

BASSIANAE – A REASSESSMENT OF EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

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Izveček

[Basiane – ponovno ovrednotenje epigrafskih virov]

Rimsko mesto Basiane je ležalo v jugovzhodnem vogalu Panonije, od leta 106 n. št. pa je sodilo v Spodnjo Panonijo. Ostanke so vidni v bližini današnje Rume, v Gradini, blizu vasi Donji Petrovci. Naselje, ki se je razvilo na ozemlju *civitas Scordischorum*, je postalo municipij pod Hadrijanom, morda leta 124, ko je cesar obiskal Spodnjo Panonijo. Karakala je Basianam podelil status kolonije. Sprememba je povezana z njegovim obiskom v Panoniji leta 214.

Namen prispevka je povzeti zgodovino Basian in ponovno ovrednotiti podatke iz različnih virov, predvsem epigrafskih. Napisi, odkriti v zadnjih dveh desetletjih v Basianah in na njihovem ozemlju, dodatno osvetlujejo različne vidike zgodovine mesta (prebivalstvo, uprava, kulti, cestno omrežje). Novi viri na primer kažejo, da je bil *Publius Aelius Censorinus* eden od dekurionov kolonije Basiane. Na enem od nagrobnikov je omenjen *medicus*. Med novimi epigrafskimi spomeniki je tudi več oltarjev, posvečenih Jupiteru, eden je verjetno posvečen Liberi, dva mejnika pa sta iz časa severske dinastije.

Ključne besede: Spodnja Panonija, Basiane, *civitas Scordischorum*, rimska naselbina, municipij, kolonija, epigrafika, kulti

Abstract

The Roman town of Bassianae was situated in the southeastern corner of Pannonia and, from 106 AD, Pannonia Inferior. Its remnants are visible in the vicinity of modern Ruma, on the site of Gradina, near the modern village of Donji Petrovci. It is believed that the settlement which developed on the territory of the *civitas Scordischorum* became a municipium under Hadrian, possibly in 124 AD when the emperor visited Pannonia Inferior. Caracalla granted Bassianae the status of a colony. The change is connected to his visit to Pannonia in 214 AD.

This paper aims to summarise the history of Roman Bassianae and reassess the data provided by the sources, primarily epigraphic evidence. Inscriptions discovered during the previous two decades in Bassianae and in its territory shed additional light on various aspects of the town's history (population, government, cults, road network). New evidence allows us, for instance, to add the name of Publius Aelius Censorinus to the list of decurions of the colony of Bassianae. It also provides information on the professions practised by the inhabitants of the town since one tombstone mentions a *medicus*. New evidence also includes several altars dedicated to Jupiter and one dedicated probably to Libera, as well as two milestones dated to the reign of the Severan dynasty.

Keywords: Pannonia Inferior, Bassianae, *civitas Scordischorum*, Roman settlement, municipium, colonia, epigraphic evidence, cults



Fig. 1: Bassianae, comparison between the city plans: a – interpretative plan from 1935; b – newly generated interpretation map (from Filzwieser et al. 2021, 25, Fig. 19)

SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Bassianae was a Roman town in the province of Pannonia. Its history has been thoroughly researched and presented by several scholars, most recently by Milena Milin in a fine paper published in 2004.¹ The remains of Bassianae are visible at the site called Gradina, in the vicinity of the modern village of Donji Petrovci, approximately 15 km east of the city of Ruma.² Archaeological excavations in the town were undertaken in 1882 and in 1935. In 1882 Šime Ljubić unearthed well-preserved walls at the eastern rampart of Gradina and traces of buildings inside the hillfort. He also discovered thirteen lead pipes that belonged to an aqueduct, as well as a number of various artefacts, fragments of reliefs, statues and epigraphic monuments. The excavations undertaken by Miodrag Grbić in 1935 were considerably larger in scale. They were based on aerial photography of the site, taken by the Yugoslav Royal Air Force. In the central area of Gradina, at the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus*, beside a paved street leading southwards, Grbić unearthed three buildings with remnants of water pipes, hypocausts, mosaic pavement and frescoes. In the northeastern part of Gradina, near the modern cemetery, he discovered the remnants of

a three-nave basilica with a partially preserved floor mosaic (dated to the period between the fourth and the sixth century). A field survey in 1963 confirmed the finds and conclusions from 1935. A number of portable finds was collected during the 1980s and a structure made of massive stone blocks was registered by chance in 1988.³

After the campaigns from 1882 and 1935, however, large scale systematic research has not been undertaken until the 2010s. The area of Bassianae was surveyed in 2014 by an international team using aerial photography, ground-penetrating radar and magnetometry (Fig. 1). The results confirmed the findings and conclusions of previous research and added new information on the site's topography, notably the fortifications, street grid, forum and two early Christian basilicas. The town of Bassianae was built on an elevated platform in the center of an alluvial fan and it covered an area of approximately 23.2 ha. The city wall was 1.8 km long and presumably 1.8 m wide. Rectangular or square towers were located at intervals of 45 or 50 m. Smaller ones were built along the fortification walls and larger ones at corners and other critical points. Most of them protrude outwards from the ramparts. The exact number and position of city gates is uncertain. The existence of the western and eastern gate is confirmed by the *decumanus*, covering a distance of approximately 460 m. Other gates in the northern and southern parts of the city walls probably existed as well.

