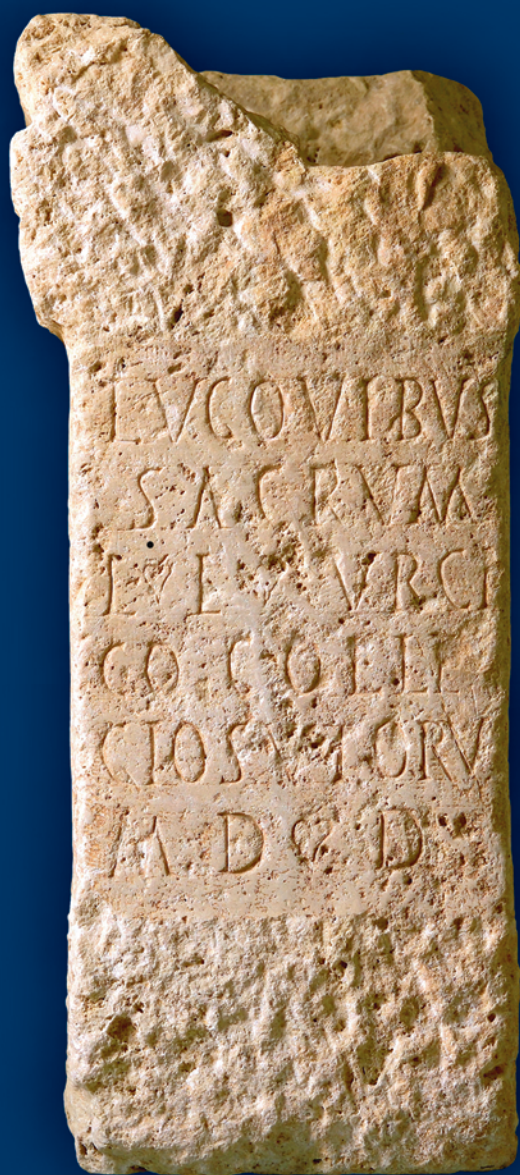


CELTIC RELIGION ACROSS SPACE AND TIME

J. Alberto Arenas-Esteban (ed.)



IX Workshop F.E.R.C.AN

-Fontes Epigraphici Religionvm Celticarvm ANtiqvarvm-

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, nine altars dedicated to Savus and/or Adsalluta were known from their (?) sanctuary at the hamlet of Sava near Podkraj opposite Hrastnik (the territory of Celeia in Noricum, present-day Celje in Slovenia), situated above the river Savus (the Sava), by a section of dangerous rapids and waterfalls. Rescue excavations, during which an altar to the Magna Mater was discovered, were carried out in 1994 in the sanctuary area. From the unexpected Magna Mater dedication it could be inferred that the Great Mother was also worshipped at this sacred place alongside the water divinities, or that the worship of the latter was later replaced by that of the Magna Mater, or else that an additional small sanctuary was erected to her. The evidence shows that cult of the Great Mother soon also became popular in the Celtic provinces, and that its popularity could in some cases have eventually outshone various local Celtic goddesses. Reminiscences of the worship of Cybele have survived from antiquity and can be identified in the custom of the 'pinewood marriage' during the Carnival time at Ptuj (Roman Poetovio).

KEYWORDS

Roman period, Celeia, Noricum, Savus and Adsalluta, Magna Mater (Cybele).

RESUMEN

Hasta hace poco, eran conocidos nueve altares dedicados a Savus y/o Adsalluta procedentes de su (?) santuario en la aldea de Sava cerca de Podkraj frente a Hrastnik (el territorio de Celeia en Noricum, en la actualidad Celje en Slovenia), situado sobre el río Savus (el Sava), en un tramo de peligrosos rápidos y cataratas. Las excavaciones de urgencia, durante las que se descubrió un altar a Magna Mater, se llevaron a cabo en 1994 en el área del santuario. A partir de la inesperada dedicación a Magna Mater podría inferirse que la Gran Madre también fue venerada en este lugar sacro junto a las divinidades acuáticas, o que la veneración de las últimas fue sustituida más tarde por el culto a Magna Mater, o incluso que un pequeño santuario adicional fue erigido para ella. La evidencia muestra que también el culto a la Gran Madre pronto se hizo popular en las provincias célticas, y que su popularidad pudo en algunos casos haber finalmente eclipsado a varias diosas célticas locales. Reminiscencias del culto a Cibeles han sobrevivido desde la Antigüedad y pueden ser identificadas en la costumbre del 'matrimonio del pino' durante la época de carnaval en Ptuj (Poetovio romana).

PALABRAS CLAVE

Periodo romano, Celeia, Noricum, Savus y Adsalluta, Magna Mater (Cibeles).

Adsalluta and Magna Mater - is there a link?

Marjeta Šašel Kos

1. AN ALTAR DEDICATED TO THE MAGNA MATER IN THE SANCTUARY OF SAVUS AND ADSALLUTA

At the end of the nineteenth and in the first half of the last century, five small altars dedicated to *Savus* and *Adsalluta*, as well as four to *Adsalluta* alone (the tenth was not inscribed), were discovered partly on the right bank of the river Sava above the rapids, at the hamlet of Sava (formerly

also Saudörfel) near Podkraj opposite Hrastnik (Fig. 1), and partly elsewhere in nearby places, reused as building material.¹ At this site the remains of a sanctuary were also found and supposedly excavated in 1917 by Walter Schmid, although no written report about these excavations has ever been published either by him or anybody else. The sanctuary is located at a certain distance from the Savinja River and its confluence with the

