

THE NEW EPIGRAPHIC MONUMENT OF IMPERIAL CULT IN HISTRIA

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During 1997-1999 construction work on the renovation and adaptation of the Italian Community headquarters in Pula (1 Carrarina street), a large number of fragments of stone monuments from the period of Antiquity were found built into mediaeval and recent foundation walls¹.

There is the one fragment of particular interest among them, found in secondary use as building material for early mediaeval fortification of city gate, and presently kept in the Archaeological Museum of Istria. It is broken off on the left side, above and below; a section of the original edge is preserved only on the right side of the inscribed field. Also, the original smoothly polished back side is preserved. Dimensions of the limestone monument are: 56 × 54 × 40 cm. Height of the letters is 6 cm in the 1st line, 4 cm in the 2nd line and 4 cm in the 3rd line. The letters are carefully cut, damaged in places (especially in the 2nd line, before and after C), with small triangular punctuation marks between the words. The letters T in the 1st line and I in the 2nd line are elongated. A decorated patera is represented in relief (diameter 23 cm) under three preserved lines of inscription. The inscribed field is damaged on all sides. An augur's staff is represented in the relief on the right lateral side (25 × 14 cm).

 [.]VGVSTO . S[.]
 [.] VIBIV[S P]V[---]
 [---] L
 (patera)

* Arheološki Muzej Istre.

1. STARAC, A., "Istraživanja kod Herkulovih vrata, Antički epigrafski spomenici", *Sportula dissertationum Marino Zaninović dicata, Opusc. Archaeol.* 23-24, 1999-2000, 133-142.



 [A]ugusto s[ac(rum)]
 [.] Vibiu[s P]u[----]
 [p(osuit)] l(ibens)
 (patera)

A fragment of the monument with a dedication, a frontal relief of the vessel for sacrifices (*pat-
era*) and a lateral relief of an augur's staff (*lituus*)
were undoubtedly of sacral character². The monu-
ment seems to be closely related to the inscription
from Škocjan, which was the base of a statue of
Augustus as augur and which is dated to 14 AD³.
Dimensions of the entirely preserved base from
Škocjan are 70 × 70 × 40 cm, what corresponds to
the dimensions of the monument from Pula. The
language and the form of the letters support the
dating of our inscription to the late augustean or
tiberian age. Another similarity between two monu-
ments is the relief of the augur's staff on the right
lateral side. A monument erected to Augustus dur-
ing his lifetime (14 AD as more likely) would
include the title *Imp(eratori) Caesari divi f(ilio) /
Augusto*. A monument raised commemoratively
after Augustus' death on 19 August 14 AD would
contain the formulation *Divo / Augusto*.

The dedicant of the base from Škocjan is not
known — it must be a community (the colony of
Tergeste or the Roman state?)⁴. A private individ-
ual from Pula, probably from a high ranking
social class of the colony of Pola, a certain Vibius,
offered the monument to a divine emperor. It
seems that Vibius has no filiation. Because of a
damaged surface of the monument, the second
preserved line could be read in several ways. The
onomastic formula of the dedicant probably
could be read including cognomen: [.] *Vibiu[s
P]u[dens?]*. The other, less convincing possibility
to complete the name would include the filiation
and the mention of the Velina voting tribe: [.]
Vibiu[s] C(ai) [f(ilius)] V[el(ina tribu)], but there is
no space for the filiation. The lecture of the last
line containing only the last letter is also problem-

atic. Hypothetical sacrificial formula [p(osuit)]
l(ibens) instead of v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)
represents the relatively rare, although epigraphi-
cally attested feature, and shows a characteristic of
a private inscription, not of an official one. How-
ever, it was rather expensive dedication; although
any magistrature, priesthood or association is not
mentioned, it is obvious that only member of the
upper municipal class could be able to support an
expense for the statue base.