¹ Dušanić 1967; Brukner 1988; Milin 2004.

² Milin 2004, 253.

³ For a brief survey see Milin 2004, 260–262; Djordjević 2007, 46–47.

The survey results suggest that the *decumanus* was approximately 13 m wide. Along its northern side buildings with narrow rooms were located. Their layout suggests that the main street of Bassianae was lined with shops. A magnetic survey revealed a large compound building block south of the *decumanus* near the eastern gate. They were interpreted as *tabernae* based on their structural similarity to the architectural remains located north of the main street. The 2014 prospection revealed traces of the forum in the center of the town. It comprised an insula with an open courtyard, presumably flanked by the temple on the west side and a basilica on the east side. An insula partly excavated by Grbić in 1935 was registered south of the main street, to the east of the forum. Two complexes with large courtyards in the center were revealed near the western gate, to the north and south of the *decumanus*. Both were accessed through large entrance halls. The northern complex comprised a portico and several apse halls. A rectangular building on the west side of the southern courtyard could be interpreted as a temple, as has already been suggested by Ljubić in 1882. The plan from 1935 suggested that architectural structures with large rooms, long corridors and courtyards were located in the southern part of the town. Their existence was confirmed during the 2014 prospection. Based on survey results, four more insulae should be expected in the southeastern quadrant of Bassianae. Among the buildings in the northeastern section of the town, one should note two Christian churches. The larger one is identified with the basilica partly excavated by Grbić in 1935. The two basilicas probably formed a Christian complex with the two large buildings registered to the northwest. These buildings were superimposed over an older street which presumably led to the north gate of Bassianae. Traces of several small buildings were registered in the northwestern part of the town. The 2014 prospection encompassed the area outside the city ramparts as well. Several large pits were revealed to the northeast, as well as the remains of what appears to be a rectangular building.⁴

TERRITORY OF BASSIANAE

The territory of Bassianae encompassed the southeastern corner of Pannonia and, since 106 AD, Pannonia Inferior. Its northern and eastern boundary followed the Danube, coinciding with the frontier of the Roman Empire. The river Sava is usually taken as the southern boundary of the city's territory, while the western boundary, between Bassianae and Sirmium, presumably ran between Krušedol and Hopovo, leaving the latter modern settlement, as well as Jarak and Hrtkovci, on the territory of Sirmium. The territory of Bassianae encompassed several Roman settlements and

⁴ Filzwieser et al. 2021.

forts. The fortress from the late Roman period – *Caput Bassianense* – was located at the site of Solnok, approximately 3 km west of the town. The forts of Cusum (Petrovaradin), Rittium (Surduk), Acumincum (Slankamen), Burgenae (Novi Banovci), as well as the harbour of Taurunum (Zemun) were situated on the Danubian limes. Two stations were located on the road connecting Bassianae and Taurunum: *mutatio Novicianum* (identified with the site of Brestove Medje, near the village of Krnješevci) and *Idominium/Altina*, about 10 km to the east. *Confluentes* was a customs station between Taurunum and Singidunum in Moesia Superior (Fig. 2).⁵

CIVITAS SCORDISCORUM AND ITS ADMINISTRATION

Our knowledge of the history of Bassianae and its territory is largely based on epigraphic evidence. The aim of this paper would be, therefore, to reassess the data provided by inscriptions. Epigraphic monuments published since the appearance of the survey of M. Milin, as well as inscriptions published in the 1990s which were not included in her article, provide valuable information on various aspects of the city's past and development (e.g. population, government, cults, the road network in the territory).

The inhabitants of the territory of Bassianae in pre-Roman times were the Scordisci. Roman conquest saw the establishment of the *civitas Scordischorum*, shortly after the end of Tiberius' Pannonian campaign, in 11 or 10 BC.⁶ Modern scholars have presumed that the community was governed by the officers of the Roman army.⁷ This assumption is confirmed by a recently published inscription from Aquae Iasae in Pannonia Superior, recording the career of Quintus Gavius Fronto. In lines 2–5 one reads that he was the centurion of the legion *XIII Gemina* and prefect of the tribal communities of the Scordisci, Breuci and Iasi.⁸ Fronto's military career provides a chronological frame for his prefecture. His centurionate in *XIII Gemina* falls at the time when the legion garrisoned Poetovio. The unit came there from Vindonissa in Germania, around 45 AD.⁹ After serving

⁵ Dušanić 1967, 70–71; Milin 2004, 253.

⁶ For the dating see Grbić 2014, 286.

⁷ Dušanić 1967, 68; Milin 2004, 255.