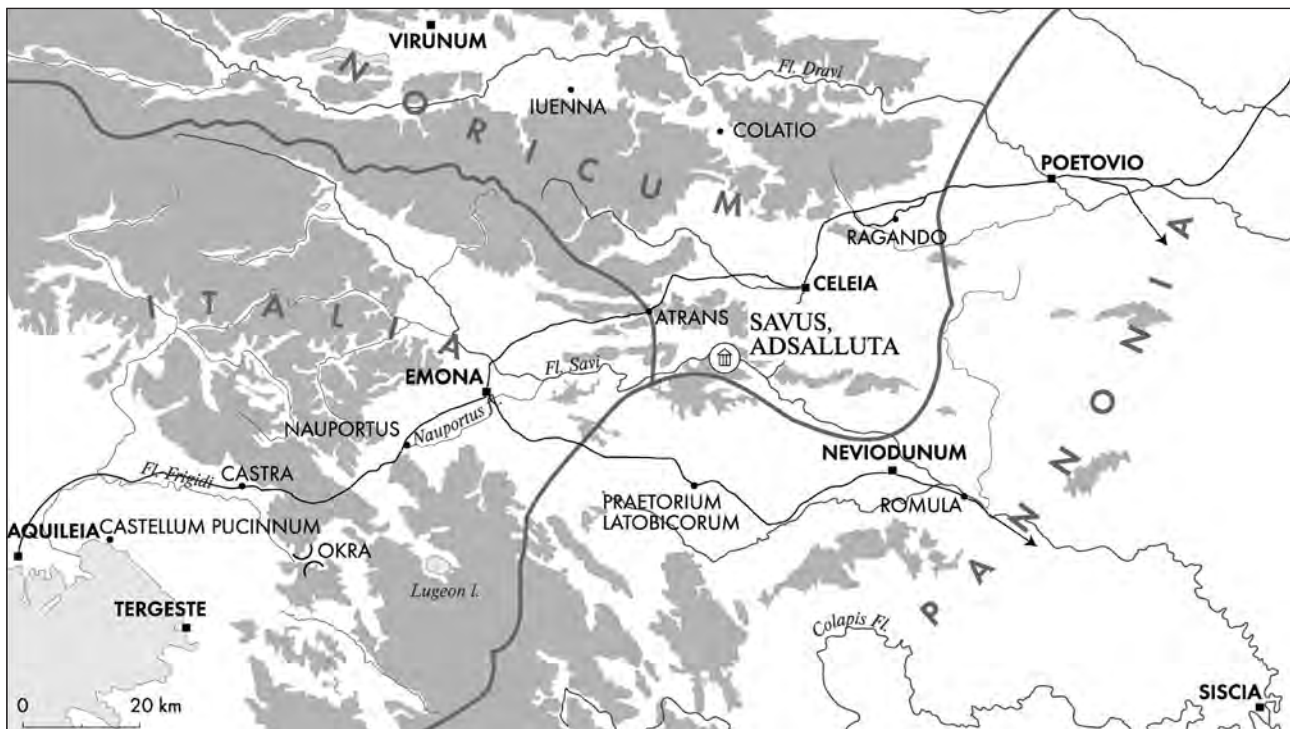


Figure 1: Map showing the triple border region between Aquileia and Poetovio (Computer graphics: M. Belak).

¹ They were first published by Knabl 1851. For a modern publication with commentaries see Šašel Kos 1994 (1999).

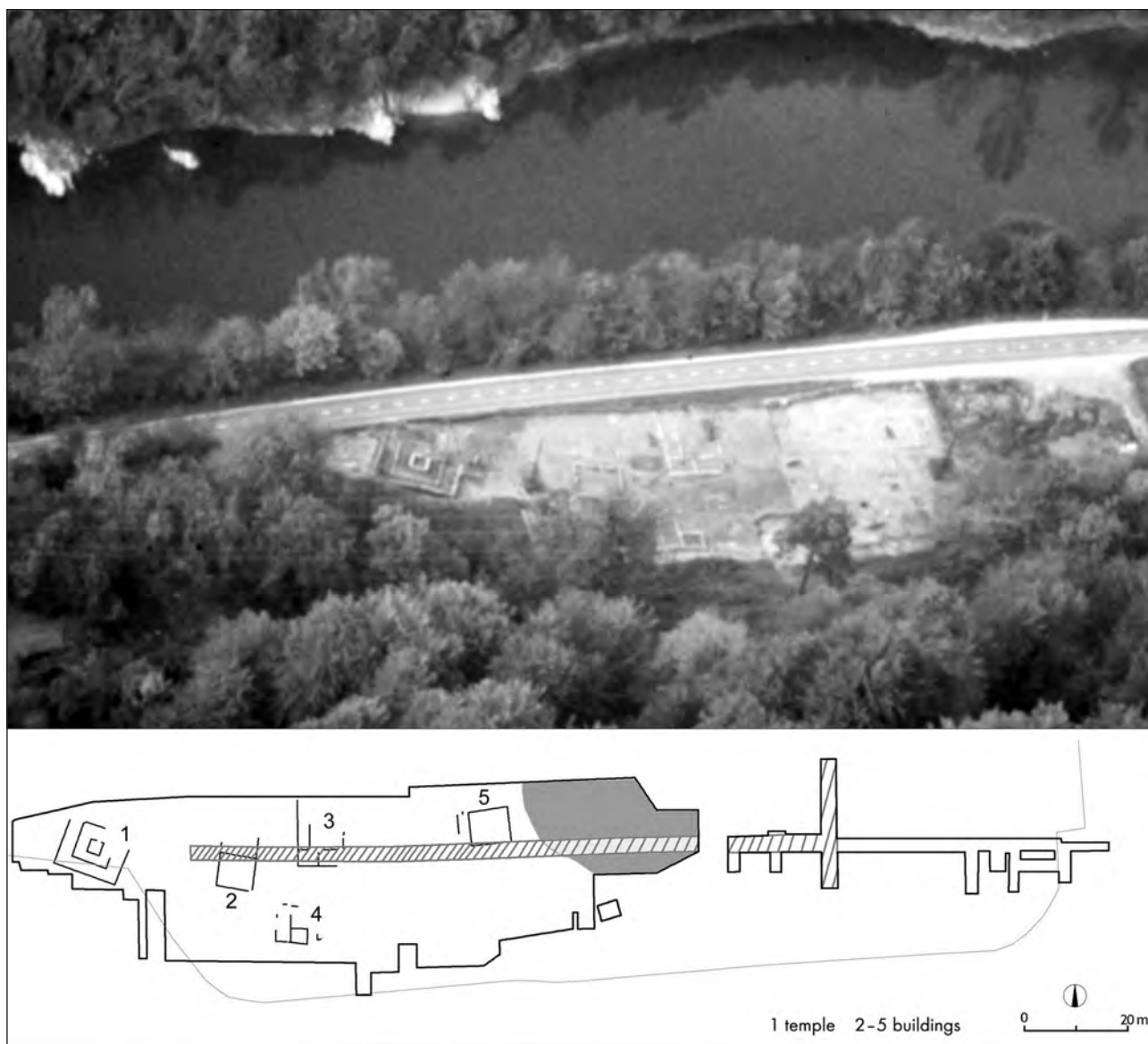


Figure 2: The excavated sanctuary and other buildings at the sacred site of Savus and Adsalluta.

Sava at Zidani Most, thus excluding the possibility that Adsalluta could be regarded as a personification of the Savinja River, flowing through Celeia, as has sometimes been assumed.²

However, the existence of a supposed sanctuary and a sacred site at this spot above the Sava River in the broad region of Celeia in the province of Noricum was not disputed, and architectural remains at the site were newly investigated in 1994.³ During these recent rescue excavations (a petrol station was built on the site), which yielded various small finds ranging from pottery and coins to other objects of everyday use (dated from the

second half of the first century to the end of the third century AD), the architecture of several buildings could be better defined (Fig. 2). A shrine or a sanctuary would have been built because of the rapids and waterfalls, which obstructed the traffic along this section of the river, and made the passage dangerous. Safe transport across them required an elaborate infrastructure, in particular for transport upstream, which was impossible in certain other areas. Barges had to be towed by draft animals along towpaths deliberately constructed for this purpose, which in some cases had been cut into rocky cliffs.

² For various theses concerning Adsalluta, see Šašel Kos 1994 (1999).

³ Jovanović 1998; Krajšek, Stergar 2008.

