A NEW ALTAR TO THE NYMPHS AND THE MAGII IN DALMATIA

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Water springs of all kinds were often associated with the Nymphs and were of special importance in the regions where water was scarce. An as yet unpublished small limestone altar is presented in the article, which one Magia Macana dedicated to the Nymphs. Since it appeared for sale in an antiquity shop in Ljubljana, its exact provenance is not certain. The altar came from a private collection in Split, allegedly it had been found somewhere in the vicinity of the city, hence probably in the area of Salona, Dalmatia. The Magii are well attested in Italy, most of all in northern Italy including Histrion; they are further known from Gallia Narbonensis, Hispania, and Dalmatia, particularly Liburnia. The worship of the Nymphs is documented in Dalmatia since the Hellenistic period.

Key words: Roman period, Dalmatia, Salona, Nymphs, Magii

Water as one of the main sources of life has always been an object of veneration, and Pindar regarded it as the greatest good. Servius in his commentary to Virgil’s Aenid remarked: “There is no water spring that would not be sacred.” Water and various phenomena connected with it represent an interesting topic of study. Vesna Girardi Jurkić dedicated some of her research to divinities worshipped in Histria, including altars and reliefs erected to the Nymphs; also, in 2002, she organized one of the yearly international conferences in Pula on the subject of water. The conference resulted in a publication containing many important contributions on various subjects ranging from water cults and the significance of water in various cults to commerce and other forms of the economy, as well as sea and river traffic. Moreover, volume 13 of Histria Antiqua was dedicated to cults, and it, too, contained several articles concerning water cults in antiquity.

1 Olympian Odes 1. 1; cf. also 3. 42.
2 Maurus Servius Honoratus, In Vergilii Aenidos Libros 7. 84. 1: Nulius enim fons non saecr.
3 See her survey monograph: GIRARDI JURKIĆ 2004.
5 Cults and Beliefs throughout Historical Periods (Histria Antiqua 13). Pula 2005.
Provenance of the altar

In the summer of 2003, a small limestone altar, dedicated to the Nymphs, appeared on sale in one of the antiquities shops in Ljubljana. The exact provenance of the altar is unknown, but according to the information obtained by the owner of the shop, the altar would have been found “somewhere around Split” and belonged for several years to a well-to-do Split family. Thus it may be assumed with great probability that the altar was discovered in the Salona region, if not at Salona itself.

The altar is made of whitish limestone, most probably from one of the local quarries, although it was not possible to make an appropriate petrographic analysis; in any case, however, the stone is not marble. Its front and lateral sides are smoothly polished and moulded, while its rear side is roughly worked; it was not cut in a straight manner but was left uneven, displaying a large embossment in the lower part. The stone is naturally damaged, with a large hole in the upper part of the rear side, as well as several small holes on all other sides. It has a hollow on its upper side, intended as a place to perform a sacrifice. The capital of the altar is decorated in the shape of a cushion (pulvinus), a frequent decoration of altars’ capitals. The dimensions of the altar are 24 (height) x 13-13.5 (width) x 8-10.5 (thickness) cm; height of the letters: 2 cm (figs. 1-2). The inscription, consisting of four lines, is not framed:

Magia L(ucii) f(ilia) Maxima / Nimphis (I) / v(otum) s(olvit) Libens (I) ad(ae).

Ligatures: line 2: the second MA; line 3: III. Nimphis instead of Nymphis is not an unusual spelling of the name, and neither is Nimphis or Nimfis. Maximus/ Maxima is a very common name, from which no further conclusions can be drawn. A very similarly structured (impagnatio) dedication to the Nymphs is known from Tragurium (Trogi) near Salona, erected by Pullia C. f. Surisa, and similar small altars have been found elsewhere in the Roman Empire. The new dedication should be dated to the first or second century AD.

