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FUNERARY MONUMENTS FROM THE SITE OF VAROŠIŠTE NEAR POŽEGA

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Rezumat. Siturile arheologice cele mai apropiate de Varošište, respectiv Požega și Blaškovina, au fost cunoscute de la începutul secolului XX, fiind menționate de Nikola VULIĆ și Petar PETROVIĆ. Descoperirea de monumente funerare în situl de la Varošište, la începutul sec. XXI, demonstrează că monumentele nu au fost descoperite *in situ* și au o origine necunoscută. Tipologia acestor trei monumente este cea de *cipus*, din care unul de tip stela și două plăci din curte sunt de tipul *maceria cincta*. Pe cele două *cipi* apar reprezentări de Attis și femei, iar stela și *cipus*-ul apar deteriorate.

Cuvinte cheie: perioadă romană, monumente funerare, *cipi*, stela, zonă *maceria cincta*, Attis.

1. Introduction

The site of Varošište is located in the vicinity of the town of Požega, western part of Serbia, in the territory of what used to be the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia (Fig. 1). The site has not been discussed previously in the literature, although the sites of Požega, Visibaba, Blaškovina have been known by the findings of Roman lions and funerary monuments since the beginning of 20 century as well as the end of 20 century¹. At the site of Varošište four tombstones were identified, three being of *cipus* type and one of *stela* type, as well as two grave parapet slabs of the type *area maceria cincta*. The monuments were not found *in situ*, but it is not known where they had been brought from.



Fig. 1. Varošište.

In the territory of the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia funerary monuments of the *cipus* type are somewhat less frequent when compared to the funerary monuments of the *stela* type. They are most often located in the areas in the vicinity of the rivers Drina and Lim called Podrinje and Polimlje². Since the territory of the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia is specific in many aspects, this is where first

¹ Буђић, Петровић, 1983, p. 32, н. 21, Т. V; *Ibidem*, p. 26.

² Зотовић, 1995, p. 24.

such specificity may be identified – a female figure appearing at the lateral side of the *cipus*. The appearance of a human figure at the *cipi* in the territory of the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia is extremely rare. That is why the representation of a female figure in the *cipus* at the site of Varošiste is highly atypical and important (cat. no 2). The closest analogy to this monument may be found in Komini near Pljevlja, a representation of a woman in the *cipus* of Paconia Montana³. Yet another specific feature of funerary monuments from the territory of the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia is variability in representations on tombstones. For instance, at the lateral part of a *stela* from Skelani there is a relief picturing a hunt, which is actually a style of decorating the *cipi*⁴. Thus it may be concluded that this style is actually autochthonous in nature, and that it is yet another characteristic of funerary monuments from the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia that migrated from the *cipus* to the *stela* owing to a personal wish of the person ordering the monument. Representations of women holding an object in their hands is frequent in funerary monuments of the cube type⁵. That is why it can be concluded that this instance as well is the case of migrating representations from funerary cubes to the *cipi* within an autochthonous style, i.e. a personal wish of the client and not the book of samples, the so-called “Müsterbucher”.

The appearance of Attis in the *cipus* from Blaškovina (cat. no 1) is common in the area of the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia. Mithras and his dadoxphi⁶ were also often confused with Attis, but Attis mostly meant a shepherd who was loved or would be loved by Cybele, through that love he led to castration, and from whose blood violets would grow in the end⁷. Attis is primarily a deity of youth and vegetation, personification of the full-blown revival of Nature, and thus could also be associated with the chthonic culture, where what is already dead is revived and its path to the light of heavenly life is illuminated. In the Roman times Attis was present in the cult as early as 1st century AD. Thus we find him presented in two different ways: dressed, with no wings, relying on a *pedum*, and naked, with wings, one hand either holding a torch or resting on the hip⁸. In the monument from Varošiste Attis is dressed, without wings, his legs crossed, and he leaning on the *pedum*, shepherd’s staff. It may be assumed that in this capacity, as a shepherd, he is also associated with Silvanus, or, in other words, he is to lead the souls of the dead to heavenly woods and clearings where Silvanus rules.