Of the mentioned dedications to Savus and Adsalluta, only one offers more than the name of the dedicator and the usual formula of the “fulfilled vow”, that of L. Servilius Eutyches with his helmsmen (*cum suis gubernatoribus*).⁴ Families whose members have been attested as worshippers of one or both water divinities were – in addition to the Servilii – the Cassii, Mammii or Memmii, Antonii, Iulii, Caecinae, and the Castricii. All of these gentilicia are (well) attested in Celeia or in other towns in the broader region.⁵ Their cognomens are uninteresting except the name Eutyches, which probably represents a freedman of the Servilii family, as well as the name of the slave of Castricius Marcellus, Ocellio, whose name is Celtic.⁶ The name of another dedicator, Secundio, who was probably of peregrine status, could also conceal a local inhabitant, since the names derived from numerals were very popular among the native population.

An important new find was an altar of local tuff, unexpectedly dedicated to Magna Mater (Fig. 3).⁷ It was found in the smallest room of one of the buildings with well preserved walls, which was erected on the slightly elevated terrace. Undoubtedly the altar was found *in situ*; this fact, combined with the prominent position of the building, strongly suggests that it could be interpreted as a sanctuary. This is further supported by the find of objects intended for cult practices, since in the same building a fragment of an incense burner, as well as a handle of a ceramic patera, bearing a relief depiction of Luna/Selene, were also discovered.⁸ As is confirmed by similar finds elsewhere in nearby provinces, pateras with such handles were probably manufactured in Aquincum before the Marcomannic Wars, i.e. in the mid-second century AD.⁹

Until the discovery of the Magna Mater altar it had always been assumed that the sanctuary was dedicated exclusively to Savus and Adsalluta; in the light of the new find it could be hypothesized that the Great Mother was also worshipped at this site alongside the water divinities, or that the worship of the latter was later replaced by that of



Figure 3: The dedication to the Great Mother found at the sacred site of Savus and Adsalluta.

Magna Mater, or else that an additional small sanctuary was erected to her. The dedication on the altar reads as follows:

M(atri) d(eum) m(agnae) / Cassius Restut(us) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).

It is interesting that the dedicator has no *praenomen*, which may indicate – although not necessarily – a somewhat later date, perhaps the second half of the second, or even the third century AD. Restutus is a very common cognomen in Noricum, particularly in the syncopated form, but also as Restitutus and various derivatives of this name.¹⁰ Cassius Restutus could most probably be regarded as a native inhabitant from Celeia or elsewhere in southern Noricum, and as a local

⁴ *AIJ* 26, drawing = *AE* 1938, 151 = Šašel Kos 1994 (1999), no. 6.

⁵ Šašel Kos, *Celtic divinities*, 2008.

⁶ *Nomenclator*, p. 206; *Onomasticon* III, p. 109; cf. the name of local Mars, Ocelus, in *Britannia*, De Bernardo Stempel 2004, 219.

⁷ Measuring 40 x 26.5 x 20.5 cm; height of letters: 3–2.5 cm: Lovenjak 1997, 67–68.

⁸ Published by Krajšek, Stergar 2008, 248–249.

⁹ Krajšek, Stergar, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Onomasticon* IV, 27–28.

worshipper of the Great Goddess. Quite possibly he belonged to the same family as C. Cassius Quietus, who dedicated an altar to Savus and Adsalluta at the same site, although perhaps a generation earlier.¹¹ An earlier date for the Quietus inscription is inferred from the fact that he bears a praenomen, and that he dedicated his altar to Savus and Adsalluta, who were supposedly worshipped at the site before Magna Mater.

The Cassii with different *praenomina* are well attested in Aquileia¹² and were also settled in Emona, where they are, interestingly, known from two dedications to water deities. P. Cassius Secundus, a prefect of the *ala Britannica milliaria c. R.*,¹³ set up a dedication to Aecorna, while some unnamed individual erected a small altar to Neptune and the Nymphs for the welfare of Cassia Clementilla, or on her behalf.¹⁴ As Romanization progressed, the Cassii also became very well attested in Noricum, mainly in the southern region of the province with its centre at Celeia.¹⁵

The cult of Magna Mater is attested in all major neighbouring regions and cities,¹⁶ thus in Histria, and first of all in Aquileia and Emona,¹⁷ from where Romanization spread to Celeia, where the Great Mother was worshipped by a member of the municipal elite, one Cn. Pompeius Iustinus, who was a *decurio* and *duumvir* of Celeia. The dedication is most interesting because of the epithet of the goddess, and reads as follows:

*M(atri) D(eum) M(agnae) Blaudi(a)e (?) /
Cn(aeus) Pomp(eius) Iustinus, / dec(urio) et Ilvir
Cl(audiae) Cel(eiae), / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)
m(erito).*¹⁸

The epithet was explained as *Blau(n)dia*, derived from the Phrygian toponym Blaundus,¹⁹ but the town is also known as Blaudus, thus *Blau-dia* would be correct. Epithets of the goddess other than *Idaea* and *oreia* are not usual in the

western provinces, although in the East several have been attested, often also topographical.²⁰ These probably indicate different cult practices and more or less important differences in her worship. Nothing in the dedicator's name would suggest that he would have had any connection with the Phrygian town of Blau(n)dus, although this cannot be totally excluded. The worship of the Great Mother seems to have been introduced to Noricum at a relatively early date.

Another altar was found in Celeia, at Miklavški hrib, where a sanctuary was excavated; the inscription is fragmentary and of uncertain interpretation. The fragmentary abbreviations could either be explained as a dedication to the Great Mother or to Mithras.²¹ An unfinished altar of Pohorje marble was discovered in Celeia in the river bed of the Savinja, along with some other unfinished monuments, indicating a stonecutter's workshop in the city. It was decorated with reliefs, but bears no inscription. While the reliefs on the right panel are linked to the cult of Dionysus, the reliefs on the left panel depict objects typical of the cult of Cybele and Attis. In addition to a *cymbulum*, a *syrinx*, and a Phrygian flute (instruments characteristic of Attis), a *patera* and *urceus* (symbolising Cybele) are represented, all of them surrounded by a plant with large heart-shaped leaves.²² A beautiful bronze statuette of Cybele, enthroned, with a large tympanum, was found in Virunum.²³ The worship of Cybele and Attis was also popular in the neighbouring Pannonia.²⁴

A most interesting monument of Cybele and Attis that unexpectedly came to light in the region between the Sava and the Savinja Rivers, has been published by Slavko Ciglenečki. A part of a large monument, probably an altar, of Pohorje marble, was found towards the end of the last century at a house near the waterfall of the small Gračnica River at Marof (Mrzlo Polje near Jurklošter, the territory of Celeia), where it had been used as a

¹¹ CIL III 11684; Šašel Kos 1999, 96 no. 3.

¹² See the indexes in the *Inscr. Aquil.*

¹³ J., A. Šašel 1977 (1992).

¹⁴ RINMS 24 (= CIL III 13400 + p. 2328, 26 = ILS 3285).

¹⁵ Scherrer 2002, 24–25.

¹⁶ Vermaseren 1989.

¹⁷ Jurkić 1975 (Histria); *Inscr. Aquil.* 284–291; Zaccaria 2008; RINMS 20; 22; 21, cf. 39.

¹⁸ CIL III 5194 + p. 1830; Wedenig 1997, p. 120 C 11, with earlier citations.

