

CULT OF SILVANUS IN *SINGIDUNUM* AREA

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Rezumat. În zona *Singidunum* cultul lui Silvanus a fost identificat doar pe două monumente votive. Motivația absenței acestuia trebuie căutată în puținele cercetări arheologice realizate pentru această zonă. Monumentele în care este menționat Silvanus fac trimitere la atribuțiile sale de *Silvester* și *Augustus Conservator*, protector al pădurii sau cel care protejează și păzește. Aceste atribuții se potrivesc cu natura sa, fiind cunoscută calitatea sa de protector al pădurilor, crângurilor și al animaleor care creșteau acolo, pentru a deveni ulterior un zeu al câmpurilor, al plantelor și protector al granițelor. Atributul de “sfânt” și “protector” subliniază aspectele legate de caracteristicile ce-l fac pe Silvanus o divinitate a pantheonului roman ca și protector al granițelor. Monumentele descoperite pot fi încadrate cel mai probabil la începutul secolului al II-lea dHr.

Cuvinte cheie: perioada romană, *Singidunum*, Silvanus, cult, al pădurii, sfânt, protector al granițelor.

In the area of *Singidunum* only two votive monuments dedicated to Silvanus¹ have been identified to date. The reason for this may be insufficient archaeological explorations of *Singidunum* whose urban centre lies underneath the urban centre of modern day Belgrade (**Fig. 1**). On the other hand, however, when we look at the findings dedicated to god Jupiter, as numerous as in any other urban centres of the Roman Empire, we may wonder whether it is the only reason. The other reason may be that god Silvanus was not widely worshipped in the area of *Singidunum* and that dedications to him were rather sporadic.

God Silvanus was primarily god of forests and flocks grazing in the forests, and then also god of fields, crops and all vegetation, and he was also venerated as a protector of boundaries (*tutor finium*)². Therefore he was primarily seen as god of uncultivated land and boundaries separating fields from forests³. It is believed that this deity originated from separation of epithets of gods Faunus (*silvicola Faunus*) or Mars (*Marti Silvano*). Since Mars was initially god of vegetation and flocks, when he later became god of war his attributes developed into an independent deity, Silvanus. Since he was also seen as a deity of forests, flocks and all vegetation, he was often identified with Faunus or Pan. However, he was venerated as a protector of boundaries, so each house

¹ Вулић, 1931, p. 7, n. 7; Mirković, Dušanić, 1976, p. 56-57, n. 22, p. 130, n. 108.

² Замуровић, 1936, p. 374.

³ Срејовић, Цермановић Кузмановић, 1979, p. 383.

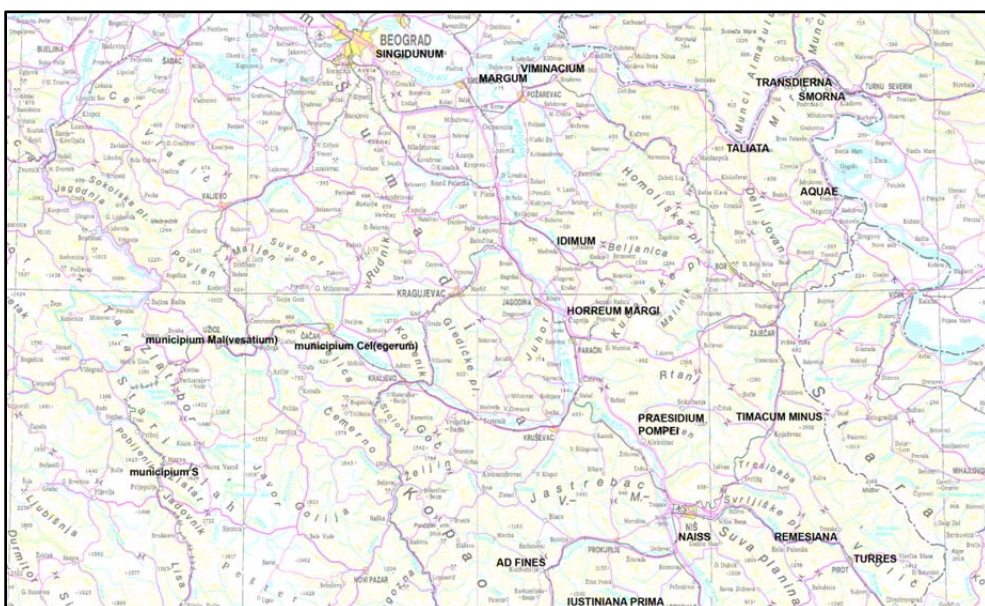


Fig. 1. Central Serbia in the roman period.

had three of his statues. One of the statues was connected to the house (*Silvanus Larum* or *domesticus*), the other to the fields (*Silvanus agrestis*), and the third was placed on the boundary where two or more estates began (*Silvanus orientalis* or *custos*)⁴. As he most often and with most pleasure dwelled in thick and dark forests and used to frighten lonely travellers at night by his cries, it was such travellers who invoked him for protection. That was probably why he was later also favoured among the military men. Soldiers invoked him asking him for blessing and protection. Silvanus, as a protector of homes, could also frighten women in labour, and that is why they invoked him along with Devera who protected women in labour from Silvanus' noise⁵.

As a god of forests and flocks Silvanus was also musical, so he appeared in the company of Pans and nymphs, and flute was dedicated to him. The first fruits were sacrificed to him, grapes, ears of wheat, wine, milk, meat, and bacon.