The Magii in Dalmatia

The gentilicium Magius is well attested in Italy, and this was one of the most distinguished gentes in Capua, who moved to Acclamum after the Second Punic War; from Sulla onwards the Magii from this city appear in the Roman Fasti. The Magii are also documented in northern Italy including Histria; already towards the end of the second century BC one Magius was a prefect of L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, consul in 112 BC, who held a command in Cisalpine Gaul in that year or a year later. The Magii are further documented in Gallia Narbonensis,
Hispania, and in Dalmatia; it should be added that the name Megius is also known as a cognomen. Members of the gens Magia can sporadically be found in Noricum and Pannonia. In the hinterland of Tergeste, in the region of the Timavus River, at Duino, an altar to Hercules or more probably Silvanus was erected by one Gaius Magius Secundus.

The gens is particularly well documented in the Liburnian part of Dalmatia (fig. 3), and several inscriptions erected by the Magii are from the period of the early Principate. Even if no Magii have been attested to date among the town magistrates, they appear among those families that were related to the municipal aristocracy by marriage. The Liburnian Magii may either have come from northern Italy to settle in the neighbouring province, or perhaps they would have come directly from the Italian regions opposite the northern and central Dalmatian coast. This is even more likely if some of the Republican Magii indeed came to Aquileia from Campania, as has recently been suggested. It may be interesting to note that Magius Celer Velleianus, brother of the historian Velleius Paterculus, was active in Dalmatia as a legate of Tiberius in the course of the great Pannonian-Dalmatian rebellion in AD 6-9.

A veteran Quintus Magius, who had been recruited in Verona, died in Asseria, where he chose to settle down, setting up his second home. He had served in the legion VII, stationed in Tiburium, early in the first century, before he got the honorific title Claudia pia fidelis under Claudius, after the revolt of Lucius Arruntius Carnillius Scrobianianus in AD 42. An early date is additionally indicated by the fact that Magius has no cognomen. Members of the gens Magia were also settled on the Liburnian islands, thus on Arba (Rab), in the city of Arba, where a nineteen year old Magia Luculla is commemorated on a plain tombstone, as the only person recorded on it.

The upper class Magii are attested at Apusor (present-day Osor) in the northern part of the island of Cres (Cres and Lošinj). There the wife of Lucius Magius Neus, Lartia T.f. Maxima, was honoured with a public funeral, which was decreed to her by the town council because of the merits of her father. Her funerary monument may be dated to the early Principate. Neus, the name of Magia's husband, is probably of Greek origin (Vēos), hence he may have been a freedman; the lack of his father's name in his name formula seems to confirm it. Their daughter, too, is mentioned on the side panel of the tombstone, Magia L.uci f(ilia), bearing no cognomen, which is unusual since her mother has it. She was perhaps the only daughter or she died as a baby, or else her parents purposely gave her no surname in imitation of Italian upper class families who retained for some time this early onomastic habit. Lartia Maxima may have been the only woman in Dalmatia whose nomenclature consisted of both the

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12 OPEL III 46, probably also IRS 64 from Kalsdorf, in which elsewhere unknown Macius is mentioned.
13 INSER II 44, 328; the name of divinity is not preserved, and the relief decoration is damaged.
15 GHARA 2003, 89-90.
16 Velleius Paternocel II 115; CAMDEGA 1982, 135.
17 CIL III 9939: Q. Magius / C. F. / Pupliretis tribu / domini / Verona, vetera(nus) / legio(onis) VII / aviorum / L. stipendit forum / XXV / titulam / (fieri) / (ausi) / (Hic) / (dies) / etc.
18 CIL III 3124: Magi / (fia) / Julia / ausuri(num) / VIII / lib(era) / etc. Reading after KURILC 1995a, 1275.
20 ALFÖLDI 1969, 96.
21 KURILC 1995a, 78.
names of her father and her husband, probably to draw attention to the relationship of two prominent families at Apaurus, the Lartii and Magii.22

The Lartii are also attested in Nedinum, where some generations later a member of the local municipal upper class, Gaius Lartius Sabinianus, was officialis Neditarum; he was a lower municipal official attending to a town magistrate. There is evidence to suggest that the Lartii in Nedinum may have been of native origin.23 Interestingly, the wife of Sabinianus is called Magia Maxima,24 her name attesting a close relationship between these two leading families in the town, the same families as at Apaurus.25 There are other Magii known at Nedinum.26 Nedinum was one of the most important southern Liburnian indigenous settlements in the fertile Ravni Kotari area, which - together with Asseria and Varvari - rapidly developed from the pre-Roman hillfort settlements to municipia.