¹⁹ Toutain 1911, 75 n. 11; see also Swoboda 1969, 200 no. 8.

²⁰ E.g. Roller 1999, 204.

²¹ CIL III 5195 + p. 1830, 2285 = ILLPRON 1584: *M(atri) M(agnae) / Aemilia [---] / don(avit)*; unpublished notes of J. Šašel: *D(eo) S(oli) M(ithrae) l(nvicto) / ex imp(erio) / Aemilia / don(o) d(edit)*.

²² Ciglenečki 1998, 255–256.

²³ Schön 1988, 198 no. 226; Vermaseren 1989, 28, no. 88, fig. Pl. XX.

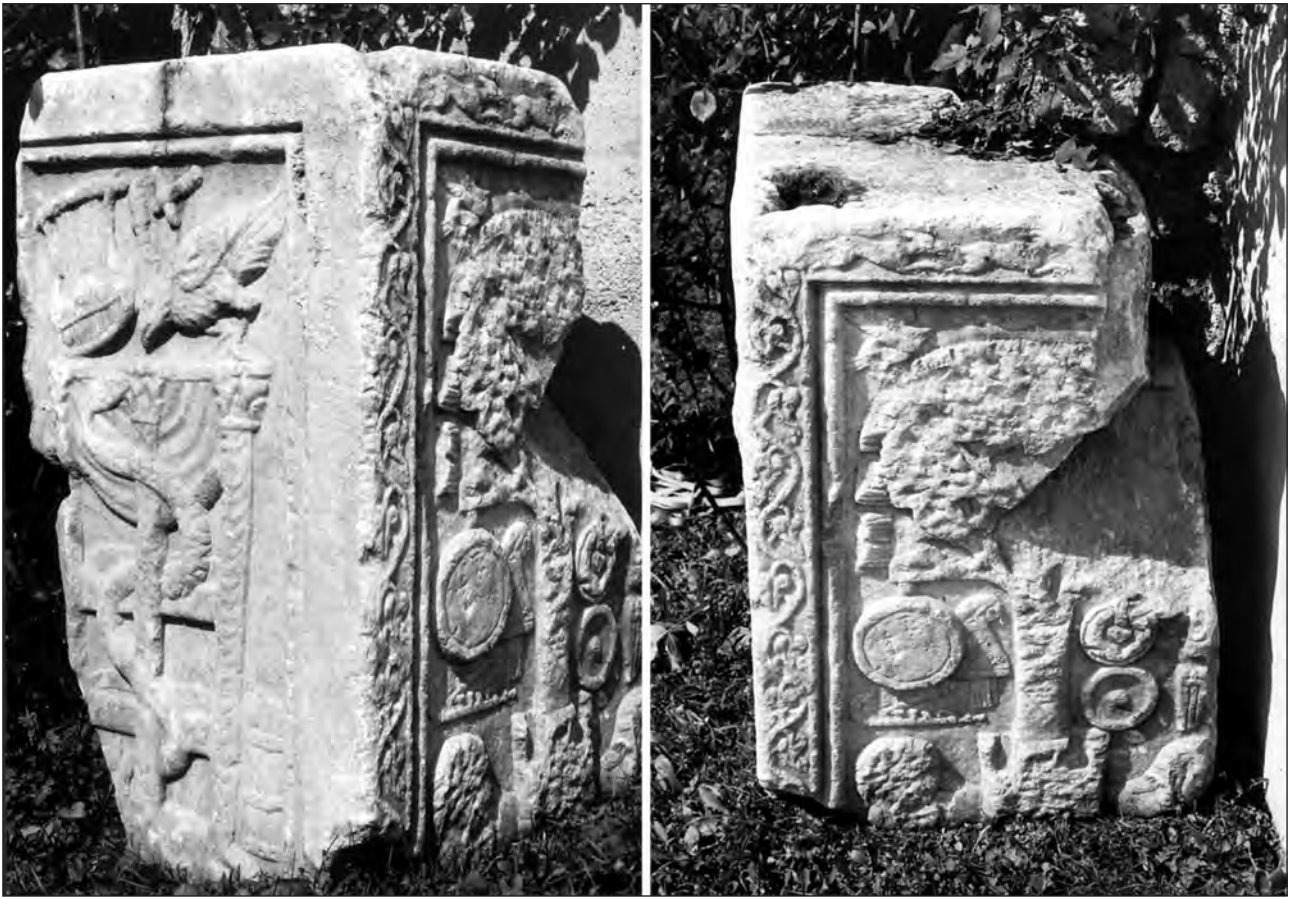


Figure 4: Symbiosis of the cult of Cybele and Attis, and that of Apollo on an altar from Marof (Mrzlo Polje near Jurklošter, the territory of Celeia).

water trough until the owner discovered that it was decorated. It is impossible to know where it stood originally, possibly in a sanctuary somewhere in the vicinity of the waterfall and its naturally charming surroundings, as has been suggested by Ciglenečki. Each of its two preserved sides bears different relief decoration, indicating an elsewhere rarely attested unusual symbiosis of the cult of Cybele and Attis, and that of Apollo (Fig. 4). On the basis of its iconography, the altar should most probably be dated to the second century AD.

On the larger panel the attributes of Cybele and Attis are depicted: at the fragmentary bottom of the monument there is a turreted crown between two reclining lions (symbols of Cybele), out of which a pine tree grows, symbolizing Attis. Sever-

al other attributes of Cybele and particularly of Attis are represented on either side of the tree, on the left a *tympanum* (characteristic of Cybele) is hanging from it, next to it a Phrygian cap with four little stars is depicted, as well as a double flute below these two objects. On the right, two little *cymbula* and a *syrinx* are represented. On a smaller side panel attributes of Apollo are depicted: a large decorated tripod with a serpent coiling around one of its legs, while to the right of it a quiver with arrows is represented, and above it there is a lyre with two plectrums, as well as a raven.²⁵ Religious combinations and points of contact between different cults in antiquity were innumerable, and it may be noteworthy that Cybele and Apollo were both healing divinities.

²⁴ Tóth 1989; Tóth 1992; particularly also in Carnuntum: Kandler 1990.

²⁵ Ciglenečki 1998.

