

The Ljubljana — *a River and its Past*

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Ig – a rural settlement on the southern edge of the Ljubljansko barje

Marjeta Šašel Kos

Judging by the archaeological finds, the area of Ig was settled from the late Stone Age onwards; human presence is attested both in Copper and Bronze Ages.¹ The Iron Age hillfort was probably on Grajski hrib, at Pungert.² A small settlement from the late Iron Age perhaps developed below the hill above a marshy area along a local road that connected the Ljubljana basin across Rakitna and Bloke with Notranjska (Inner Carniola) and the Adriatic Sea, and undoubtedly also with Dolenjska (Lower Carniola; Fig. 109). Its existence is indicated in addition to the scarce archaeological objects primarily by the indigenous names of the Roman period inhabitants. The village at Ig was separated from the contemporaneous settlement at Emona (whose hillfort was on Castle Hill, while the settlement from the late Iron Age was closer to the Ljubljana) by the Ljubljansko barje (Ljubljana Marshes) and connected with it by the Iščica stream. The Barje region was frequently transformed partially into a lake and it gave the area between Nauportus, Ig, and Emona a special character; the patroness of this area was the goddess Aecorna. It is not clear whether or not the Romans began draining the marshes. Perhaps the Barje was called *Lugeon* in antiquity, although it is more likely that the Greek historian and geographer

Strabo used this name to refer to Cerknjško jezero (Cerknica Lake; 7. 5. 2 C 314). The indigenous settlement at Ig flourished in the Roman period, when it was part of the Emona administrative district. It was located in the fertile area at the fringes of the marshes, which enabled the inhabitants a self-sufficient existence, regardless of their other activities.

At Ig, Iška vas, Strahomer, and neighbouring villages, around 100 Roman tombstones have been found, which is exceptional for a settlement of the village type (Fig. 110). The name Ig has not yet been explicated etymologically, but is probably pre-Slavic. The discovered archaeological artefacts and images on the tombstones indicate that the Roman period Ig inhabitants were primarily involved in stone-cutting, iron- and wood-working. Most of the Roman period finds were discovered in the centre of the village of Ig (which was called Studenec to the end of the second world war), while Roman monuments were also found in the neighbouring villages (Figs. 111 and 112).³

The most significant special feature of the Roman period inhabitants of Ig are their names, on the basis of which they differ – viewed as a whole – from all others in the Emona region and beyond. This was an indigenous population who belonged,



Figure 109. An aerial photograph of the Ig region, showing its openness towards the Ljubljana basin.



Figure 110. The Church of St. Michael from the 13th century, where a temporary *lapidarium* of the Roman inscribed stone monuments from the Ig area has been set up: outside and inside.



Figure 111. A fragmentary tombstone of Fronto, discovered in the Church of sv. Jakob (St James) in Strahomer, with a rustic depiction of the Gorgon's head and downwards flying birds in the corners where dolphins are usually depicted.⁶



Figure 113. An altar dedicated to Jupiter.⁹



Figure 112. A capital with lions that decorated a Roman tombstone.⁷

as indicated by some of their names, to the circle of northern Adriatic Iron Age groups, while they were partly mixed with the Celts, who penetrated into the south-eastern Alpine area primarily in the 3rd century BC. Several villagers had Latin names derived from numerals, which were perhaps translated from their language, such as first, second, third: *Primus*, *Secundus*, *Tertius*; some names were characteristic for the northern Adriatic and Venetic regions, or areas under Venetic influence, such as *Laepius*, *Plator*, *Voltupar*, *Voltaronta*, while others were Celtic, e.g. *Adnamatus*, *Amatu*, *Brocc(i?)us*, *Eppo*, *Buco*, *Galun(i?)us*, *Manu*, *Nammo*, *Secco*. A few names are not known elsewhere, such as *Aicon(i)us*, *Bolerianus*, *Buctor*, *Buquorsa*, *Ennina*, *Moioa*.⁴ Some of the Celtic names from Ig are rare in the neighbouring kingdom of Noricum, but they can be found in other Celtic provinces, such as Gaul, which indicates that the Celtic inhabitants in the late Iron Age settled the territory of

Slovenia from various areas. It is not excluded that the Ig region represented the easternmost point of settlement by the Carni, who inhabited Friuli and western Slovenia, and probably also Notranjska (Inner Carniola).

Some of the Roman period Ig inhabitants lived long lives, as three who reached a hundred years are documented (Fig. 114), and several noted ages of 70, 75, and 80. In antiquity, and particularly in the countryside, ages were rounded up to the nearest multiple of 5 or even 10, as without a list of the consuls or the ruling emperors it was very difficult to establish the passing of years and the exact age of an individual. Their tombstones sometimes also list the size of the grave plot in Roman feet, meaning that the plots at the cemeteries were officially demarcated. This indirectly proves that life in the rural hamlets of the Ig region was organized in accordance with Roman legal provisions through branches of the administrative offices in Emona. Families also lived here whose members performed high municipal functions in Emona, as is shown, for example, by the honorific inscription for Gaius Bassidius Secundus, who was twice *aedilis* with the right to dispense justice, treasurer of the public treasury, joint mayor, patron of the association of foresters, prefect and patron of the association of firefighters, and even mayor in charge of the census of inhabitants that was conducted every five years.⁹ It is not excluded that his family may have originated from Ig.

It is interesting that despite the large number of funerary monuments found in the Ig region, there are very few votive altars, as only two have been preserved that are dedicated to Jupiter (Fig. 113), along with the recently discovered lower part of an altar mentioning an unknown deity *Acinor* (if this is not in fact a personal name). There is no doubt that it was not the custom to erect stone altars to the gods at Ig; evidently they did not worship them in the Roman manner, but rather according to the indigenous rituals of their ancestors.



Figure 114. The tombstone of the centenarians Fronto and Secunda, immured in the cathedral of Ljubljana, originates from Ig.⁸

Notes

- 1 Velušček 2005b; Velušček 2006; Korošec, Korošec 1969.
- 2 *Arheološka najdišča Slovenije*, 180–183.
- 3 For Roman Ig cf. Šašel 1959; Pleterski, Vuga 1987; Šašel Kos 1999a.
- 4 Katičič 1968.
- 5 Šašel Kos 1997a, no. 79.
- 6 Šašel, Šašel 1963, 298.
- 7 Kept in the National Mu-

seum of Slovenia, Inv. No. L 179; Šašel Kos 1997a, no. 93.

8 Hoffiler, Saria 1938, 186.

9 Kept in the National Museum of Slovenia, Inv. No. L 133; Šašel Kos 1997a, no. 77.