He was most often depicted as an old man in love with goddess Pomona, with a sickle in his left hand and a twig in his right, wearing a wreath of various field flowers on his head. Sometimes he was depicted also as a boy or a youth, but such images were quite rare. In the territory of Serbia there was one such figurine from the area of Požega⁶. He was represented also as Aegipan since he was identified with the Greek Pan, as half-man half-goat deity, most often in the company of a dog. One such votive relief is kept in the National Museum in Užice, but the location of this find is unknown⁷.

⁴ Замуровић, 1936, p. 375.

⁵ Срејовић, Цермановић Кузмановић, 1979, p. 105-106.

⁶ Zotović, 1995, p. 102-104; Zotović 2016, p. 22.

⁷ Zotović, 1994, p. 177-178; Zotović 2016, p. 22.

Silvanus was also very much present in *interpretatio romana*, with the deities of native tribes, especially of Dacia, Dalmatia, Pannonia and Africa⁸. He appeared particularly often in *interpretatio romana* of the deities of native tribes in the interior part of Dalmatia province⁹.

The closest analogies to the findings from *Singidunum* were the votive monuments dedicated to Silvanus from *Viminacium*. Four votive monuments dedicated to Silvanus were identified in *Viminacium*, three of them belonging to independent Silvanus' cult¹⁰. There Silvanus was designated as *silvestris*, *sacrum domestico* and *domestico*. The fourth monument was dedicated to the joint cult Diana – Apollo – Silvanus, and there Silvanus was without attributes¹¹. Diana and Silvanus were often in joint cults because of the link to forests and pastures and also the company of nymphs. In this case Apollo is in a joint cult with them because of music and the sibling relationship with Diana.

Votive monuments dedicated to Silvanus from *Singidunum* show a classical Roman model in their morphological tectonics sense. Although the capital of the first monument is partly damaged (**Fig. 2**), it is obvious that the monument had the capital as the canopy. The second monument is better preserved (**Fig. 3**) and acroteria are visible in the corners of the capital. This shows that these monuments were influenced by classical Roman plastic art where votive monuments represented stylised and rather simplified front of the temple¹². In such simplicity and austerity the capital was the actual roof of the temple, and the body of the votive monument was the temple pillar. In these two monuments Silvanus was designated as *Silvanus silvestri* and *Augusto conservatori*. Thus, in the former case, Silvanus, frightening the travellers and soldiers, but also protecting them in the dark forests, was venerated and asked to be merciful. In the latter, Silvanus is a sacred guardian and protector, which certainly refers to the boundaries, limits between two or more estates. Such characteristics showed him in his natural position of the Roman Silvanus, with no influence of native beliefs.

Onomastic formulae of the dedicants indicate that Silvanus was venerated as far back as the Trajan times (**Fig. 3**). Such early veneration of Roman Silvanus in the area of *Singidunum* might have been due to increased circulation of population in the area of *Singidunum*, and thus also potential relocation of already Romanised population to the area of *Singidunum*.

Finally, it may be concluded that in this period the Roman *Singidunum* most probably had no temple of the god Silvanus and that his rare and sporadic votive monuments were contributed to the temple of some other deity. As for belief in god Silvanus, it is obvious that it corresponds to the full Romanisation of the dedicants, and thus god Silvanus was worshiped in his natural position of Roman Silvanus, god of all vegetation and forests, and protector of boundaries.

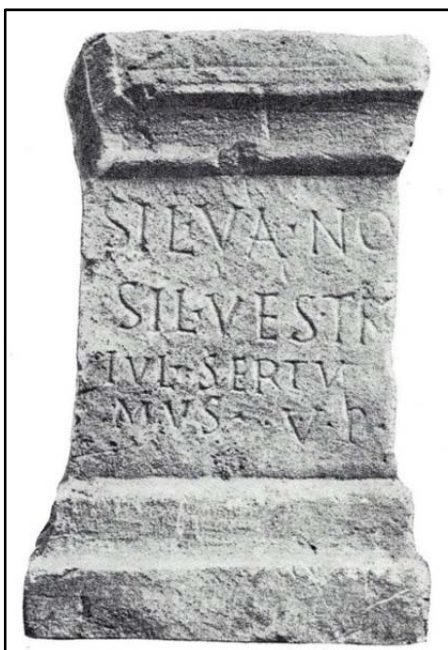
⁸ Срејовић, Цермановић Кузмановић, 1979, p. 384.

⁹ Imamović, 1977, p. 54, 55-82.

¹⁰ Mirković, 1988, p. 80, 197-198, 201, n. 41, 300, 310.

¹¹ Mirković, 1988, p. 196-197, n. 297.

¹² Zotović, 2016, p. 7.



1. Ara, limestone, dimensions: 0,47 × 0,24 × 0,25 m. Capital partly damaged. Location: Belgrade, Vračar area.

*Silvano/ Silvestr[ij]/ Iul(ius)
Se<p>tu/mus v(otum) p(osuit).*¹³

Fig. 2.



2. Ara, limestone, dimensions: 0,39 × 0,26 × 0,12 m. Primitive workmanship. Acroteria are visible in the corners of the capital. Location: Guberevac.

*Silvano Au(gusto)/ Conservato(ri)/ M.
Ulp(ius) Teren/tius cum sui<s>/
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*¹⁴

Fig. 3.

¹³ Вулић, 1931, p. 7, n. 7; *IMS*, I, p. 56-57, n. 22.

¹⁴ *IMS*, I, p. 130, n. 108.

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