2. A SHORT ASSESSMENT OF CYBELE/MAGNA MATER IN THE LIGHT OF THE LATEST RESEARCH

The Phrygian Matar Kubileya or the 'Mother of the Mountains', which was translated into Greek as *Mêter oreía*, was worshipped since the early first millennium BC.²⁶ Oreia, as well as Idaea (from Mount Ida near Troy, thus also called by Virgil who made her the divine protector of Aeneas),²⁷ were her common epithets during the Roman period, and it is almost certain that *Oraea*, a divine name attested on an altar to the Magna Mater from Emona, was nothing else but this incorrectly spelt epithet, *oreia*, although it seems that it was used as an independent theonym.²⁸ Originally, she was the goddess of mountains and wild nature, hence her companions, the two lions, with which she is very often depicted; from Anatolia she came to the Greek world in the early sixth century BC.²⁹ The Greeks most of all equated her with Rhea, and gave her servants the same name of Couretes, as borne by Rhea's companions, who saved the baby Zeus from his father Kronos with their loud noise. This is mentioned, among other writers, by Strabo (and Posidonius), who added that Phrygians in general, as well as the Trojans below Mt. Ida, worshipped Rhea, calling her the Mother of Gods, or Agdistis, or the Great Phrygian Goddess, or, according to the places of worship, Idaea, Dindymene, Sipylene, Pissinuntis, Cybele, or Cybebe.³⁰

With the coming of the Hellenistic period, her worship spread all over the Greek world; she enjoyed a prominent place in many Hellenistic cities, while in Asia Minor she was also still worshipped in the countryside. In Greek literature her cult was often portrayed with contempt on account of the Goddess' effeminate barbarian priests, but among the people she enjoyed great

popularity.³¹ She was often regarded also as a healing deity, and – what is most interesting – according to Diodorus, it was believed that she could heal sick animals and children's diseases with her ritual purifications (*katharmoi*) and charms, and he even linked her name of the 'Mother of the Mountains' to this aspect of hers.³² Her close connection with children is well attested even at an early time both in Anatolia³³ and in Greece.³⁴

The arrival of the Goddess in Rome took place officially in 204 BC. As is well known from Livy, in this year the holy dark meteorite symbolising Cybele was solemnly brought to Rome from Pessinus, the centre of her worship, by distinguished Roman senators. The transfer of the Goddess occurred during the war against Hannibal and his invasion of central Italy, on the advice of the Sibylline Books, which had been consulted a year earlier because of frequent showers of stones. However, the exact background and motives of this political and religious action are not entirely clear since ancient writers differ on several significant points, including the place from where the cult was introduced to Rome.³⁵ Recently, the reasons and political circumstances surrounding the arrival of the Great Mother in Rome have been analyzed at length by Isolde Stark, partly basing her arguments on those of Philippe Borgeaud,³⁶ and she proposed a new interpretation of various disputed issues.³⁷ Most ancient sources name the Phrygian sanctuary at Pessinus as the original place of the goddess, while the shrine in Pergamon, called Megalesion, is also cited,³⁸ as well as Mount Ida near Troy.³⁹ According to Livy, whose narrative is the most exhaustive, the Romans obtained the Goddess from Pessinus with the help of the Pergamene king Attalus I.⁴⁰ The Great Mother was traditionally regarded as a Phrygian goddess.

²⁶ Roller 1999, 124–125; 171.

²⁷ Sanders 1981, 275–276.

²⁸ *RINMS* 21 = *AIJ* 162: *Orae(a)e / ex imp(erio) / M(atris?) D(eum?) M(agna?) / L(ucius) A(--) P(--)*.

²⁹ Roller 1999, 119 ff.

³⁰ 10. 3. 12 C 469; cf. 12. 5. 3 C 567.

³¹ Recently discussed, e.g., by Roller 1999, in the first chapters of her book.

³² *Bibl. Hist.* 3. 58.

³³ Roller 1999, 104 ff. and Fig. 35; Sfameni 1985, 86; 123.

³⁴ Sanders 1981, 272.

³⁵ See, e.g., Gruen 1990; Roller 1999, 263 ff.

³⁶ Borgeaud 1996, 116 ff.

³⁷ Stark 2007.

³⁸ Varro, *De ling. Lat.* 6. 15: *Megalesia dicta a Graecis, quod ex libris Sibyllinis arcessita ab Attalo rege Pergama; ibi prope murum Megalesion, id est templum eius deae, unde advecta Romam.*

³⁹ Ovid, *Fasti* 4. 263–264: *consulitur Paeon, "divum" que "arcessite Matrem" inquit; "in Idaeo est invenienda iugo."* The goddess is called Mater Idaea by Virgil in *Aeneid*.

⁴⁰ Livy 29. 14. 5 ff.; cf. Strabo 12. 5. 3 C 567.

Stark, however, emphasized the great role played by the Celts in the Carthaginian armies, both that of Hannibal and particularly that of his brother Mago. The Celts had not been entirely pacified after the wars against them in northern Italy between 225 and 222 BC. The *metus Gallicus* had had a great impact on the Romans ever since the conquest of Rome by the Celts in 387 BC, and in 205 BC the army of Mago in northern and central Italy, with his many Celtic troops, represented the most dangerous threat for the Romans. Stark claimed that the Romans had never before been able to arrange for the transfer of any Celtic divinity because in their eyes the Celts had no visible gods, no statues or other representations of gods.⁴¹ Pessinus was at that time Galatic, and she further stressed the reputation of Attalus I of Pergamon (through whose mediation the Romans obtained the goddess), as the conqueror of the Galati. In her opinion Cybele was summoned to Rome as a Celtic deity. Against this claim it could be argued that regardless of who possessed himself of Pessinus and the goddess, she remained Phrygian, and further, that no gods are reported to have been imported to Rome from many other of the most serious Roman enemies, as for example from most of the Italian peoples, or the Macedonians, Thracians or Illyrians.

Even if political and religious motives for the transfer of the Great Mother – remaining shady and ambiguous – could allow for the new thesis, nonetheless the validity of previous explanations has not been much diminished. Stark's thesis lacks convincing arguments, and in any case it is clear that at least by the late Republican and Augustan Age this political and religious act was regarded as reflecting, in one way or another, Rome's increasing connections with the Greek East and its claim to a Trojan origin.⁴² The sanctuary of the goddess was built on the Palatine (it was dedicated in 191 BC) and henceforth she was officially worshipped in Rome as the protector of the state (wearing a turreted crown), and mother of

Jupiter.⁴³ She was an important state deity as her legend was so closely related to Roman history. Therefore she also played an important role among members of the Roman ruling class, even if her ecstatic rites did not always meet with approval. These were carried out by her priests, the *galli*, during the public March festival in her honour.⁴⁴ The homonymy of the name for these priests (which may have been Semitic in origin, as may have been the priests themselves) and the Gauls should be regarded as merely coincidental, as was firmly believed in antiquity.⁴⁵ In connection with the *galli*, it can be noted that there are conspicuous parallels between the cult of the Magna Mater and the Indian goddess Mata (Mother) who is still being worshipped as a fertility goddess in India. Her castrated priests, *hijras*, similar to the Roman *galli*, perform blessing ceremonies at weddings and naming feasts of sons by singing and dancing. According to the myth, Mata was married to a handsome young prince who was incapable of sexual love, and she castrated him in anger. These eunuch priests of the Hindu goddess join the *hijras* community on account of their impotence or because they are transsexuals, coming mainly from a lower middle or working class. Ritual performances give them a special status in their community.⁴⁶

Many votive offerings depicting male and female sexual organs show that the Goddess was perceived most of all as a fertility deity and this is further confirmed by Lucretius, Ovid, and Pliny, who all claimed that she brought rich crops and made barren fields fertile. In Aquileia, the Magna Mater even bore the epithet *Cereria*.⁴⁷ Eunuch priests were typical of other oriental fertility goddesses,⁴⁸ and were from the very beginning an essential part of the goddess's Roman cult. Lucretius equated her with Earth, and explained the *galli* as ungrateful to the divine Mother and to human parents, and therefore undeserving of their own children;⁴⁹ the Great Mother's cult should thus be seen as encouraging family life. Later,

⁴¹ Stark 2007, for this last claim in particular 109 ff.