Nedinum may have theoretically become a municipium already under Augustus, since the voting tribe Claudia should not necessarily indicate that the town was granted autonomy under Tiberius or Claudius. Inhabitants of the northern Italian Augustan colonies of Emona and Iulium Carnicum, for example, were inscribed in the tribus Claudia,27 in Liburnia most probably Aenona, Arba, Tarasatica, Alonva,28 and perhaps Apaurus and some other towns, too, became municipia under Augustus; however, a later Iulio-Claudian period is also not an unlikely date for this administrative promotion.29 If a parallel may be drawn between the Rome-friendly Noricum, which was annexed ca. 15 BC, and Liburnia, where several towns enjoyed special privileges such as ius Italicum (Alonva, Flanona, Lopsica, Varvari) and immunitas (exemption from tribute: Asseria, Curicum, Furfinium),30 urbanisation perhaps occurred under Claudius; earlier, these towns may have been allowed to retain their own internal settlement.

The Lartii have not been attested to date outside Apaurus and Nedinum, except later at Salonae and its territory,31 where the Magii are also documented.32 This is not surprising at all in a large provincial capital, which attracted many immigrants from all parts of the province. However, in the early Principate, no Lartii and Magii have been attested to date at Salonae, which should probably be ascribed to chance, particularly because they are known from Epidaurum.33

A typically Liburnian funerary cippus has been discovered at Iader (Zadar), in the Arbanasi suburb, now kept in the Archaeological Museum of Zadar. It was erected by one Novia Severa to her husband Marcus Magius Galata, bearing a rather rare cognomen, only attested in the East and in Italy. It probably betrays the man’s origin from Galatia, and his freedman status.34 At Iader another funerary monument was also discovered, mentioning Lucius Cominius and Marcus Magius, two socii, probably two merchants, who erected the tombstone to another socius of theirs, whose name has not been preserved.35 That they were engaged in commerce may be indicated by the word socius, which usually refers to traders, as, for example, at Andautonii in Pannonia, where one Marcus Iuventius Primitivenus, no doubt a merchant, dedicated an altar to the river god Savus, together with his socius.36 The Cominius, too, are well attested in northern Italy, particularly in Aquileia.37 The tombstone must have been erected in the early Principate, since both socii have as yet no cognomen.

Another veteran belonging to the gens Magia, in addition to Quintus Magius from Asseria, is attested at Narona, Gneius Magius, he, too, bearing no cognomen, hence his tombstone must also be assigned to the early first century AD.38 Perhaps he had also served in the legion VII in Tihurium, closer to Narona than Burnum, where the legion XI was stationed. Another Magius is documented in Narona, one Lucia Magius Princes, who erected a small column to Mercurius.39

Summing up the evidence, it can be concluded that some Magii came to Dalmatia as soldiers, probably from various towns of northern Italy, while some came to the province as traders and businessmen, possibly mainly from Aquileia. These settled down most of all in Liburnia. The gens must have been prosperous and wealthy, having many slaves and consequently also several freedmen, some of whom attained an eminent position in their home towns, as did most probably Lucius Magius Neus.

The Nymphs

The cult of the Nymphs was of great importance in most of the Roman Empire, and in a similar way it had earlier been important in the Greek world before the coming of the Romans.39 It was also flourishing in the Augustan age, and Strabo mentioned that Elis, for example, was full of sanctuaries of Artemis, Aphrodite and the Nymphs, erected in sacred groves, where flowers grew because of the abundance of water.41 An exception is Roman Africa, where dedications to the Nymphs have rarely been attested, at the expense of Neptune, as it seems; he may have occasionally replaced some male deity who protected the sources there before the coming.
of the Romans. Since coastal areas of Dalmatia and most notably the major Dalmatian islands were colonized by the Greeks, Hellenization played an important role in Illyria. Greeks were settled in the mainland at Epitum (Stobrec) and Tragurium (Trogir), perhaps also in Salona and in several other places along the coast as is explicitly stated by Pliny the Elder; by his time, he says, many once flourishing Greek cities had become extinct. Greek colonists came in contact with many indigenous peoples, introducing the cult of the Nymphs to the eastern Adriatic, which is not least reflected in the coins of Issa from the early third century BC, bearing a depiction of a Nymph on the obverse. Along the central Dalmatian coast and particularly on the islands spring water is scarce and therefore appreciated. In some places and under exceptional circumstances water even had to be paid for, as, for example, in Attica on the coast along the road from Athens to Sounion, in the sanctuary of the Nymphs at the water source called Halykos (present-day Pigádi to Łýkóũ). There, according to the Delphic oracle, sacrifices to the Nymphs had to be performed, costly as it seems, for which priests needed money.

