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## The She-Wolf Motif with Romulus and Remus on a Tomb Stela of an Augustal from *Viminacium*

### Introduction

The emblem of the city of Rome with the she-wolf and twins has a specific meaning in provincial art. Considering coinage, the motif was in the obverse of the coin minted in the honour of establishing Rome as a city. It is rare in monumental provincial art and has a specific symbolical meaning. The image of a she-wolf with twins from the territory of *Moesia Superior* is known only from the tomb stela found at *Viminacium*. More often it occurs on sepulchral monuments in *Gallia*, *Noricum*, *Moesia Inferior*.

Stela (fig. 1) was found in 1987 during salvage archaeological excavations in the Southern cemetery of *Viminacium* (site Pećine). It was documented as C-12736 when discovered as *spolia* built in later tomb (G-5375) along with another fragmented stela (C-12737, C-12738) and bricks with the stamp LEGIIIIF. This tomb was dated by a coin of the emperor *Licinius* (308-324).

### Iconography of the stela

Stela is divided into four segments. Top segment is a relief depiction of deceased married couple (fig. 2). Second segment is a combination of two scenes with animals. The third segment is a field containing an inscription. The lowest segment is a relief depiction of the she-wolf with twins (figs. 3 and 4).

### The she-wolf and twins

Depictions of the she-wolf with twins in sepulchral art are very rare in Upper Moesia. So far we know of only two reliefs with this motif. One was found in *Viminacium* (located at Regional Museum in Požarevac)



Fig. 1 - Tomb stela of *T. Baebius Eutyclus*.



Fig. 2 - Detail of the upper part of the stela depicting married couple and frieze with animals.

la has no indication of the surrounding area. The upper part of stela from *Singidunum* is not preserved. The upper part of the stela from *Viminacium* is also damaged but contains a field with relief of a married couple. Two holes on the architrave suggest the existence of a pediment or possibly two facing lions that often crown stelae from *Viminacium* cemeteries.

The she-wolf with twins is a universal statement of Roman citizenship and acceptance of Roman tradition. That is the main reason why local aristocracy accepted it.

Examples of this scene are more often on stelae from Lower Pannonia (*Pannonia Inferior*) than in *Moesia*. There are stelae from *Sirmium* (Sremska Mitrovica), *Poetovio* (Ptuj), *Daruvar*, *Sopianae* and *Bastaje* near *Varaždin*.

and the other in *Singidunum*. The stela from *Singidunum* is known only through an old documentary drawing since the original was lost after discovery<sup>1</sup>.

If we compare these two reliefs several differences are noticed. The stela from *Viminacium* has its field with inscription flanked by two columns with oblique channeling above which are two rows of laurel, egg shaped leaves that is repeated again on capitals. The stela from *Singidunum* has the same concept of two columns flanking inscription field but there is a major difference. This one is flanked by smooth pilasters with Corinthian capitals.

In the base of both stelae she-wolf with twins is presented. On the stela from *Viminacium* the she-wolf is faced to the left, while on the stela from *Singidunum* she is facing right towards twins *Romulus* and *Remus*. The scene on the stela from *Singidunum* is placed in a mountain environment while the *Viminacium* ste-



Fig. 3 - Detail of lower part of stela depicting she-wolf (photo).



Fig. 4 - Detail of lower part of stela depicting she-wolf (drawing).

<sup>1</sup> SPASIĆ 1996, 159, No 13, MIRKOVIĆ 2003, 101–102, No 11; MIRKOVIĆ, DUŠANIĆ 1976, 62–63, No. 32.

The whole scene is often located in the lower part of stela (*Viminacium*, *Singidunum*, *Sirmium*, Ptuj and Daruvar), sometimes in the pediment (Ptuj, Čakovac and Zalalov) and rarely in an inner field<sup>2</sup>. Such stelae are also found in Hungarian parts of *Pannonia: Sopianae*, Szalónaka, Felsőraksa and Becsehely<sup>3</sup>.

An analogous scenes to the one we are presenting can be found on stela from *Sirmium*, which is today located in the museum in Temishvar<sup>4</sup>. The whole scene is located in artistically confined space imitating a cave.