⁴² See footnote 35.

⁴³ Virgil, *Aeneid* 9. 82–84.

⁴⁴ Sanders 1981. See also Thomas 1984.

⁴⁵ Sanders 1981, 265; Alvar 2008, 251 ff.; for a different opinion, which is

not plausible, see Lane 1996.

⁴⁶ Nanda 1990; Roller 1999, 320–325.

⁴⁷ *Inscr. Aquil.* 291.

⁴⁸ Sanders 1981, 265–266.

⁴⁹ 2. 598–660.

Claudius allowed her priests to be Roman citizens, and introduced *dendrophoria* in her public festival. *Ludi Megalenses* were celebrated yearly from April 4, when the *praetor urbanus* offered a *lectisternium* (a festival of supplication with a banquet) in her sanctuary, to April 10, in the course of which the cult statue of the goddess was ritually washed.

In the second half of March, festivities of an ecstatic character took place in honour of Cybele and Attis, whose cult included mysteries that could be compared to the Eleusinian ones.⁵⁰ Festivities began on March 15 with a procession of the Reed-bearers (*cannophori*) and a sacrifice for the crops. After a week of fasting and purification, a pine-tree symbolizing the dead Attis was solemnly brought to the temple by the *dendrophori* (*arbor intrat*). The college of the *dendrophori*, even if it may not have been an exclusively religious association,⁵¹ was closely connected with the cult of the Great Mother, as is epigraphically very well attested, thus for example by the inscription of the Goddess' priest C. Laecanius Theodorus from Pola, who donated to the *dendrophori* of the city a large sepulchral space within the city's cemetery.⁵² March 24 was the Day of Blood (*sanguem*, performed by the *galli*), commemorating the self-castration and death of Attis, while March 25 was the Day of Joy and Banqueting (*Hilaria*), and the festival ended after a day of rest and *lavatio* (of Cybele's statue). Ritual sacrifice of a bull or a ram (*taurobolium* or *criobolium*), attested from the Antonine period onwards, was regarded as a kind of baptism, symbolizing a rebirth for the devotees of the Great Mother.⁵³

The myth of Cybele and Attis is differently transmitted in different literary sources. Attis is generally regarded as the youthful consort of Cybele. According to the most accepted (Phrygian) version,⁵⁴ Agdistis was an androgynous Phrygian mother goddess, whom the gods feared and castrated. From the fruit of the almond tree, which grew out of her male parts, Nana, the daughter of

the River Sangarius, conceived Attis, who was nurtured by a goat, and saved by shepherds. Agdistis fell in love with him, but when he was about to marry the daughter of King Midas from Pessinus, she drew him to madness so that he castrated himself and died, his blood turning into violets. He was denied resurrection, but his body preserved traces of life and was ritually mourned every year. Agdistis is obviously Cybele, and in Pessinus Cybele was indeed called Agdistis.⁵⁵

The myth was transformed as a consequence of the spread of the cult in Mediterranean regions, where it was variously received and not uniformly assimilated; its impact was different in different cities and regions, partly also due to a misunderstanding of the ancient Phrygian rites by the Greeks and Romans.⁵⁶ Similar cults must have no doubt played a great role in a kind of symbiosis and local interpretations of the Great Mother, such as Ceres, Bona Dea, various healing and water divinities, as well as Celtic divine mothers. In Greece Attis appears only rarely but in Rome he was officially worshipped since the reign of Claudius, while during the later Empire he even became a supreme solar deity, and his initiates, perhaps under the influence of Christianity, were promised immortality.⁵⁷

3. THE IMPACT OF THE GREAT MOTHER IN THE WESTERN PROVINCES – SOME ASPECTS

In her comprehensive book *In Search of God the Mother*, Lynn Roller came to the conclusion that, as opposed to her place among the divinities in the Greek and Hellenistic world, "the Mother's Roman cult offers no private inspiration by individual devotees; in fact, there is no indication that the Magna Mater was one of the deities to whom ordinary people turned for private consolation".⁵⁸ This, however, should be modified, not only in view of the very many dedications to her throughout the western provinces, and in particular the Salonitan

⁵⁰ Sfameni Gasparro 1985; Alvar 2008, 10.

⁵¹ Schillinger 1979, 398 ff.

⁵² *Inscr. It.* X 1, 155: *Dendrophoris / Polensium / C. Laecanius / Theodorus / sacer[d]os M(atris) d(eorum) m(agnae) l(daeae) / lo[cu]m cum / sepultura dedit. In fr(onte) p(edes) XLII, in ag(ro) p(edes) LXIII?*.

⁵³ Sanders 1981.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Paus. 7. 17. 10–12.

⁵⁵ Strabo 10. 3. 12 C 469; 12. 5. 3 C 567.

⁵⁶ Roller 1999, 237–259.

⁵⁷ Sanders 1981, 288–289; Fear 1996.

⁵⁸ Roller 1999, 317.

evidence of her cult (for which see *infra*), but also in the light of the recently discovered curse tablets (*tabellae defixionum*) from the sanctuary of Cybele and Isis in Moguntiacum in Germany (present-day Mainz).

In 1999, during the excavations of the sanctuary of both oriental goddesses in Mainz, 34 inscribed lead curse tablets of varied shape and style were discovered, along with other inscriptions, coins, pottery, and remains of partly carbonised food (mainly poultry, birds, exotic and local fruits),⁵⁹ sacrificed to the goddesses. The sanctuary, where the tablets were deposited in a similar manner as the tablets from Aquae Sulis (Bath) and Uley in Gloucestershire, is well dated to the period from the Flavian emperors to the reign of Trajan or Hadrian. The imprecations are formulated as an appeal addressed to Magna Mater and Attis, but not to Isis. This is unusual in a sanctuary shared between the two goddesses, perhaps additionally stressing the popular appeal of the Great Mother. The lack of fixed formulas and clichés, as well as complicated magical texts, makes it clear that the curses were written by men and women themselves and not by professional sorcerers, although scribes may have been employed in some cases because of the elegant handwriting. The texts bear witness to various troubles affecting everyday life, such as malicious frauds, theft of money or jewels, embezzlement, rivalry, and jealousy.⁶⁰

The curses range from a simple name of the victim, such as Trutmo Florus, son of Clitmo, to an imprecation against one Ullatius Severus, who had defrauded the writer of the curse of the goods of her husband, or to an elaborate prayer to Attis.⁶¹ The names Trutmo and Clitmo are Celtic, as is the gentilicium of Ullatius Severus, and some other names in these texts as well, Trutmo bearing an additional Roman name, a typical habit of an early stage of Romanization.⁶² One of the curses reads: “*May their limbs melt as this piece of lead melts*”,⁶³ which indicates that tablets were thrown

in the sacrificial fire. In several tablets the invoked punishment is, interestingly, a bleeding wound similar to that of the self-castrated *galli*, which was obviously regarded as abominable.⁶⁴ These curse tablets are evidence that the worship of the Mother Goddess was accepted early both by the native Celtic and other inhabitants of Mogontiacum, mainly Roman citizens, who regarded her both as powerful and approachable in their everyday distresses, from lawsuits to various injustices. They no doubt continued to worship their old gods, although they may not have found them as effective as the two divinities of this new oriental mystery religion. There is no evidence in these texts that they would have been written either by members of the Roman army or by settlers coming from the eastern part of the Empire.⁶⁵

