

ALIA MISCELLANEA ANTIQUITATUM

*Proceedings of the Second Croatian-Hungarian
PhD Conference on Ancient History and Archaeology*

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ALIA MISCELLANEA ANTIQUITATUM

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cum Italiae parte by Gerardus Mercator (1578)

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THE BENEFICIARY ALTARS ON THE DANUBE LIMES IN CROATIA

MIRNA VUKOV

Abstract: Numerous epigraphic monuments come from Roman military sites along the Croatian part of the Danube Limes, and part of them have been found on Roman votive altars. This work contains an analysis of seven votive altars erected by military officers beneficiarii - two from the forts Teutoburgium and Cornacum, and five from the city of Mursa.¹

Keywords: Croatia, Danube limes, beneficiarii, votive altars

The Danube limes in Croatia

The occupation of the Roman province of Pannonia and formation of the Danube *limes* took place in several steps.² During the period between 35 BCE and the reign of Emperor Claudius, the army conquered the area between the Drava and Sava Rivers. The north-eastern part, the area north of the Drava River, was occupied during the reign of Claudius, making the Danube River the frontier of Pannonia. The final formation of the *limes* happened during the Flavian period, when limes-forts became more or less permanent.³

The Croatian part of the Danube *limes*, 138 km long, stretches today from the town of Batina to the town of Ilok. It encompasses the forts *Ad Militare* (Batina), *Ad Novas* (Zmajevac), *Ad Labores* (Nemetin), *Teutoburgium* (Dalj), *Cornacum* (Sotin) and *Cuccium* (Ilok). In the hinterland of this part of the *limes* were three important road routes that went along rivers Sava (*Emona – Siscia – Sirmium*), Drava (*Poetovio – Mursa – Cibalae – Sirmum*) and Danube (*Cannabiaca – Taurunum*).⁴

1 This work has been supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project 6505 *Between the Danube and the Mediterranean. Exploring the role of Roman military in the mobility of people and goods in Croatia during the Roman Era.*

2 Tončinić 2015, 335–345.

3 Tóth 2003, 19.

4 Sanader 2003, 135; 2010, 225.

The beneficiarii on the Danube limes in Croatia

Beneficiarii were the military officers who served in governor's office (*officium consularis*). As administrative officers in *officium*, they belonged to the class of *principales* and received double rate of pay.⁵ Their assignments in *stationes*, where they served, included wide variety of specific administrative, judicial and military duties.⁶ As evidenced by the examples from the Empire, the *stationes* were mainly located along the borders of the provinces, but they also could have been located in the cities, on important transport routes and nearby mining centers, quarries and the royal estates.⁷ At the beginning or after successful completion of the task, *beneficiarii* often erected votive altars, thanking the gods for their assignments.⁸ Most often they dedicated the altars to the official deities of the Roman army – *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*, *Iuno Regina*, *Minerva* and *Mars*.⁹

The presence of the *beneficiarii* on the Danube *limes* in Croatia has been attested on seven votive altars - two from the forts *Teutoburgium* and *Cornacum* and five from the city of *Mursa*.

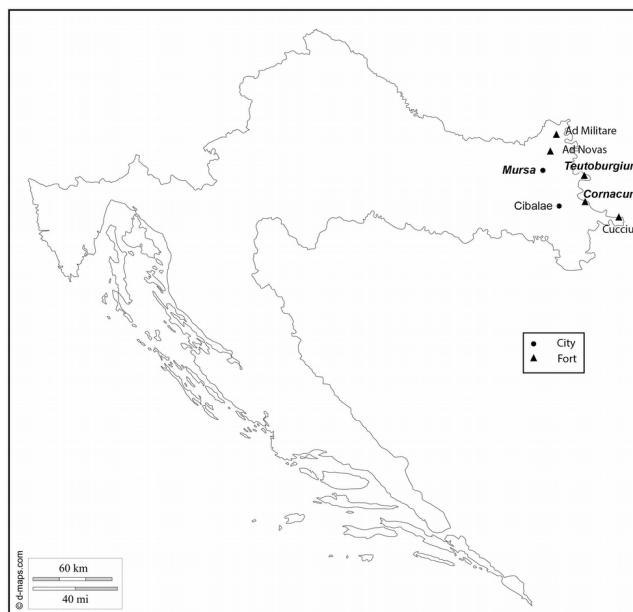


Fig. 1. Map of Croatia with marked positions of the Danube Limes (source: d-maps.com, adapted by author)

- 5 Rankov 1987, 12, 17.
- 6 Ott 1995, 82–154.
- 7 Glavaš 2016, 39.
- 8 Dise 1997, 285.
- 9 Rankov 1987, 118; Glavaš 2016, 11.