On funeral monuments in the western provinces (Gaul, Noric, Upper and Lower Pannonia) scenes with the she-wolf can be found from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. During the same period it can be found also in the eastern provinces but less often. Burger offers the opinion that scenes presented in the lower parts of stela have analogies in funeral altars from Rome, and those scenes located in the pediment have analogy in *Ara Pacis*<sup>5</sup>.

### **Frieze with animals**

The Frieze consists of several running animals in relief. From left to right there is a bear fighting a wild boar and a dog chasing a rabbit. In Celtic mythology the bear is a symbol of warriors and the wild boar of priests. In Gallic stories a fight between bear and boar represents conflict between secular and religious authorities<sup>6</sup>. The dog chasing a rabbit is a common scene on sepulchral monuments. It is often depicted with the Thracian Hero or as a part of hunting scene.<sup>7</sup> Dog as a psychopomp predicts misfortune and death, while rabbit as a lunar animal symbolizes renewal of life but also and hint of death<sup>8</sup>.

### **Inscription**

D(is) M(anibus) | T(itus) Baeb(ius) Eutychi |  
 Aug(ustalis) Mun(icipii) Ael(ii) Vim(inacii) | qui v(ixit) a(nnis)  
 LXV et / Baebiae Marcel / lae eius | T(itus) Baeb(ius) Abascan |  
 tus aug(ustalis) eiusdem | mun(icipii) patronis

Both men mentioned in inscriptions from *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*, were in government service. *T. Baebius Eutychnus* was *augustalis municipii Aelii Viminacii*, as was *T. Baebius Abascantus*, *augustalis* of the same *municipium*. On the other hand *Sempronius Coba*, whose stela was found in Singidunum, was *princeps* of the Buba village located in Singidunum territory.

The name *Baebius* is of Latin origin. This was the nomen of the *gens Baebia* - a plebeian family of ancient Rome. There are several known consuls and praetors from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC from city of Rome with this name. During imperial expansion it is often found in *Italia* and *Pannonia*<sup>9</sup>.

It is obvious that the persons mentioned in this inscription are *libertini*. The «Omega» type bracelet on the woman's hand together with torques around her neck suggest Celtic origin. The native population of northern *Moesia* was Celtic (*Scordisci* tribe) before Roman conquest. Even Lower Pannonia where this name was common had Celtic population which was moved from Moesia at the time of conquest. She-wolf as a typical Roman traditional scene suggests a high impact of Romanization and emphasizes Roman

<sup>2</sup> DAUTOVA-RUŠEVLJAN 1983, 61–62, T.8/3; Mursa (Osijek).

<sup>3</sup> BURGER 1961, 55–57; *RIU*, 2, 24, No. 289.

<sup>4</sup> DAUTOVA-RUŠEVLJAN 1983, 61–62, T. 8/5.

<sup>5</sup> BURGER 1961, 58.

<sup>6</sup> CHEVALIER, GHEERBRANT 1987, 396, 743.

<sup>7</sup> CERMANOVIĆ-KUZMANOVIĆ 1962-1963, 113–123.

<sup>8</sup> CHEVALIER, GHEERBRANT 1987, 476.

<sup>9</sup> LÖRINCZ, REDŐ 1994, 268.

citizenship granted to *libertini*. Although their ethnic origin cannot be defined securely as Celtic this seems to be the most likely interpretation.

This stela can be dated only through relative means. *T. Baebius Eutyclus* and *T. Baebius Abascantus* were *augustalis municipii Aelii Viminacii*. Therefore dating must be within years from 117 to 239 AD, when *Viminacium* held status of *municipium*. City was raised to the status of *municipium* during Hadrian's reign after 117 AD. The style and characteristics of portraits also correspond to the age of Hadrian (117-138) and his wife *Vibia Sabina*.

The she-wolf with twins motif is present on funeral monuments through first and first half of the second centuries AD. It is a particularly favored motif during Hadrian's reign and often is related to an early celebration of 900 years from the foundation of Rome which normally would have been in 146/147 AD.