An interesting transformation of the cult of the Great Goddess and possible points of contact with Celtic religion are attested also in Dalmatia. In Salonae, the capital of the province, the worship of Cybele has long been recognized as very important,⁶⁶ and the city was the centre of the cult of the Magna Mater in Dalmatia.⁶⁷ Out of 29 inscriptions from Salonae, which record an act of private munificence, eleven (or even more, since some are fragmentary) testify to persons who had a sanctuary of Magna Mater built or restored, or in some other way contributed to the cult of the goddess. In one case she is invoked by a freedman as *dea barbarica*,⁶⁸ the identification is almost certain. In another case, a sanctuary and an altar were erected to her as the *Mater Magna cognationis* by a *sexvir Augustalis* L. Turranius Cronius, who may have come from Liburnia where both the Turranii and *cognationes* are well attested.⁶⁹ The *cognationes* (a community including members of *gentes* bound by blood kinship), attested in Salonae, appear on dedications to Venus (*cognatio [Cl]odiorum*),⁷⁰ Mater Magna, and Matres Magnae, divinities closely connected to fertility and family life.

⁵⁹ Blänsdorf 2005a, 671.

⁶⁰ Blänsdorf 2005a; Blänsdorf 2005b.

⁶¹ Blänsdorf 2005a, 672–674; Blänsdorf 2005b, 21; 16. See, for other texts, translations, and commentaries, Blänsdorf 2005a, b.

⁶² Blänsdorf 2005b, 13.

⁶³ Blänsdorf 2005b, 15.

⁶⁴ Blänsdorf 2005b, 19 ff.

⁶⁵ Blänsdorf 2005a, 689.

⁶⁶ Kubitschek 1896; Medini 1985.

⁶⁷ Šašel Kos 1994.

⁶⁸ *CIL*, III, 14663,2 = *AE*, 1902, 7; cf. Šašel Kos 1994, no. 1.

⁶⁹ *CIL*, III, 8675 = *ILS*, 4105; cf. Šašel Kos 1994, no. 2.

⁷⁰ *CIL*, III, 8687.

The Matres Magnae are particularly interesting as they may represent a Celtic influence in Dalmatia.⁷¹ The altar was dedicated by one P. Safinius Filucinus who noted his filiation from his mother's side, probably because she was a priestess.⁷² Some light is perhaps shed on these *Matres Magnae* by a dedication from Lugdunum, erected to Aufanes Matronae and to *Matres Pannoniorum* and *Delmatarum*.⁷³ It is not possible to adequately assess the Celtic influence, which in itself would be nothing unusual considering the close connections between Dalmatia and Aquileia, as well as other northern Italian cities. Clearly, new religious ideas and cults contributed towards the assimilation and transformation of the previously existing ones. The worship of Magna Mater in Saloniae, where Greek elements among the city's population should not be neglected, appears to have been very popular and quite a mixture of various beliefs, perhaps even a kind of syncretism of different cults.

4. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ADSALLUTA AND AN UNUSUAL SURVIVAL OF THE CULT OF CYBELE

The altar dedicated to the Magna Mater, recently discovered at the supposed sanctuary of Savus and Adsalluta may be explained by the fact that the Great Mother, possibly at a later date, either found her place alongside the two Celtic divinities in their sanctuary, or else her cult superseded the previously exclusive masters of the sacred site and the protectors of travellers along the Sava. Certainly the Great Mother was a goddess of a much more polyvalent nature than Adsalluta, and it could even be supposed that in the late Roman period, with the spread of the monotheistic religions, she indeed supplanted the Celtic goddess. Similar phenomena could be noted elsewhere in the western part of the Roman Empire, and cases can be cited where the Magna Mater worship replaced either a Celtic divinity or a water deity or

both, or else joined in their cults. It is a well-known phenomenon that "her cult in the provinces often joined that of the indigenous Mother Goddess".⁷⁴

At Novaesium (Neuss), where earlier a flourishing cult of the Matronae was recorded, the worship of the Magna Mater/Cybele most probably superseded it towards the late Roman period.⁷⁵ At Aquae Aureliae (Baden-Baden) the worship of the Magna Mater is documented alongside that of Sirona, the protectress of the sacred spring there; Cybele was also worshipped as a health bringing goddess. The role of protector of the holy springs seems to have been shared between the two goddesses, and a similar situation could be attested at Aquae Mattiacae (Wiesbaden), where both Diana Mattiaca and the Magna Mater were worshipped;⁷⁶ indeed, the Great Mother was often related to thermal and other sacred springs. This particular feature of hers is already well attested in her original homeland in Phrygia, where her shrines are frequently associated with springs and the goddess even bore the epithet *θερμηνή*.⁷⁷ Clearly, it was not at all rare that local divinities were assimilated with the Great Mother – in the western Roman Empire these were often Celtic goddesses – and Adsalluta seems to fit this pattern very well.

How wide-spread and influential the worship of the Great Mother in the Roman Empire must have been in general, and no less so in Noricum and Pannonia, is indicated – although indirectly – by frequent depictions of the so-called 'mourning Attis' on Roman period tombstones, probably representing an untimely death.⁷⁸ The popularity of both divinities in the Norican and Pannonian regions could also be inferred from the traces of their cult that have survived from antiquity and could be identified in the most unusual, and still existing, custom of the 'pinewood marriage' during the Carnival time at Ptuj (Poetovio) and the Ptuj region (Fig. 5).⁷⁹ This custom displays great similarities to the festivity that used to be celebrated on March 22, when the *dendrophori* solemnly

⁷¹ See, for example, Landucci Gattinoni 1986.

⁷² *ILJug*, 2052: *Matrib(us) Mag(nis) / sacrum P. Safinius Fulci/nus Terentiae sacerdotis f(ilius) / aram supstituit idem ampl(iavit) /^s sibi et cognatio[ni] suae / permissu C. Clodi Grac[ilii]*.

⁷³ *ILS*, 4794.

⁷⁴ Vermaseren 1977, 142.

⁷⁵ See Petrikovits 1960, 129 ff.

⁷⁶ Grailot 1912, 470.

⁷⁷ See Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 87 and n. 10, with further references; Roller 1999, 138; 184; 211.

⁷⁸ Sanders 1981, 282.

⁷⁹ Ciglenečki 1999; it may be noteworthy that in late antiquity, Poetovio was no longer in Pannonia but belonged to Noricum.