The beneficiary station in *Teutoburgium* (Dalj)

The auxiliary fort *Teutoburgium*, situated in Dalj, was the residence of the military units *ala II Hispanorum Aravacorum* (41–85 CE), *ala I praetoria civium Romanorum* (106–200 CE), *ala I civium Romanorum* (3rd century) and *legio VI Herculea* (4th century).¹⁰

The altar dedicated to supreme Jupiter, by consular beneficiary of the *legio II Italica pia fidelis*, was found in Aljmaš which is located in the vicinity of Dalj (cat. no. 1).¹¹ The altar was erected in 226 CE during the consulship of Emperor Severus Alexander, when the unit was stationed in fortress *Lauriacum* in Noricum.¹²

The beneficiary station in *Cornacum* (Sotin)

The auxiliary fort *Cornacum*, located at Popovo brdo in Sotin, was built in the Flavian period at the latest. It was the residence of the military units *ala I civium Romanorum* (70–101 CE), *cohors I Montanorum* (106–180 CE), *cohors II Aurelia Dacorum* (180–? CE) and *cohors I Lusitanorum* (180–? CE).¹³

The epigraphic trace for the presence of beneficiary station in *Cornacum* provides us the altar dedicated to Liber by consular beneficiary *Caius Antonius Sabinus* (cat. no. 2). The altar was found in 1906 in the courtyard of the school in Sotin. Unfortunately, the inscription does not reveal information about the military unit to which the dedicator belonged. According to Brunšmid, this altar is a proof of the existence of beneficiary station in Sotin.¹⁴ The main task of this station was to secure the peace on the position where the road to *Cibalae* (today Vinkovci) was separated from the main Danube *limes*.

The beneficiary station in *Mursa* (Osijek)

The Roman town *Mursa* was located on the southern bank of the Drava River and it was constructed on an already-existing La Tène settlement. It is believed that in the early 2nd century a Roman legionary fortress was established there. In 133 CE, Emperor Hadrian raised the Roman settlement to the status of a Roman colony – *Colonia Aelia Mursa*. According to numerous epigraphic stone monuments and brick stamps, *Mursa* could have been the residence of military units *legio I* and *legio II Adiutrix*, *legio*

10 Lőrincz 2001, 49–50; Sanader 2003, 141; Farnum 2005, 20.

11 Until the Croatian War of Independence, the altar was stored in the church of St. Mary in Aljmaš, but during the war it was destroyed along with the church.

12 Farnum 2005, 17.

13 Lőrincz 2001, 49–52; Sanader 2003, 142; Rendić Miočević 2010, 79–103; Radman-Livaja 2012, 176–177.

14 Brunšmid 1911, 131, nr. 232.

*III Flavia Felix, legio VI Herculia, legio V Macedonica, legio VII Claudia pia fidelis, legio X Gemina, legio XIII Gemina, legio XIV Gemina, cohors II Alpinorum equitata, cohors II Asturum and ala II Hispanorum Aravacorum.*¹⁵

Discoveries of five beneficiary altars that originate from *Mursa* indicate that a beneficiary station could have been located in Osijek's downtown.¹⁶ Four altars that were found in Osijek were erected by *beneficiarii consularis*, while one altar was erected by *beneficiarius procuratoris*. Although that altar was found in Klisa, it is thought to originate from *Mursa*. All five of the altars were dedicated to the supreme Jupiter.

In 1971, three beneficiary altars have been found together on what is known today as Vladimir Nazor Square in Osijek's downtown. This square is located on the right bank of the Drava River in the western part of the city, outside of the city walls.¹⁷

The altar of *beneficiarius Titus Flavius Iustus* (cat. no. 3) can be dated to 164 CE when the consuls were *Macrinus* and *Celsus*. As evidenced on the inscription, dedicator served in the *legio III Flavia Felix*. This legion was established in 70 CE by Emperor Vespasian and it was stationed in *Singidunum* in Upper Moesia between 120 and 337 CE.¹⁸ The legion had its *vexillatio* in *Aquincum* in Pannonia in the period between 161 and 167 CE.¹⁹ This leads us to conclusion that *Iustus* was dispatched on an assignment to *Mursa* from his unit in *Singidunum* or *Aquincum*, most likely to watch over the Drava crossing. This happened before the Marcomannic Wars, but during the war with Parthia.