Vibii are one of the most frequent families in
northern Italy. It originated from central Italy
where Caius was an especially characteristic
praenomen of the senatorial family of Vibii⁵. The
Vibii were economically powerful in northern
Italy, partially from metallurgy and trading activi-
ties, and they were centred on Aquileia and Pola⁶.
Vibii were fairly common in the province of Dal-
matia also; in the liburnian municipium of
Flanona they were related to the leading family of
the Aquilii (*CIL* III, 3032), at Narona they appear
in sevirate (*CIL* III, 1770, 1835), but only in Epi-
daurum did they appear as magistrates (*CIL* III,
1750). In Pula they were evidently economically
important, which was reflected in an increased
number of freedmen. The bearers of the name of
Vibius were in first place in the list of representa-
tion of individual families in Pula with 22 inscrip-
tions and 36 individuals, but there was no men-
tion of a certainly eminent individual, of
aristocracy or municipal magistrates. Socially they
belonged mostly to the middle strata as freedmen.
Some of them were members of the board of six
priests in charge of the imperial cult (*seviri
augustales*) in the first half and middle of first cen-
tury AD⁷. Although the respectable senatorial fam-
ilies of Apuleii, Cassii, Calpurnii, Servilii, Statilii
and Valerii were known to had had connections
with Pola and Histria, it would be difficult to sug-
gest that the Vibii of Pola could be connected in
some way with the senatorial dynasty of Vibius, at
its height of influence specifically in the Augustan

2. I would like to thank Marjeta Šašel Kos and Claudio Zac-
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tion of the monument.

3. *Ilt* X/4 337, [I]mp(eratori) Caesari / divi f(ilio) Augusto /
pontif(ici) maxim(o) / trib(unicia) potest(ate) XXXVII /
co(n)s(uli) XIII p(atrici) p(atriciae) sacrum.

4. ŠAŠEL, J., "Iuliae Alpes", *Opera selecta*. Situla 30, 1992, 432-
449, 442; ZACCARIA, C., *Tergeste - ager tergestinus et Tergesti
adtributus. Regio X. Venetia et Histria. (Suppl. It. 10)*, Roma 1992,
235; ROSSI, R.F., "Insediamenti e popolazioni del territorio di
Tergeste e delle aree limitrofe", *Scritti di storia romana*, Trieste
1996, 267-278, 267-268.

5. TASSAUX, F., "La population et la société de Parentium",
AAAd 27, 1985, 157-182, 162; BANDELLI, G., "Per una storia
della classe dirigente di Aquileia repubblicana", *Les bourgeoisies
municipales italiennes aux I^e et I^e s. av. J.-C.*, Naples 1981, 194-
202, nr. 2,4,5,15,16; SYME, R., *L'aristocrazia augustea, le grandi
famiglie gentilizie dalla repubblica al principato* (2.ed.it.), Milano
1993, 210, 259, 334-335, 353.

6. CALDERINI, A., *Aquileia romana*, Milano 1930, 568; PANCIERA,
S., *Vita economica di Aquileia in età romana, (Quaderni dell'Asso-
ciazione Nazionale per Aquileia 6)*, Aquileia 1957, 30.

7. *Ilt* X/1 126, 127; "Notiziario epigrafico (a cura di Fulvia
Mainardis e Claudio Zaccaria)", *AqN* 65, 1994, 261-328, 263-
265.

and Tiberian periods; there was no epigraphical evidence for such a connection⁸.

The discovery of a votive monument to an emperor in a secondary fortification use at the late Republican gate of Hercules in Pula means that the monument possibly would have been placed somewhere in the vicinity, although there exists a strong possibility that the monument was moved from the original position on the forum that was situated on the opposite side of the town in the mediaeval period, because of the urgent needs for protection from war attacks. There exists example of the analogous transportation from the forum to the city walls and gates during mediaeval war periods⁹. It is rather unlikely that a religious connection exists between the emperor statue base and the altar dedicated to Hercules that is discovered just next to the gate of Hercules at the same excavations campaign 1997-1998. Altar of Hercules, originally located in the area of the propugnaculum of the city gate dedicated to the same deity, is the fifth inscription dedicated to Hercules, the patron of colony, to be discovered to the present in Pula¹⁰. The mapped finds of monuments to Hercules in Pula show the densest concentration just at the gate of Hercules, particularly along the road leading outside the city walls towards the amphitheatre. A structure of the cult of Hercules (aedes) was located in this area, and is built and dedicated most probably in the third quarter of the first century BC, in the first years of the newly founded roman colony of Pola¹¹. But, not a single one dedication to Hercules, found in the vicinity, has any connection to Augustus' cult.