### **Augustals and their role in the provinces**

Title augustal is mentioned seven times on monuments from Upper Moesia (*Moesia Superior*):

*Singidunum* (Belgrade, sarcophagus)<sup>10</sup>

*Ratiaria*, found in *Timacum Minus* (Ravna, stela)<sup>11</sup>

*Margum* (Dubravica, ara)<sup>12</sup>

*Viminacium* (Kostolac, 3 inscriptions)<sup>13</sup>

An inscription on stela from *Viminacium* mentions two Augustals *T. Baebius Eutyclus* and *T. Baeb(ius) Abascantus*. Both of them were members of that order during Hadrian's reign or shortly afterwards (Reign of Antoninus Pius).

*Thall( )* and *Telesphorus* are two further Augustals of the same *municipium* who during reign of Antoninus Pius and Gordianus III (when *Viminacium* becomes *colonia* (in 239 AD).

In the year period 117 – 239 AD of *Viminacium* being a *municipium*, we have four known Augustals.

The fifth *Augustal* whose name remains unknown dates from period of *col(oniae) Vim(inacii)*. City was raised to the rank of *colonia* in 239 AD.

*Augustales* were normally imperial freedmen (*libertini*), as confirmed on several inscriptions. *Thall(?)* from *Viminacium* is a freedman, as well as *P. Aelio Aug(usti) Aprioni*, augustal of *colonia Ratiaria*, who gained his freedom during the reign of Hadrian or shortly afterwards. Other Augustals like *Ulp(ius) Trophim[us]*, an augustal from *Singidunum*, gained his freedom in the age of Trajan.

On the funeral monument of *T. Baebius* his official position is emphasized not just with scroll but also with the depiction of the she-wolf and twins. She-wolf is an ancient scene even for the Roman age. It symbolizes tradition and celebrates Roman citizenship. Other Augustals point their position simply by holding a scroll.<sup>14</sup> The she-wolf with twins as the symbol of the *Urbs aeterna* gains special meaning in distant provincial art. Normally it is found on monuments raised by official magistrates, but not as a rule. The same scene could be found in non municipal settlements in Africa. On the stela from Vina, close to the Julian colony of Neapolis (Nabeul), a *magister* of peregrine *civitas* is mentioned. An inscription from El Haouaria, mentioning *praefectus iure dicundo*, also indicates semi municipal status<sup>15</sup>.

With the expansion of cities in provinces and development of local autonomies and semi autonomies imperial office had a need for influence in local societies. *Augustales* were hardly just a simple order of

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<sup>10</sup> MIRKOVIĆ, DUŠANIĆ 1976, 72, 47.

<sup>11</sup> PETROVIĆ 1995, 77–78, 24.

<sup>12</sup> MIRKOVIĆ 1986, 213, 315.

<sup>13</sup> 3 inscriptions; MIRKOVIĆ 1986, 112, 76; 113–114,78; 116–117,84.

<sup>14</sup> PETROVIĆ 1995, 77–78, 24.

<sup>15</sup> JOVANOVIĆ 2007, 203–204.

priests taking care of the imperial cult. The scroll in their hand suggests more administrative office and maybe protection of the Emperor's interests in their absence than simple priest duties. The whole priest order could be front cover to background duties with higher importance in local communities. Organizing games in the name of the royal family was another way for imperial promotion in regions where the Emperor was often not immediately present for long periods.

Loyalty was also a possible problem and the solution to it was seen in appointing freedmen (*libertini*) to this office. Former slaves had opportunity to reach high positions in the local community and were well suited for the job. They formed a collegium and were appointed by the *decuriones*, or senate of the *municipium*. The *Augustales* ranked next in dignity to the *decuriones* and in time become a wealthy class.

The last *Augustales* disappear before middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. This process could be related to degeneration of the imperial power and a transition from adoptive to military emperors. It is notable that their disappearance is related to change in imperial philosophy. They are no longer linking their power to ancient tradition and the Julian family but to military force. This is also the age when she-wolf disappears from Roman iconography.

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