The inscription on the altar of *beneficiarius Censorinus Maximus* (cat. no. 4) reveals us that the dedicator made his vow after he had been discharged from the army "*acc(epta) missione*", but no information has been given about when and in which unit he served. We can only assume that this happened around 164 CE and that he served in the same legion as *Titus Flavius Iustus*.

The altar of *beneficiarius Iulius Salutaris* (cat. no. 5) is interesting because it testifies about destruction and rebuilding of the sanctuary. The inscription contains the information that the dedicator erected the altars again in the same place "*aras in hunc locum recollocat*", although it does not state which altars were re-erected nor why and where.

According to Bulat and Pinterović the destruction of the altars erected in 164 CE must have happened during the first phase of Marcom-

15 Visy 2003, 161–162; Radman-Livaja 2012, 175.

16 Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 105; Visy 2003, 161.

17 France, Nelis-Clément 2014, 188–189.

18 Farnum 2005, 19.

19 Schallmayer et al. 1990, 333.

manic War (167–171 CE). *Iulius Salutaris* probably came to the *Mursa* after that and re-erected the altars in their original location.²⁰

Considering the fact that those three altars were found together and were dedicated to the supreme Jupiter, we could maybe assume that the temple of Jupiter existed at the location of their finding. This thesis is supported by the fact that, together with the altars, a column with a capital which contains remains of the sculpture of some deity was found.²¹

In 18th or 19th century in Osijek's downtown, a fragmented altar erected by *Caius Iulius Iulianus*, consular beneficiary of the legion *III Flavia Felix*, was found (cat. no. 6). The exact find spot of the altar is not known. The altar can be dated to the middle of the 2nd century.

According to Brunšmid, the monument found in Klisa (cat. no. 7), which is located between Osijek and Vukovar, was originally raised in *Mursa* as well.²² This altar was erected by the *beneficiarius procuratoris Lucius Marcus Avitus* whose unit is unfortunately unknown.

As above-mentioned, five beneficiary altars originate from *Mursa*. One altar originates from unknown position in Osijek's downtown, while three of the altars were found together in Osijek's downtown, which opens the possibility that a station of beneficiary was located there. This corresponds to the opinion of Boris Rankov who stated "Where more than one altar is discovered in a locality this can be accepted beyond any reasonable doubt, and even a single inscription, though it might have been erected by a *bf cos* in his home town, or on a journey, ought generally to be accepted as strong evidence for a *statio*."²³

Despite a relatively high number of inscriptions left by *beneficarii* in *Mursa* we don't know what their responsibilities and duties were. We can't exclude the possibility that those military officers were just sent there to oversee the Drava crossing and that they had erected the altars after successful completion of the task.

We can conclude that the activity of *beneficarii* on the Croatian part of the Danube *limes* has been attested, like it has been in the other parts of the Roman Empire where the Danube represented the frontier to the unconquered enemy territory. The beneficiary stations in *Teutoburgium* and *Cornacum* were located on the stretch of the frontier along the Danube, between *Aquincum* (Budapest) and *Singidunum* (Belgrade), where

20 Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 104–105.

21 Pinterović 1978, 59.

22 Brunšmid 1900, 187.

23 Rankov 1987, 121.

the stations in *Campona*, *Intercisa* (Dunaújváros), Bölscke (?) and *Acumin-cum* can also be found.²⁴ In contrast to those stations, the station in *Mursa* was located in the city situated in the hinterland of the *limes*, but at the crossroad of an important axis of river communication. The similar example in vicinity can be found in the station in *Sirmium* (Sremska Mitrovica), also located in the city at the edge of the frontier, close to the Sava River.²⁵

CATALOGUE

1. Altar of Caius Oppius Bebius

Find site: Aljmaš

Current location: lost

Material: marble

Inscription:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
C(aius) Oppius
Bebius
b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis)
II Ital(icae) p(iae) f(fidelis)
Sever(ianae) pro
se et suis
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)
Imp(eratore) d(omino) n(ostro) Sever(o)
Alexandro Aug(usto) II
et Marcello co(n)s(ulibus)*

Dating: 226 CE

Published: CIL III 3270; Pinterović 1968, 69; 1969, 59; 1978, 130; Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 105; CBI 392; Perinić Muratović 2003, 100, cat. no. 1.45; Sinobad 2010, 216, cat. no. 215; HD068757 (07. 01. 2015); EDCS-28600253; lupa 13395

Comment: Votive altar erected by consular beneficiary of the legion *II Italica pia fidelis Severiana*. The altar was erected in the period when the consuls were *Severus Alexander Augustus II* and *Marcellus*. Until the Croatian War of Independence, the altar was stored in the church of St. Mary in Aljmaš, but during the war it was destroyed together with the church.

