyone who robbed the bishopric of material goods could be denounced as a murderer of the poor – a charge that offered bishops a far more tangible justification than abstract claims of sacrilege. The rise of episcopal authority – which may be framed within the concept of *Bischofsherrschaft* (“episcopal rule”) – thus appears as a gradual process, closely linked to the growing responsibility of bishops within society and to the Church's assumption of key social functions in times of crisis.

¹⁴ See especially JUSSEN 1995; 1997; 1998.

¹⁵ “*Secundum constitutionem synodi Vasensis, quicumque oblationem fidelium suppresserit aut negauerit, ab ecclesia cui fraudem fecerit excludatur.*” SCHOLZ 2022, 78, canon 47.

¹⁶ “*Clerici etiam uel saeculares, qui oblationes parentum aut donatas aut testamentis relictas retinere perstiterint, aut id quod ipsi donauerint ecclesiis uel monasteriis crediderint auferendum, sicut synodus sancta constituit, uelut necatores pauperum, quousque reddant, ab ecclesiis excludantur.*” SCHOLZ 2022, 88, canon 4.

¹⁷ “*Casellas uero uel mancipiola ecclesiae episcopi, sicut prisca canonum praecepit auctoritas, uel uasa ministerii, quasi commendata fideli proposito integro ecclesiae iure possideant: id est, ut neque uendere neque per quoscumque contractus res unde pauperes uiuunt, alienare praesumant. Quod si necessitas certa compulerit, ut pro ecclesiae aut necessitate aut utilitate, uel in usufructu uel in directa uenditione aliquid distrahatur, apud duos uel tres comprouinciales uel uicinos episcopos causa, qua necesse sit uendi, primitus comprobetur; et habita discussione sacerdotali, eorum subscriptione quae facta fuerit uenditio roboretur; aliter facta uenditio uel transactio non ualebit. Sane si quos de seruis ecclesiae bene meritos sibi episcopus libertate donauerit, collatam libertatem a successoribus placuit custodire cum eo quod eis manumissor in libertatem contulerit: quod tamen iubemus uiginti solidorum numerum modum in terrola, uineola uel hospitio tenere. Quod amplius datum fuerit, post manumissoris mortem ecclesia reuocabit. Minusculas uero res aut ecclesiae minus utiles peregrinis uel clericis, saluo, iure ecclesiae, in usum praestare permittimus.*” SCHOLZ 2022, 88, canon 7.

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