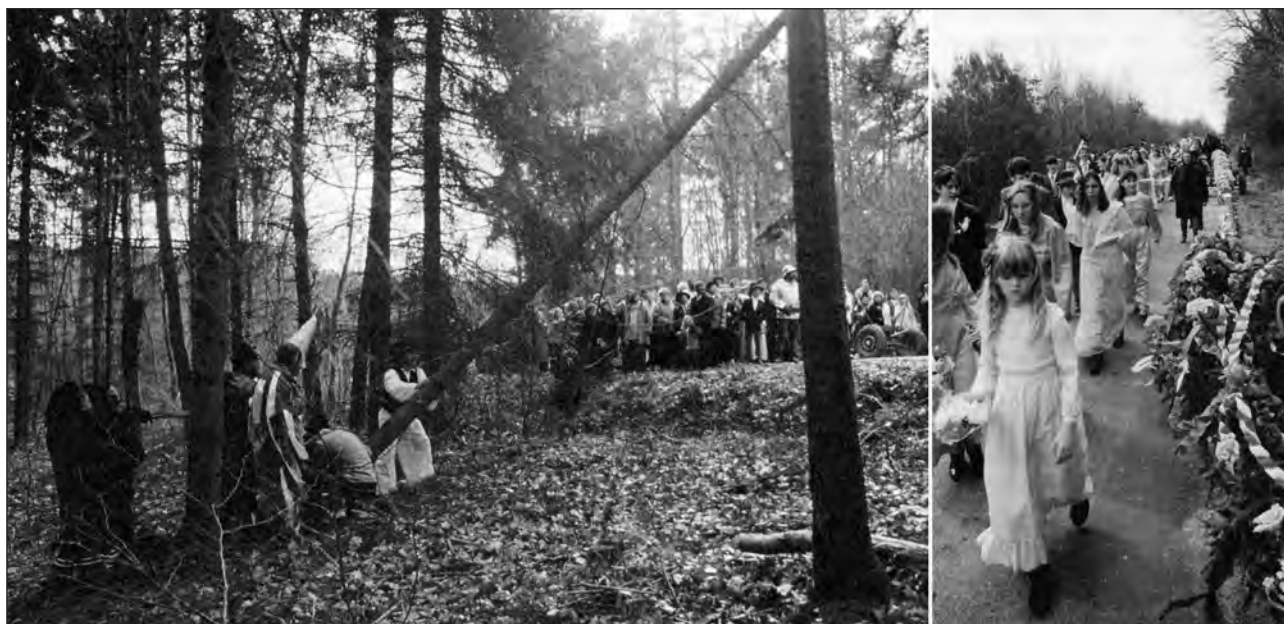


Figure 5: The custom of the 'pinewood marriage' during the Carnival time at Ptuj (Poetovio) and the Ptuj region.

brought a pine-tree in procession, wrapped up in bandages and adorned with flowers, symbolizing the dead Attis. Here, too, the solemnly decorated pine tree is being brought in a procession by the so-called 'chickens, cockerels' with pointed caps, reminiscent of young Attis and of the *galli*.⁸⁰ The main actors of the Carnival festivities in the Ptuj region and elsewhere in Slovenia are the masked young men called the Kurents.

Lucretius' description of the cult of Cybele as it was celebrated in Rome,⁸¹ and particularly of the Curetes, the armed bands attending the Mother, are in some details indeed reminiscent of these Kurents (including the similarity of their names): "*Here an armed band, which the Greeks name Curetes, disport themselves randomly among the Phrygian troops, and leap up among their group, joyful in blood, shaking the frightful crests by the nodding of their heads.*"⁸² The "*Phrygian troops*" must be replaced by other masqueraders, and the Kurents of the Ptuj Carnival are of course not "*joyful in blood*", but their behaviour is very wild and noisy. It should be mentioned that in Poetovio, in addition to an altar from the beginning of the sec-

ond century AD, dedicated to Iuno and Magna Mater by the Albucii couple, Celerina and Rufus,⁸³ a statue of Cybele was also discovered.⁸⁴ Both were found at Spodnja Hajdina, within an area of minor sanctuaries.⁸⁵ Another fragmentary statue, formerly equated with Cybele, may more probably be a Nutrix.⁸⁶

Transformations of the Magna Mater cult were numerous and some of them were quite remarkable. The Great Mother, worshipped under different names, was known to all peoples and was known also to the Celts, although among them the cult of various Mother Goddesses is usually documented in the plural. The evidence shows that the cult of the Great Mother soon also became popular in the Celtic provinces, and that its popularity could have in some cases eventually outshone local Celtic goddesses. Some of them were no doubt assimilated with the cult of the Great Mother, as may have happened not only with Adsalluta, but – due to the close association with children – also with the Nutrices, once so very popular in the Poetovio region. The cult of the Magna Mater seems to be the only Roman period cult in the for-

⁸⁰ Ciglenečki 1999, 27.

⁸¹ Summers 1996.

⁸² 2. 629–632. Translation from: Roller 1999, 298.

⁸³ *ILJug* 1138.

⁸⁴ Modrijan, Weber 1979–1981, 95–97.

⁸⁵ See also Ciglenečki 1998, 255.

⁸⁶ Diez 1993 (2006).

merly Celtic regions of Noricum and Pannonia to leave traces in the modern age, which no doubt reflects the great impact it had on the population throughout antiquity. This may have been in part due to the soteriological aspects of the cult (the Magna Mater was often called *soteira*), and in part

to the profound transformation of Attis, with *taurobolium* or *criobolium* as a kind of 'rebirth' rites, such that the cult could even have competed for some time with the spread of Christianity,⁸⁷ but not least, however, to the ability of Magna Mater to absorb (pre-)Roman cults such as Adsalluta.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Heft I</i>	Hoffiller, V., B. Saria, <i>Antike Inschriften aus Jugoslawien</i> , Heft I: <i>Noricum und Pannonia Superior</i> , Zagreb 1938.
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> .
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i> .
<i>ILJug</i>	A. and J. Šašel, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt</i> (Situla 5), Ljubljana 1963; iidem, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX repertae et editae sunt</i> (Situla 19), 1978; iidem, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt</i> (Situla 25), 1986.
<i>ILLPRON</i>	<i>Inscriptionum lapidariarum Latinarum provinciae Norici Indices</i> (compos. M. Hainzmann, P. Schubert), Fasc. I (1986); II-III (1987).
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau, Berlin 1892–1916.
<i>Inscr. Aquil.</i>	J. B. Brusin, <i>Inscriptiones Aquileiae</i> , I–III, Udine 1991–1993.
<i>Nomenclator</i>	A. Mócsy et alii, <i>Nomenclator</i> (Diss. Pann. 3/1), Budapest 1983.
<i>Onomasticon</i>	B. Lőrincz, <i>Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum</i> , Vol. I: <i>Aba – Bysanus</i> , Budapest 2005 ² ; II: <i>Cabalicius – Ixus</i> , Wien 1999; III: <i>Labareus – Pythea</i> , Wien 2000; IV: <i>Quadrata – Zures</i> , Wien 2002.
<i>RINMS</i>	M. Šašel Kos, <i>The Roman Inscriptions in the National Museum of Slovenia / Lapidarij Narodnega muzeja Slovenije</i> (Situla 35), Ljubljana, 1997.

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⁸⁷ Fear 1996; Borgeaud 1996, 169 ff.; Alvar 2008, 383 ff.

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