These *cipus* type monuments were often used for graves of *area maceria cincta* type, i.e. they were surrounded by parapet slabs, making up a single funerary unit. Such two parapet slabs were also found at the site of Varošiste (cat. no 5 and 6). It can be concluded that in the vicinity of this locality, which was previously unknown, there

³ Цермановић, Кузмановић, 1968, p. 202, T. I/2, T II/3, 4.

⁴ Зотовић, 1995, p. 20-21.

⁵ Зотовић, 1995, p. 125-130.

⁶ Vermaseren 1966, p. 13.

⁷ Замуровић, 1936, p. 66; Срејовић, Цермановић, Кузмановић, 1979, p. 64.

⁸ Vermaseren, 1966, p. 14-17.

were such funerary units of the type *area maceria cincta*.

As far as decorative elements are concerned, they were found only in one monument (cat. no 1). The decorative elements were garlands and grape clusters. The motif of plant calyces was used to form the garlands, one of the most frequent decorative elements in both the *cipi* and in funerary cubes and *stelae*. In the middle of the garland there was usually the ivy leaf motif, appearing along with the grape cluster motif. In the territory of the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia, these decorative elements were actually most frequent in funerary monuments of the *cipus* type, especially in the north, in the vicinity of Užice and Požega. The ivy leaf and grape cluster motifs suggest believing in Dionysus, who was certainly connected to the chthonic world, as well as to the belief in enjoying eternal life.

For the *stela* it cannot be determined to which type of *stelae* it belonged since it had sunk into the ground front first, thus preventing more precise dating (cat. no 4).

As for the rest of the monuments, they can be dated to a wider time range, from the second half of 2nd century to the end of 3rd century.

2. Catalogue

1. Funerary monument of *cipus* type, made of limestone, preserved in a fragmented state, dimensions: 105 × 78 × 56 cm. The monument is chipped and gravely damaged, so that only a part of the front and lateral sides are visible. In the front the inscription field is chipped, and under the relief field there is a barely visible garland decorative ornament. On the left lateral side, in the relief



field, the lower part of the Attis figure has been preserved, in the crossed legs position and resting on the *pedum*. Beneath the relief field there is a barely visible garland and grape cluster decorative ornament. The inscription and relief fields are framed by a simple triple molding with no decoration (Fig. 2, 3, 4).

2. Funerary monument of *cipus* type, made of limestone, rather damaged and sunk into the ground, dimensions 73×67 cm. The lower part of the lateral relief field is visible, framed by a simple triple molding with no decorative elements. In the relief field, the lower part of a female figure is visible from the shoulder down. A woman dressed in a long robe, with her right arm hanging down and her left bent at the elbow. She is holding an object in each hand, but the shape of the objects can no longer be distinguished.



3. Funerary monument, chipped and preserved in a fragmentary state (possibly part of the previous one, since it was located next to it), made of limestone, dimensions 45×64 cm. The monument has sunk into the ground, and only the rear part of the monument is visible (Fig. 7).

←

4. Funerary monument of *stela* type, made of limestone, damaged and sunk into the ground, dimensions $80 \times 20 \times 168$ cm. The front side of the monument facing the ground and sunk, and a part of the lower left side chipped off (Fig. 5).

→



5. Limestone slab measuring $30 \times 93 \times 116$ cm. Left lateral side and bottom lateral side visible, with a simple molding into narrow “cassettes”. The slab was probably used as part of funerary architecture in the grave of *area maceria cincta* type, as part of the fence (Fig. 6).

←

6. Made of limestone, sunk into the ground, dimensions 120×170 cm. The worked part barely visible, shaped into a narrow cassette. Like the previous one, it may have belonged to the funerary unit of *area maceria cincta* type and used as part of the fence.

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