The Nymphs, whose dedications are most often found in the vicinity of water sources, at thermal springs and in accompanying sanctuaries, or at fountains, were worshipped either alone or with one or more other divinities. They could bear various epithets ranging from Augustae to aeterna, salutares, sanctae or sanctissimae, novae, and fontanae to epithets deriving from place-names or names of peoples. Epithets derived from toponyms or peoples, such as Isaeae (Aquae Isaeae, modern Varaždinske Toplice), or Griseae (present-day Gréoux-les-Bains), and occasional association of the Nymphs with the Matres suggest that in several such cases the Nymphs may have been indigenous local divinities. As is indicated by an altar from the area of Doclea, the Nymphs were perceived as three deities.

While in Italy they sometimes appeared in the company of Fontanus and Apollo, but also with Silvanus, in the Gallic provinces, for example, they were occasionally worshipped together with Apollo, Silvanus, Neptune, and Mercury. In Dalmatia, particularly in the regions of the Delmatae, they were frequently depicted together with Silvanus or with Silvanus and Diana. Silvanae, who sometimes occur in dedications from this area, should probably be regarded as some kind of fairies dwelling in woods. Interesting for the close relationship between Silvanus and the Nymphs is a building inscription found at Kliš, where a small Salonian village must have been located, and a control post supervising the road leading from the Dinaric hinterland to the coast near Salona. Fescenia Astice had a sanctuary to Jupiter erected together with her husband Faustus, adding to his cult also that of Silvanus and the Nymphs. They did this in accordance to the command of Jupiter and the council (testamentum) of gods and goddesses. It is significant that in the beginning of the last century, when the inscription was first published, the oldest inhabitants of Kliš remembered that a well existed some 200 m from the place of discovery of the inscribed stone. It was found reused in the pavement of the early Christian church there.

As has long been known and subsequently analyzed and redefined by Duje Rendić-Miočević, Silvanus of the Delmatae has certain characteristics of the Greek Pan, which should most probably be interpreted as an influence from the cults of Greek settlers along the coast. He has been regarded as an indigenous divinity of forests, woods, pastures, and breeding sheep and goats, somehow transformed under the influence of Greek Pan and Roman Silvanus. The god is depicted as having goat legs, ears and horns, playing on a pipe (tyrannus) or flute, and holding shepherd's staff (pedum), while the Roman Silvanus is represented in a human form, holding a gardening sickle (folco) and a pine branch.

Although it was argued by Peter Dorecy, against the general opinion, that Silvanus in Dalmatia would not have been an "Illyrian" god, this has recently been twice rejected on iconographic and onomastic grounds. It may well be added that Silvanus should not be called "Illyrian", as has inexacty been done by Dorecy, since D. Rendić-Miočević emphasized that the worship of the god was most of all centred on the territory of the Delmatae. Thus it can be concluded that Silvanus, who was worshipped in the area of the Delmatae and their neighbours, and is usually accompanied by Diana and/or the Nymphs or Silvanus, was most probably an indigenous local god of pastures, stockbreeding, and woods, of similar characteristics as Pan and Italian Silvanus. The same may be true of his attendants. This is indicated most of all by iconographic peculiarities such as the typically indigenous attire of the depicted deities (fig. 4). Diana on the monuments analyzed by D. Rendić-Miočević does bear the name of the Italian/Roman goddess, also having some of her attributes, but in the hinterland of coastal Dalmatia, in Delmataean communities and adjacent areas, she was no doubt perceived as their own deity, and the same would have been true of the Nymphs. This was their "humble pantheon", so important for the population living in