⁸ Kušan Špalj 2015, 50–55. The text of the inscription is published in the Catalogue, p. 152, no. 64: Q(uintus) Ga[vius] Q(uinti) f(ilius) Pub(lilia) / Fronto pr(imus pilus) leg(ionis) XIII / Gem(inae) praef(ectus) civitatium / Scordisc(orum) et Breuco(rum) /⁵ et Iasorum beneficio / Imperatoris tra(n)s-latus / successionibus in leg(ione) IIII / Macedonic(a) dedicavit / Bachylus lib(ertus) eius. It appears that the reading of Fronto's rank in the second line should be corrected to 7(centurio). The symbol denoting the rank is carved in ligature with the L of the abbreviation leg(io).

⁹ Šašel Kos 2014, 142.

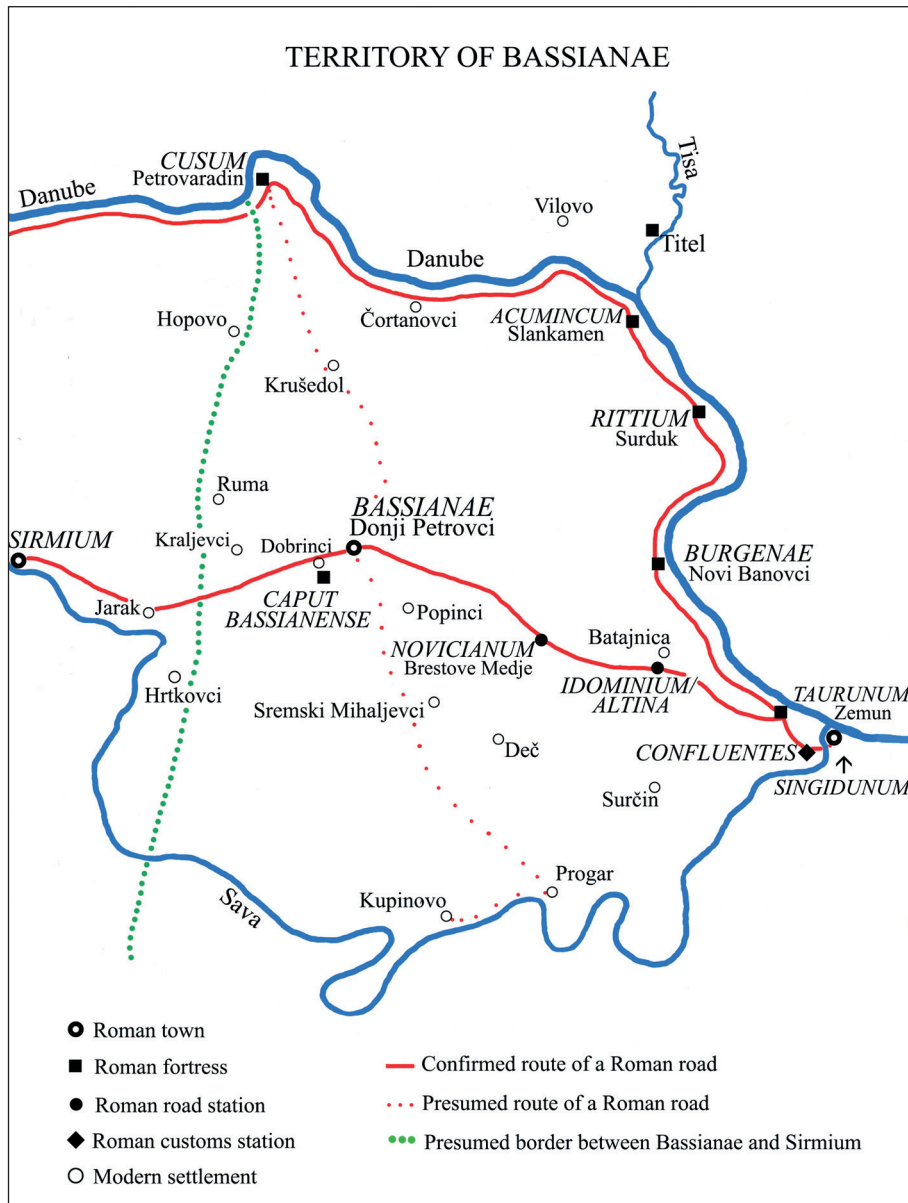


Fig. 2: The territory of Bassianae

in *XIII Gemina*, Quintus Gavius Fronto was transferred to the legion *IV Macedonica*. This piece of information provides a solid *terminus ante quem* for the dating of his prefecture. Vespasian disbanded the legion *IV Macedonica* in 70/71 AD because it had supported Vitellius and, possibly, Civilis.¹⁰ It appears, therefore, that Fronto governed the tribal communities of the Scordisci, Breuci and Iasi under Claudius or Nero, while he held the rank of the centurion in *XIII Gemina*.

Over the course of time the *civitas Scordisorum* was allowed to be autonomous and elect its officials. This change was a consequence of its progress in the adapta-

tion to the Roman system and government. It happened during the reign of the Flavian dynasty, possibly under Domitianus.¹¹ At the turn of the first century AD the *civitas Scordisorum* was governed by a certain Titus Flavius Proculus.¹² He probably belonged to the second generation of Roman citizens. His father Titus Flavius Dulcis obtained citizenship from one of the Flavian emperors. Since *civitates peregrinae* were governed by members of the native aristocracy,¹³ it seems probable that Proculus' family belonged to the tribe of Scordisci. His father's cognomen – *Dulcis* – might be interpreted

¹¹ Dušanić 1967, 70.