²⁴ France, Nelis-Clément 2014, 147.

²⁵ France, Nelis-Clément 2014, 171–172.

2. Altar of Caius Antonius Sabinus

Find site: Sotin (*Cornacum*)

Current location: Archaeological museum in Zagreb, inv. nr. 232

Material: sandstone

Dimensions: height 60 cm, width 34 cm, thickness 20 cm

Description: Votive altar of sandstone. The base of the monument is damaged. The crown is triple moulded. On the front of the monument, there is a five line inscription:

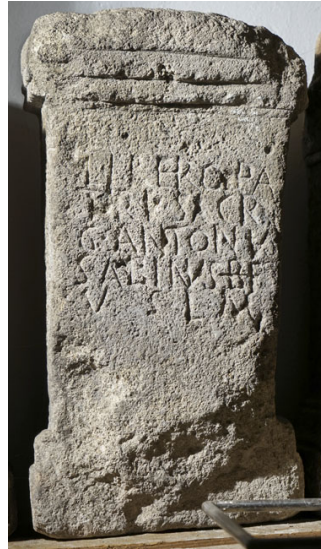
*Liberō Pa
tri sacr(um)
C(aius) Antonius
Sabinus b(ene)ff(iciarius) c[o(n)]s(ularis)
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*

Dating: 2nd-3rd century

Published: Brunšmid 1911, 131, nr. 232; Pinterović 1968, 70; 1978, 134; Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 105; ILLug 3014; CBI 423; Perinić Muratović 2003, 124, cat. no. 2.5; HD034830 (08. 09. 2016); EDCS-10102018; lupa 11576

Comment: Votive altar erected by consular beneficiary. The altar was found in 1906 in the courtyard of the school in Sotin.

Photo: lupa 11576



3. Altar of Titus Flavius Iustus

Find site: Osijek (*Mursa*)

Current location: Museum of Slavonia, Osijek, inv. nr. 9008

Material: sandstone

Dimensions: height 84,5 cm, width 53 cm, thickness 37 cm

Description: Votive altar of sandstone. It was broken into two parts, today connected together. The base is quadruple moulded; the crown is quintuple moulded with stylized acroterion at the edges. A *patera* is carved on the left and the right side. On the front of the monument, there is a six line inscription:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
T(itus) Fl(avius) Iustus*

[b(ene)]f(iciarius) [c]o(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) IIII
Macrino [et]
Celso co(n)[s(ulibus)]
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

Dating: 164 CE

Published: Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 101–102, nr. 1; Pinterović 1978, 128; CBI 413; Perinić Muratović 2003, 99, cat. no. 1.43; 2004, 106, cat. no. 6, fig. 3; Sinobad 2010, 214, cat. no. 203; HD011417 (26. 08. 2009); EDCS-09401550; lupa 11475

Comment: Votive altar erected by consular beneficiary of the legion IIII *Flavia Felix*. The altar was erected in the period when the consuls were *Macrinus* and *Celsus*. The altar was found in 1971 on Vladimir Nazor Square in Osijek's downtown, together with two other beneficiary altars (cat. no. 4 and 5).

Photo: M. Vukov, 2015.



4. Altar of Censorinus Maximus

Find site: Osijek (*Mursa*)

Current location: Museum of Slavonia, Osijek, inv. nr. 9007

Material: limestone

Dimensions: height 96 cm, width 46 cm, thickness 34 cm

Description: Votive altar of limestone. The base has a shallow plinth which continues with S-moulding (*cyma recta*) above which is a body of the monument with the inscription field. The crown begins with S-moulding (*cyma reversa*) followed by a horizontal band (*fascia*). Top of the crown is decorated with four pulvins on the edges and the volute triangular gable in the middle. An *urceus* is carved in the center of the left side and a *patera* is carved on the right. On the front of the monument there is a six line inscription:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
Censorinius
Maximus
b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)
acc(epta) missione
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*

Dating: around 164 CE

Published: Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 103, nr. 2; Pinterović 1978, 128; CBI 414; Perinić Muratović 2003, 98, cat. no. 1.41; 2004, 104, cat. no. 4; Sinobad 2010, 214, cat. no. 204; HD011414 (26. 08. 2009); EDCS-09401549; lupa 11470

Comment: Votive altar erected by consular beneficiary. The altar was found in 1971 on Vladimir Nazor Square in Osijek's downtown, together with two other beneficiary altars (cat. no. 3 and 5).