14 ARNALDI 2004
15 K. b. 3.144 C. CAMBI, CACCI, KIRCHER (eds.) 2002. BRACCEVI, LUNA (eds ) 2002
16 IDS 1998, 156-158, with literature cited.
17 ZASIMOVIC, M. Voda i naselja na srednjovijekovnom obali i u ostrima (Water and settlements on the central Illyrian coast and islands), Histria Antiqua 10, 2003, 35-43.
18 NEVER 2004.
19 See indexes to the ILS, and dedications to the Nymphs in this epigraphic collection.
20 Hjág 1170.
21 HJOTNE-BIRIOT 2004, 64.
23 IDS 3873-3876a, together with Silvanus, 3877, and 3878; additionally with Aesculapius.
24 Hjág 2003. Woman's gentilicium is otherwise only known fromotta, and her cognomen sporadically in southern Gallia and Hispania. cf. ALFÖLDY 1969, s.s. Her husband's gentilicium is broken off.
Dinaric karst regions, who most of all depended on flocks of sheep and goats, and on hunting.

However, Romanization and epigraphic habit made these divinities known to us under their Roman names, while their original names are no longer known. In northern Italy, too, the Nymphs may have been worshipped as local indigenous divinities even among members of the upper class, and this could have often been the case elsewhere, among people of all social classes. This is not at all an isolated case in the Roman Empire; an example from the neighbouring Pannonia would be the Celtic Nutrices, whose cult is attested only in Poetovio, and whose worshippers were in several instances local Celtic inhabitants. The question why these non-Roman deities were venerated under the Latin names cannot be answered with certainty, but there are several possibilities to explain the phenomenon. The Latin theonyms may have been translations of the epichoric names; possibly names such as Silvanus or Nutrices may have been similar in both languages. Perhaps Latin names were adopted to share the cult with the entire community, members of which were undoubtedly also Roman immigrants from Italy or immigrants from other parts of the Empire.

Clearly not all dedications to Silvanus, and even less so to the Nymphs in Dalmatia reflect an indigenous cult. Their worship was no doubt also directly brought to Dalmatia by Italian immigrants who settled down in the province. This, actually, must have also been the case for the new dedication, since - as has been seen - the Magii were among the Roman colonists in Dalmatia. The Nymphs protected public baths in the towns, as well as *nymphaea*, public fountains offering drinking water, which were both an indispensable and often prestigious architecture of every Roman city. Thus at Salona a large and luxurious *nymphaeum* was unearthed near the Porta Caesarea, which was supplied with water from an aqueduct, entering the city in this area. The Porta Caesarea was built in the Augustan age, a period most important for the urbanization of coastal Dalmatia. Another *nymphaeum* was located at the northern city wall of the oldest Salonitan settlement nucleus, and *Nymphaea* are also known from Pola, Arba, Iader, and Varvaria. At Alvena (present-day Labin) in the Liburnian part of Histria, public baths are documented in an interesting dedication to the Nymphs, which was discovered immured in the church of St Gallus in the nearby village of Gondolići. The Nymphs were honoured by the aedile and the *duumvir* (the chief magistrate) of the town Tiberius Galliullus Lambicus, who had taken a vow to erect the monument after the construction of the public baths (*batineum*) was successfully completed under his supervision. As an aedile he was responsible for public buildings and the welfare of the town inhabitants. The Gavillii, who were among the first colonists of Aquileia, are documented as the most prominent family in Alvena, which was a major harbour; the family was equally important also in Parentium, perhaps a Caesarian or Augustan colony.