It is generally regarded that Augustus' veneration in the west began on August 1, 12 BC, when Drusus consecrated the altar in Lugudunum (Liv. Epit. 139); his deification was part of a complex process which started with Caesar in the roman Republic but was based on much older Egyptian,

oriental and hellenistic traditions¹². The cult of emperor's divinity was regularly worshipped in all major centres, in colonies as well as in municipalities: forum temples or *Augustea* decorated inside with imperial statues were the centres of the cult. The ordinary priest of Augustus was a flamen; the office was held by members of the highest classes. In spite of the existence of the Augustus' temple in Pula, there are no epigraphic testimonies of flamines. The imperial cult in its other various forms is very well attested in the territories of Histrian roman colonies, especially by the numerous inscriptions of *seviri augustales*¹³. Beside the Augustus' temple on the forum of Pula, in its north-eastern corner, an object probably connected in some way with the imperial cult, schola or collegium, was built; inside the absidal object richly decorated in marble has been found an imperial statue¹⁴. Similar situation could be found in the neighbouring municipium of Nesactium¹⁵. Another inscription dedicated to the divine emperor, *Augustus ut deus*, is already known in Pula: this is the votive title of Augustus' temple¹⁶. The dedication on the Augustus' temple, the newly found statue base from Pula and the votive monument from Škocjan are the only histrian epigraphic testimonies of the specific form of worship of the emperor directly as God¹⁷.

Outside Histria, the similar dedications to the imperial divinity or *Lares Augusti* can be found in

8. DEGRASSI, A., *Inscriptiones Italiae XIII. Fasti et elogia. Fasciculus 1. Fasti consulares et triumphales*, Roma 1947, 59, 61, 185; SYME, o.c., 259, 334-5, 645; PIR V 392, 384, 396, 388; TASSAUX, F., "Laecanii. Recherches sur une famille sénatoriale d'Istrie", *MEFRA* 94, 1982, 227-269; TASSAUX, F., "L'implantation territoriale des grandes familles d'Istrie", *AttiCMT Quaderno* 13, 2, 1984, 193-229.

9. WEISSHÄUPL, R., "Zur Topographie des alten Pola", *JÖAI* 4, 1901, 169-208, 187.

10. *IIt X/1* 4-6; "Notiziario epigrafico...", o.c., 267; n. 4, STARAC, o.c., 134.

11. *IIt X/1* 5, *C(aius) Domitius . f(i)lius --- II viri aedem] / Herculis / d(e) d(ecurionum) s(ententia) c(oeraverunt) i[(demque) p(robaverunt)]*.

12. TAYLOR, L.R., *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, New York 1975, 182-245; PEKÁRY, T., *Das römische Kaiserbildnis in Staat, Kult und Gesellschaft, dargestellt anhand der Schriftquellen. Das römische Herrscherbild*, Berlin 1985, 42-65; FISHWICK, D., "Augustus Deus and Deus Augustus", *Hommages à Maerten J. Vermaseren*, Leiden 1978, 375-380; FISHWICK, D., "The Development of Provincial Ruler Worship in the Western Roman Empire", *ANRW II*, 16, 2, Berlin, New York 1978, 1204-1210; FISHWICK, D., *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West. Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire I-II*, Leiden, New York, København, Köln 1991, 84-86, 475-590; FISHWICK, D., "Numen Augusti", *Britannia* 20, 1989, 231-234; FISHWICK, D., "Numinibus Aug(ustorum)", *Britannia* 25, 1994, 127-141.

13. Including the last finds, in Pula epigraphically is attested a number of 38 *seviri*. STARAC, A., "Stanovništvo kolonije Pole u epigrafičkim spomenicima", *ŽA* 41-2, 1992, 79-107, 87.

14. GNIRS, A., "Neue Funde vom Forum civile in Pola", *JfA* 4, 1910, 172-187.

15. ROSADA, G., "Lares e culto dell'imperatore presso il foro di Nesactium?", *Histria Antiqua* 4, 1998, 127-137, 131-133.

16. *IIt X/1* 21, *Romae et Augusto Caesari divi f(ilio) patri patriae*.