¹² *ILJug* 280. For the dating see Grbić 2014, 289, ad no. 205.

¹³ Grbić 2014, 308–309.

¹⁰ Ritterling, 1924/1925, 1553–1554; Gómez-Pantoja 2000, 114–115.

as a Latin equivalent of the Celtic name *Suaducus*,¹⁴ derived from the adjective *suadus*, meaning “sweet”.¹⁵ Epigraphic evidence records the names of two members of the council of the *civitas Scordisorum*.¹⁶ The *principes* Ulpus Silvanus and Ulpus Capito also belonged to the native population. This is implied by their father’s Illyrian cognomen *Dasius*.¹⁷ The anthroponymy of the indigenous population of the *civitas Scordisorum* was composite, combining Dalmato-Pannonian, Celtic and Roman names.¹⁸

ROMAN CITY, ITS STATUS AND ADMINISTRATION

Bassianae developed gradually during the first century AD, probably out of a private estate (*villa*) that belonged to a certain Bassius.¹⁹ According to modern scholars, the settlement obtained the status of a municipium under Hadrian, possibly in 124 AD, on the occasion of his visit to Pannonia.²⁰ It appears, however, that the *civitas Scordisorum* continued to exist simultaneously with the municipium. This is implied by two military diplomas issued to the sailors of the Roman fleets. Marcus Sollius Gracilis was discharged from the Ravenna fleet in 139 AD,²¹ and Valerius from the Pannonian provincial fleet in 146 AD.²² Both documents record the *civitas Scordisorum* as soldiers’ homes. This prompted Dragana Grbić to presume that the tribal community of the Scordisci survived the foundation of the municipium at Bassianae. In that case, its territory would have been severely reduced or restricted to the area south of the Sava river.²³ The simultaneous existence of the municipium Bassianae and the *civitas Scordisorum* seems plausible. Similar cases are attested in Pannonia. Some tribal communities continued to exist as administrative and political units even after the foundation of autonomous towns on their territories.²⁴

Bassianae was raised to the rank of a colony by Caracalla. This change in status presumably took place in 214 AD and was related to the reorganisation of Pan-

nonia Inferior.²⁵ The earliest inscription mentioning the colony, dedicated to Jupiter for the welfare and return of Caracalla and his mother Iulia Domna, is associated with the promotion.²⁶

The data concerning the administration of Bassianae is rather scarce. Epigraphic evidence from the town and its territory records the names of several decurions and one magistrate. Publius Aelius Dassius is the only member of the council of the municipium attested so far. He was, in addition, pontifex of Bassianae and aedile in another municipium, called *Spodent()* in abbreviated form.²⁷ The earliest inscription pertaining to the administration of the colony is the altar dedicated to the welfare and return of Caracalla and Iulia Domna, mentioned above. It was erected by the decurion and duovir Aelius Surus.²⁸ A new name was added to the list of council members of Bassianae in 2005. Publius Aelius Censorinus, *decurio coloniae Bassianensium*, dedicated an altar to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The monument, kept in a private collection in Vienna, probably originated from Donji Petrovci. The praenomen and nomen of the decurion imply that his family had received citizenship from Hadrian, presumably on the occasion of the promotion of Bassianae to the rank of municipium.²⁹

NEW MILESTONES AND ROAD NETWORK

Recently published epigraphic evidence expands our knowledge of the road network in the territory of Bassianae (Fig. 2). The routes of the two major communications are firmly established based on Roman itineraries and milestones. The first one, connecting Sirmium with Bassianae and Taurunum on the Danube, was part of the highway leading from Italy to the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. It ran along the line Kraljevci – Dobrinici – Donji Petrovci (*Bassianae*) – Brestove Medje (identified with *mutatio Novicianum* in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*)³⁰ – Batajnica (the station

¹⁴ Grbić 2014, 288–289, ad no. 205.

¹⁵ For the meaning of *suadus* see Delamarre 2003, 284.

¹⁶ *CIL* III 15143 = *ILJug* 1035 = 3010.

¹⁷ Krahe 1929, 37–38; Mayer 1957, 112–114; Alföldy 1969, 185–186.

¹⁸ Grbić 2014, 288.

¹⁹ Milin 2004, 255.

²⁰ Dušanić 1965, 90; Dušanić 1967, 70; Brukner 1988, 89; Milin 2004, 255–256.

²¹ Eck, Pangerl 2007, 217–223, no. 1 = *AE* 2007, 1786.

²² *RMD* 401.

²³ Grbić 2014, 287–288 stating that the possibility that the diplomas recorded the previous status of the community, i. e. the name of the *civitas* in which the sailors were recruited, seems improbable.

²⁴ Alföldy 1965, 177–178; Grbić 2014, 314–315.

²⁵ Strobel 2019, 313 sqq.

²⁶ *ILJug* 1040 = *lupa* 12468.