A most interesting dedication to the Nymphs was found on the Liburnian island of Arba (present-day Rab), commemorating the discovery of a hitherto unknown source of water. It is emphasized in the inscription that not even the oldest inhabitants of the town remembered its existence. The source was fitted out and made publicly available at the expense of the senator Gaius Raecius Rufus, whose freedman Gaius Raecius Leo supervised the work. Leo dedicated the accompanying inscribed monument to
his patron on 8 November, AD 173, it obviously decorated the public fountain. Ronald Syme believed that the senator had originated from a well-to-do upper class Liburnian family from Arba, and he identified him as a senator from Dalmatia. His Liburnian origin was accepted by most scholars, although it has been suggested that the family of Raecius Rufus had come from Italy and only had estates and/or other economic interests and clients in Liburnia, since the gentillicium is also well attested in Italy and other western provinces. And indeed, the native personal name R(a)ecus, although relatively well documented in Liburnia, is also known in Histria, as well as among the Veneti and in the entire northern Adriatic region; hence, the Liburnian origin of the senatorial Raecii family should still be regarded as doubtful.

Let us conclude with a most interesting epigraphic testimony in honour of a local Nymph from southern Dalmatia. In the region of Aronia and/ or Mucrum (the present-day area of Makarska), at Živogošće, two beautiful poems in elegiac couplets are carved into the rock above a source of water, which no longer exists, while the rock is now situated in a small bay close to the sea coast. The inscribed poems, which must be dated to the fourth century AD, commemorate the Nymph, the mistress of this source; two signs of cross are engraved before the first and the last verse of the first epigram, as well as before the last verse of the second one. The good quality of the water is praised and the Nymph is thanked for having provided it to Licinius and Pelagia, the owners of an estate there, who had the verses carved into the rock above the source. These epigrams indicate that the Nymphs were worshipped in Dalmatia well into the late Roman period. However, it is significant that homage is rendered to the Nymph in singular, not to the Nymphs in plural, as was usually the case. This may be explained by the increased spread of monotheistic religions in the late Roman period, and particularly by the growing popularity of goddesses such as Isis and most notably the Magna Mater (Cybele), who often supplanted previous divinities. In certain cases the worship of the Magna Mater replaced the cult of former water goddesses. Nonetheless, despite the new religious trends, the Nymph was not forgotten along the eastern Adriatic coast, where there has always been a shortage of good drinking water and people knew how to appreciate it.

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66 SYME 1940, 229.
70 UNTERMANN 1961, 163; KATKIC 1976, 179; KURILIĆ 2002, 141.
72 RENDIĆ-MIČEVIĆ D. 1987, 236-239 nos. 82 and 83; 268-269 (= CH III 1894 = 8471).
ABBREVIATIONS:

ALF V. Hoffiller, B. Saria, Antike Inschriften aus Jugoslavien, Heft I: Noricum und Pannonia Superior, Zagreb 1938.

ANKW Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt.

CIL Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum.

IIJug A. and J. Šašel, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMXLI repertae et editae sunt (Sittula 5), Ljubljana 1963; idem, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMXLI repertae et editae sunt (Sittula 19), 1978; idem, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMXII et MCMXLI repertae et editae sunt (Sittula 25), 1986.


Inscr. It. Inscriptiones Italicae.


PIR Prosopographa Imperii Romani.


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SAŽETAK

NOVI ŽRTVENIK POSVEĆEN NIMJAMA I MAGIMA U DALMACIJI

Marjeta ŠAŠEL KOS

Raznovrsni izvori vode često se povezuju s nimjama i imali su posebnu važnost u područjima koja su oskudi jevala vodom. U ovom članku predstavljen je do sada neobjavljeni mali vapnenacki žrtvenik, koji je izvjesna Magia Maxima posvetila nimjama. Kako se taj žrtvenik pojavio u prodaji u jednoj starićarnici u Ljubljani, njegovo podrijetlo ne može točno odrediti. Taj je žrtvenik stigao iz jedne privatne zbirke iz Špila, naravno je bio pronaden negdje u blizini grada, te se stoga dade zaključiti da vjerojatno potječe iz područja Salona u Dalmaciji. Magi su potvrđeni brojnim primjerima u Italiji, ponajviše u sjevernoj Italiji, uključujući i Histriju; poznati su i iz Gallie Narbonensis, Hispanije i Dalmacije, osobito Liburnije. Stananje nimja zabilježeno je u Dalmaciji još od bencilističkog razdoblja.

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