Photo: M. Vukov, 2015.



5. Altar of Iulius Salutaris

Find site: Osijek (Mursa)

Current location: Museum of Slavonia, Osijek, inv. nr. 9006

Material: sandstone

Dimensions: height 81,5 cm, width 43,5 cm, thickness 29 cm

Description: Votive altar of sandstone. The base has a shallow plinth which continues with S-moulding (*cyma recta*) and thin band above which is the body of the monument with the inscription field. The crown begins with thin band and S-moulding (*cyma reversa*) followed by a horizontal band (*fascia*). Top of the crown is decorated with four pulvins on the edges. An *urceus* is carved in the center of the left side and a *patera* is carved on the right. On the front of the monument, there is a seven line inscription:



*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
Iul(ius) Salu
taris be(neficiarius)
co(n)s(ularis) quod
aras in hunc
locum recollocavit*

Dating: after 170 CE

Published: Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 103–104, nr. 3; Pinterović 1978, 128; CBI 415; Perinić Muratović 2003, 98, cat. no. 1.42; 2004, 105, cat. no. 5; Sinobad 2010, 214, cat. no. 205; HD011420 (26. 08. 2009); EDCS-09401551; lupa 22552

Comment: Votive altar erected by consular beneficiary. The altar was found in 1971 on Vladimir Nazor Square in Osijek's downtown, together with two other beneficiary altars (cat. no. 3 and 4).

Photo: M. Vukov, 2015.

6. Altar of Caius Iulius Iulianus

Find site: Osijek (Mursa)

Current location: Museum of Slavonia, Osijek, inv. nr. 7244

Material: limestone

Dimensions: height 79 cm, width 45 cm, thickness 29 cm

Description: Votive altar of limestone. The base of the monument is missing and its crown is beaten off. On the front of the monument, there is a four line inscription:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
C(aius) Iul(ius) Iulia
nus b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis)
[l]eg(ionis) III Fl(aviae)
[---]*

Dating: 2nd century

Published: Pinterović 1958, 23–24; 1968, 67; 1978, 128, T. XXIII,1; Bulat, Pinterović 1967, 90, nr. 8; 1971, 105; IJug 1058; Perinić Muratović 2003, 98, cat. no. 1.39; 2004, 103, cat. no. 2;



Sinobad 2010, 214, cat. no. 202; HD011436 (14. 01. 2009); EDCS-10001062; lupa 26420

Comment: Votive altar erected by consular beneficiary of the legion IIII *Flavia Felix*. The altar was found in 18th or 19th Century in Osijek's downtown.

Photo: M. Vukov, 2015.

7. Altar of Lucius Marcius Avitus

Find site: Klisa

Current location: Museum of Slavonia, Osijek

Material: limestone

Dimensions: height 101 cm, width 63 cm, thickness 51,5 cm

Description: Votive altar of limestone. The base has a shallow plinth which continues with S-moulding (*cyma recta*) above which is the body of the monument with the inscription field. The crown is multiple moulded. An *urceus* is carved in the center of the left side and a *patera* is carved on the right. On the front of the monument, there is a five line inscription:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)
L(ucius) Marcius
Avitus
b(ene)[f](iciarius) proc(uratoris)
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*

Dating: 2nd-3rd century

Published: CIL III 13362; Brunšmid 1900, 187; Pinterović 1958, 58; 1978, 129, T. XVI-3; Bulat, Pinterović 1971, 105; CBI 416; Perinić Muratović 2003, 99, cat. no. 1.44; Sinobad 2010, 216, cat. no. 214; EDCS-31500074; lupa 26311

Comment: Votive altar erected by *beneficiarius procuratoris*. The altar was discovered in Klisa, which is located between Osijek and Vukovar. According to Brunšmid (1900, 187) the monument had originally been raised in Mursa.

Photo: M. Vukov, 2015.



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