²⁷ *ILJug* 1048 = *lupa* 4332. The exact name and location of the municipium *Spodent()* are yet to be determined. Dušanić 1967, 70–71 and Crnobrnja 2011, 373–388 presume that it should be sought south of Bassianae, on the right bank of the river Sava.

²⁸ *ILJug* 1040 = *lupa* 12468. Other members of the city council were Aelius Victorinus (*ILJug* 1050), Marcus Antonius Proculianus (*CIL* III 10203 = 14340/1 = *lupa* 26401), Ulpus Neratius and Ulpus Nigrinus (*CIL* III 10204 = *lupa* 22673). The twenty year old son and nine year old grandson of the decurion Caius Nonius Marcus were designated to be quaestors of the colony (*CIL* III 15135).

²⁹ Beutler 2005, 215–216 = *AE* 2005, 1240 = *lupa* 3174.

³⁰ *It. Burd.* 563, 12. For the identification see: Milin 2004, 257; Djordjević 2007, 53.

Idominium/Altina, attested in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and *Itinerarium Burdigalense* respectively, was located in its vicinity³¹ – Zemun (Taurunum).³² The road along the Danube, which connected the legionary and auxiliary fortresses on the limes, passed through the territory of Bassianae. The first station on it was Cusum (Petrovaradin), followed by Acumincum (Slankamen), Rittium (Surduk), Burgenae (Novi Banovci), Taurunum (Zemun) and Confluentes (also a customs' station, probably located at the confluence of Sava and Danube, on the left, i.e. Pannonian bank of Sava).³³ Modern scholars have presumed that a secondary road traversed the territory of Bassianae from north to south. It connected the fort of Cusum with Bassianae and continued southward, to the modern village of Progar, then to the southwest, towards Kupinovo on the right bank of the Sava.³⁴ The existence of this road seems to be confirmed by two fragmentary milestones from the village of Sremski Mihaljevci, 13 km south of Bassianae. Both monuments were discovered in 2004. The earlier fragment is dated to the time between 197 and 199 AD when Tiberius Claudius Claudianus governed Pannonia Inferior.³⁵ The latter fragment belongs to a milestone erected between 198 and 204 AD. The dating is based on *imp(erator) XI* in the titulature of Septimius Severus. He was hailed as emperor for the eleventh time probably at the end of 197 AD and for the twelfth time in January 205 AD.³⁶

OCCUPATIONS AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The population of Bassianae and its territory was engaged in agriculture, trade, and various crafts (most notably stonemasonry, pottery, and textile production).³⁷ A recently published fragmentary inscription provides the first epigraphic attestation on the occupations of the region's inhabitants. The fragment was found in 1992 on the site of Ada, in the district of the village of Vilovo, 12 km to the east of Titel. It belongs to the epitaph of the



Fig. 3: Epitaph of medicus Claudius Apollinaris (AE 2012, 1178)

doctor (*medicus*) Claudius Apollinaris (Fig. 3).³⁸ Judging by the family name of the deceased, the inscription was erected after the reign of Claudius. More precise dating is not possible.³⁹ The word *domo* at the end of the fourth line shows that Claudius Apollinaris came to the region of Bassianae from some other part of the Roman Empire. His home, however, remains unknown, because the fifth line of his epitaph is damaged (the letters I, C and O, separated by other letters, are barely discernible on the photograph and drawing published by Dautova Ruševljan.⁴⁰

It is impossible to determine whether Claudius Apollinaris was a civilian or a military doctor. The latter seems plausible considering the presence of various units of the Roman army in the region of Bassianae since the beginning of the second century AD. These include detachments of the legion *II Adiutrix* and auxiliary regiments deployed along the Danubian limes. Taurunum

³¹ *TP VI* 4-5; *It. Burd.* 563, 13. For the identification of the two stations and their locations see: Milin 2004, 257–258.

³² The route of this road, including the Bassianae section, was mapped using modern technologies and land survey in the 2010s. Integrated results were published by Zanni, De Rosa 2019.

³³ For Confluentes see Dušanić 1965, 101–102; Milin 2004, 263–264. For the two main roads on the territory of Bassianae see: Milin 2004, 257–258.

³⁴ Popović 1996, 140–141 and Fig. 12; Milin 2004, 258.

³⁵ Mirković 2006, 136, no. 9b = Mirković 2012, 30, no. 2 = *AE* 2012, 1187 = Mirković 2017, 271b = *lupa* 26372. For the dating of the governorship of Tiberius Claudius Claudianus see: Thomasson 1984, 114, no. 26; Thomasson 2009, 19:026.

³⁶ Mirković 2006, 135–136, no. 9a = Mirković 2012, 29–30, no. 1 = *AE* 2012, 1186 = Mirković, 2017, 271a = *lupa* 26374. For the titulature of Septimius Severus see: Kienast 2004, 157.

³⁷ Milin 2004, 264–265.

³⁸ Falkenstein, 1998, 338, no. Vilovo 18 (without the text); Dautova Ruševljan 2012, 250 = *AE* 2012, 1178.

³⁹ Dautova Ruševljan 2012, 250 dates the fragment to the end of the first century or to the beginning of the second century AD.

⁴⁰ Dautova Ruševljan 2012, 250, Fig. 1

was one of the main bases of the Pannonian provincial fleet.⁴¹ The closest Roman site to the find spot of the epitaph of Claudius Apollinaris was in modern Titel, on the left bank of the Danube. A fort presumably stood on the site of Kalvarija, on the hill called Titelski breg. It was situated near the strategically important confluence of the rivers Tisa and Danube, serving as the bridgehead of Acuminum.⁴² Titel has yielded one inscription mentioning two soldiers of the cohort *I Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum equitata*. The epitaph of the horseman and imaginifer Virsuccius was erected by his heirs. The imaginifer Bodiccus probably served in the same regiment and the same might be presumed in the case of Albanus.⁴³ The inscription, dated to the early reign of the Flavian dynasty,⁴⁴ implies that the cohort *I Britannica* or its detachment (if the unit was stationed in Acuminum on the right bank of the Danube⁴⁵) garrisoned the fortress at Titel during the last decades of the first century AD.⁴⁶

One should also note a bronze ring from Ruma, bearing a simple inscription *Veni / amica*. Judging by its typology and palaeographic features, the ring was made at the end of the third century AD or in the fourth century AD. Its inscription indicates that it should be regarded as an engagement ring that was probably made at a customer's request.

CULTS AND RELIGION

Inscriptions published during the last few decades expand our knowledge of the religious beliefs of the inhabitants of Bassianae and its territory. They support the conclusion, based on epigraphic and archaeological evidence that the Roman official religion prevailed in the region.⁴⁷ The corpus of fourteen dedications to Jupiter is expanded by three epigraphic monuments. We have already mentioned the altar dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus by Publius Aelius Censorinus, decurion of the colony of Bassianae.⁴⁸ Another monument dedicated to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* was discovered in Surčin, in



Fig. 4: Altar for Jupiter, Deč (AE 1991, 1320; lupa 26404-1)

⁴¹ For the Roman army in Bassianae and its territory in general see Milin 2004, 258–260, 262–264. For a survey of the auxiliary fortresses and their garrisons see Lőrincz 2001, 105; Radman Livaja 2012, 175–176 (Table I), 178–179.

⁴² On the Roman fortress in Titel see: Dušanić 1965, 94; Djordjević 2007, 88.

⁴³ *CIL* III 3256.

⁴⁴ Lőrincz 2001, 240, no. 277.

⁴⁵ Gudea 2013, 611, no. 25; Wilkes 2005, 124–125, 207, no. 55.

⁴⁶ Cf. Dušanić 1968, 95; Lőrincz 2001, 31, n. 181 stating that the unit was stationed in the area of Brigetio or in Acuminum.

⁴⁷ On the cults in Bassianae and its territory see: Milin 2004, 265–266.

⁴⁸ Beutler 2005, 215–216 = *AE* 2005, 1240 = *lupa* 3174.

the southeastern part of the territory of Bassianae. The altar, erected by a certain Aelius Marcianus, was built into the west wall of the church of St. Petka.⁴⁹ Judging by the imperial nomen *Aelius*, it belongs to the time after the reign of Hadrian. Archaeological finds indicate the existence of a *vicus* or a *villa rustica* in Surčin.⁵⁰

The third new monument testifying to the cult of Jupiter Capitolinus on the territory of Bassianae was discovered in Deč, 18.5 km to the southeast of Bassianae (Fig. 4). The fragmentary altar was found on the site Djubrevita Greda, approximately 5 km from the village.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Vujović 2009, 149 = *AE* 2009, 1077.

⁵⁰ Vujović 2009, 152–155.

⁵¹ Dautova Ruševljan 1990, 626, n. 23.



Fig. 5: Inscription of the altar for Jupiter, Deč (*lupa* 26404-2)

Its reading presents certain difficulties, especially when the names of dedicators are concerned (Fig. 5).⁵² The abbreviated imperial gentilicium of the first dedicator – *Ael(ius)* – is clearly visible at the beginning of the second line. It is followed by a cognomen, beginning with an L in the second line, and ending in CIVS in the third line. Based on the estimation that one or two letters are missing at the end of the second line, after the letter L, the name could be restored as *L[as]/cius*, *L[u]/cius* or *L[us]/cius*. The first cognomen – *Lascius*, i.e. *Lascivus* – is attested twice in Pannonia, more precisely in Brigetio and its territory.⁵³ It is also recorded in northern Italy and the western provinces of the Roman Empire.⁵⁴ The second name – *Lucius* – is very frequent in northern Italy and in the west, as well as in Pannonia, where it is attested for 18 times.⁵⁵ The third name – *Luscus* – is recorded as a *gentilicium* in northern Italy and Dalmatia.⁵⁶ The second dedicator bore the imperial nomen *Cl(audius)*. His cognomen started with an F and ended in VS, with two or three letters between. Consequently, it could be restored as *F[est]us*, *F[irm]us*, *F[lav]us*, *F[lor]us* or *F[usc]us*. All these names are well attested in northern Italy and

⁵² Dautova Ruševljan 1990, 625, no. 4 proposed the following reading: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / [Ael]ius / ! VS !! / P . R / pos[uit]*, while the editors of *AE* 1990, 1320 opted for: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / [Ael]ius / +VS ++ / L F [. .] / P . R / pos[uit] / - - - -*.

⁵³ *CIL* III 10978 = *RIU* 397 from Szöny and *RIU* 731 = *lupa* 708 from Szomor.

⁵⁴ *OPEL* III 19.

⁵⁵ *OPEL* III 36.

⁵⁶ *OPEL* III 39.



Fig. 6: Votive relief from Čortanovci (*lupa* 26418-1)

the western provinces of the Roman Empire, including Pannonia.⁵⁷ In the last three lines of the inscription only the beginnings are clearly visible. The fifth line began with the preposition *pro*, the sixth with the letters ETS, and the seventh with an L. This part of the inscription could be restored in the following way: *pro [sal(ute) sua] / et s[uorum] / l(ibentes) [p(osuerunt)]*. The same formula is recorded, for instance, on a dedication to Liber Pater and Libera from Apulum in Dacia.⁵⁸ Considering all of the above we propose the following reading of the inscription from Deč: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Ael(ius) L[±2]/cius et / Cl(audius) F[±3]us /⁵ pro [sal(ute) sua] / et s[uorum] / l(ibentes) [p(osuerunt)]*.

The cult of Liber, the ancient Italian god of fertility of both nature and men, and his feminine companion Libera,⁵⁹ is attested in Taurunum by epigraphic evidence and votive reliefs. These finds imply the existence of a sanctuary of Liber in the settlement.⁶⁰ It appears that the cult of Libera is also attested on a recently published piece of epigraphic evidence. The votive relief with an inscription in the upper right corner was found in the vil-

⁵⁷ *OPEL* II 139 (*Festus*), 142-143 (*Firmus*), 147-148 (*Flavus*, particularly frequent on the Iberian Peninsula), 149 (*Florus*), 156-157 (*Fuscus*).

⁵⁸ *CIL* III 1094 = 7765 = *ILS* 2439 = *IDR* III/5, 243 = *lupa* 11461.

⁵⁹ On the cult of Liber and Libera see Brühl 1953; Radke 1965, 175-183; Matijašić, Tassaux 2000, 66-76.

⁶⁰ Milin 2004, 265.



Fig. 7: Inscription on the votive relief from Čortanovci (*lupa* 26418-3)

lage of Čortanovci, where it has been built into the front side of the western wing of a private house.⁶¹ The relief represents a standing naked figure, holding a thyrsus in the right hand, and a shallow dish for libations (*patra*) in the left (Fig. 6). Judging by the narrow shoulders and wider hips, the figure is that of a woman. A grapevine grows near her right arm, while a panther lies under the *patra*. To the left of the woman stands a smaller figure of a man, with, it seems, hooves instead of feet. This allows us to identify it as Silenus or Pan. It appears that the woman on the relief from Čortanovci is the goddess Libera. The grapevine, thyrsus, panther and Silenus or Pan are common in the iconography of Liber and his feminine counterpart.⁶² Similar reliefs of clothed Libera holding a thyrsus and performing a libation originate, for instance, from Taurunum⁶³ on the territory of Bassianae and the island of Pharos in Dalmatia.⁶⁴ Assuming that the relief from Čortanovci represents the goddess Libera, the first line of the inscription should be read as *D(eae) L(iberae)*.⁶⁵ Although Libera is usually invoked in the cult community with her male counterpart, dedications to the goddess alone are attested, for instance, in Rome and the provinces of Dalmatia and Lusitania.⁶⁶ Libera is designated as *dea* on a votive inscription from Giufi in Africa Proconsularis.⁶⁷

The name of the dedicator of the relief from Čortanovci, recorded in the second and third line, is hard to read and interpret (Fig. 7). Velika Dautova Ruševljan proposed the following reading: *PANN(ius)*

*ili onius) / ANVS.....*⁶⁸ We shall suggest two possibilities, depending on the reading of the second line. The first letter is a P, followed by AN, and an N or an I, and possibly another undiscernible letter. If we accept the reading PANN, the first letter in the second line might be interpreted as the praenomen *P(ublius)* and the group ANN as the family name *Ann(ius)*. The abbreviated form *Ann(ius)* is recorded twice in Pannonia – in Carnuntum⁶⁹ and Crumerum.⁷⁰ It is also attested sporadically in the western provinces of the Roman Empire.⁷¹ If the second line contained the praenomen and nomen of the dedicator – *P. Ann(ius)* – then the group ANVS in the third line must be his cognomen. It might be interpreted as a variation of the name *Annus*, attested in Naissus in Moesia Superior.⁷² The simplification of double consonants – in this case NN – is well attested throughout the Danubian and Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire.⁷³ Considering the uncertain reading of the second line of the dedication to Libera, one must take into account at least one more possibility. If PANI+ is the correct reading, the letter P might stand for a radically abbreviated family name, while the following letters in the second and third line – ANI+/ANVS – should be interpreted as the cognomen of the dedicator. If the last three letters in the second line were ANI, then it could be read as *Anianus*. The Latin cognomen *Annianus* is well attested in the western and Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire.⁷⁴ The reading of the dedicator's cognomen is more difficult if we accept the possibility that the I in the second line was followed by another undiscernible letter. As far as we know, the name beginning with ANI and ending in ANVS, with one letter between the two groups, is not attested in the onomastic material of the Roman Empire.

Epigraphic evidence published in the last few decades records the name of a deity whose cult was not previously attested in the region of Bassianae. The fragmentary altar of Priapus was discovered on the site of Pustara, on the agricultural property Sloga, in the village of Popinci, 5 km to the southeast of Donji Petrovci. Archaeological finds from Šumice imply the existence of a *villa rustica* on this site, approximately 200 m west of Pustara.⁷⁵ The altar was dedicated at the beginning of the third century AD by Vettius Marcianus and a certain Iulius or Iulia, whose cognomen is not preserved. The

⁶¹ Dautova Ruševljan 2014, 36 = *lupa* 26418.

⁶² Matijašić, Tassaux 2000, 70–71; Pilipović 2005, 83–84.

⁶³ Brunšmid 1905, 58–59, no. 115.

⁶⁴ Zaninović 1966, 18–19, no. 3.

⁶⁵ Dautova Ruševljan 2014, 36 reads *D(eo) L(ibero)*.

⁶⁶ Rome: *CIL* VI 469 = *ILS* 3379. Dalmatia: *ILJug* 1678. Lusitania: *EDCS*-11901595, 43200059.

⁶⁷ *CIL* VIII 860.

⁶⁸ Dautova Ruševljan 2014, 36.

⁶⁹ *CIL* III 4452 = *lupa* 6844.

⁷⁰ *CIL* III 3666 = *RIU* 755 = *lupa* 3283.

⁷¹ Baetica: *CIL* II 2056 from Aratispi. Gallia Narbonensis: *CIL* XII 794 from Arelate. Noricum: *AE* 1990, 778 = *lupa* 5766 from Virunum.

⁷² *IMS* IV 42 = *lupa* 29850.

⁷³ Mihăescu 1978, 208–209, § 179.

⁷⁴ Kajanto 1965, 140; *OPEL* I 118.

⁷⁵ Dautova Ruševljan 1990, 626, n. 14.

dating is based on the stylistic features of the monument and its text.⁷⁶ Priapus was probably depicted above the inscription field. His left foot is still visible. The altar from Popinci is the second epigraphic attestation of the cult of Priapus in the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire. The first is an altar or a base of a statue from Apulum in Dacia. The monument was dedicated in 235 AD by Publius Aelius Ursio and Publius Aelius Antonianus, aediles of the colony of Apulum.⁷⁷ Since

⁷⁶ Dautova Ruševljan 1990, 624–625, no. 3 = *AE* 1990, 1319.

⁷⁷ *CIL* III 1139 = *ILS* 3582 = *IDR* III/5, 308. Other dedications to Priapus originate from Rome (*CIL* III 30992 = 5173 = 3708, 30993; *CIL* XIV 3565), Italy (*CIL* V 5117 Bergomum in Transpadana; *AE* 1912, 247 Brixia in Venetia and Histria), Africa Proconsularis (*CIL* VIII 14691 = *ILS* 3583

Priapus was venerated as a god of fertility of plants and animals, a protector of herds, gardens and agricultural products,⁷⁸ it is not surprising that his altar was discovered near the site of a *villa rustica*.

Recently published epigraphic evidence provides valuable glimpses into the history of Bassianae and its region. It sheds additional light on the government of the *civitas Scordischorum*, which encompassed the future Roman town. Epigraphic monuments also provide new data concerning the institutions of Bassianae, as well as cults and road network in its territory.

Thurnburgica) and Dalmatia (*CIL* III 8683; Kurilić 2006, 141, no. 79 Salona).

⁷⁸ For this aspect of Priapus see: Herter 1954, 1927; Deac, Pripon 2016, 153.

Abbreviations

AE = *L'Année épigraphique*, Paris.

CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.

IDR = *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae* I–III, București 1975–1999.

ILJug = A. et J. Šašel, *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt* (Situla 5), Ljubljana 1963; *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX repertae et editae sunt* (Situla 19), Ljubljana 1978; *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt* (Situla 25), Ljubljana 1986.

ILS = H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae* I–III, Berlin 1892–1916.

IMS = *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure* I, II, III/2, IV, VI, Beograd 1976–1995.

lupa = UBI ERAT LUPA – Roman Stone Monuments, CHC – Archäometrie und Cultural Heritage Computing, Universität Salzburg. (<http://lupa.at/>)

OPEL = B. Lőrincz, *Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum*, Vol. I: *Aba – Bysanus*, Budapest 1994; Vol. II: *Cabalicius – Ixus*, Wien 1999; Vol. III: *Labareus – Pythea*, Wien 2000; Vol. IV: *Quadrata – Zures*, Wien 2002.

RIU = *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns*, Budapest and Amsterdam 1972–

RMD = M. M. Roxan, P. Holder, *Roman Military Diplomas* I–V, London 1978–2006.

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