17. TASSAUX, F., "Les dieux augustes en Istrie", *Međunarodni znanstveni skup "Arheološka istraživanja u Istri"*, Poreč 25-28. X 1994 (*Izdanja HAD-a* 18), Zagreb 1997, 77-84; FISHWICK, o.c., 1991, 436. About Augustus' temple in Pula taken as an *augusteum*: HÄNLEN-SCHAFFER, H., *Veneratio Augusti. Eine Studie zu den Tempeln des ersten römischen Kaisers*, Roma 1985, 149-150, 244-246; MAYER, M., "Qué es un augusteum?", *Histria Antiqua* 4, 1998, 63-70.

relative proximity: contemporary with base from Škocjan, at year 14 AD, another monument was dedicated to Augustus in Aquileia¹⁸. In the Regio X of northern Italy to which belonged Histria, the dedications to Augustus, as well as to the later emperors, and especially to the genius or numen of a living emperor are rather common¹⁹. Two altars dedicated to Lares Augusti were found in the territory of Emona²⁰. Considering the neighbouring province of Dalmatia, in its northern part named Liburnia only one direct epigraphical evidence of the veneration of emperor's divinity is known: this is the altar of Divus Augustus, erected on the island of Pag a short period after Augustus' death 14 AD (CIL III, 3113). Not only a number of the inscriptions of seviri, but also several groups of imperial statues have been discovered on the coast of the Roman province of Dalmatia. In the liburnian municipalities of Apsorus and Aenona as well as in the dalmatian municipalities of Oneum, Issa, Salona and Narona a numerous fragments of marble imperial statues were found, between them the statues of divine Augustus and of Tiberius as a priest²¹. The existence of the Ara Augusta accompanied with the dedications to Divus Augustus, Roma and Genius loci was attested in Oneum (AÉ 1992, 1373 a; AÉ 1996, 1206 a). In the dalmatian colony of Narona where a dedication to Augustus (CIL III, 1769) has already been known, recently it was discovered an extraordinary group of marble statues and epigraphic dedications to emperor's deity which confirms our knowledge of the developed imperial cult in that city acquired on the basis of known augustales' inscriptions²².

In the whole province of Dalmatia, the earliest epigraphical evidence of the divinity of Octavianus was that from Tasovčići near the Neretva

18. CIL V, 852, *Imp(eratori) Caesari divi f(ilio) pontif(ici) max(imo) trib(unicia) potest(ate) XXXVIII co(n)s(uli) XIII p(atr) p(atriciae) sacrum*.

19. CIL V, 2812, *Patavium*; CIL XI, 1164, *Veleia*; CIL XI, 719, *Bononia*.

20. HOFFILLER, V.; SARIA, B., *Antike Inschriften aus Jugoslawien I. Noricum und Pannonia Superior*. Zagreb, 1938, nnr. 158-159 = ŠAŠEL KOS, M., *The Roman Inscriptions in the National Museum of Slovenia (Situla 35)*, 1997, nnr.18-19.

21. CAMBI, N., *Antički portret u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb, 1991, cat. nnr. 25-26; CAMBI, N., "Skupine carskih kipova u rimskoj provinciji Dalmaciji", *Histria Antiqua* 4, 1998, 45-61; MARIN, E., "The Temple of the Imperial Cult (Augusteum) at Narona and Its Statues: Interim Report", *JRS* 14, 2001, 81-112.

22. MARIN, E., "Iscrizioni dell'augusteo di Narona scoperto di recente", *Preatti. XI Congresso internazionale di epigrafia greca e latina. Roma 18-24 IX 1997*, Roma 1997, 411-415; ZANINOVIĆ, M., "Neki aspekti Augustova kulta u Dalmaciji", *Histria Antiqua* 4, 1998, 37-44, 43.

river: *Imp(eratori) Caesari divi f(ilio) Sicilia recepta C(aius) Papius Celsu[s] M(arcus) Papius Kanus fratres* (CIL III, 14625). It had been dedicated even before he became Augustus, soon after the victory at Sicilia in 36 BC. During the partition of Illyricum (within the period from 10 to 20 AD) or afterwards, and in general before the end of the rule by Vespasianus, Dalmatia was divided into three judicial districts (conventi), which were based on the three centres of Scardona, Salona and Narona (PLIN. NH 3, 141-142). Each of them was the seat of the administrative and judicial circuit, as the centre of the imperial cult. Scardona was the centre of northernmost, liburnian judicial conventus and, in the same time, the centre of the regional liburnian assembly united in the worshipping of the imperial cult according to tradition from the beginning of the Principatus; already before 31 AD the civitates Liburniae unite in Scardona in a spiritual, political and financial sense, with a common goal of erecting a monument to a member of the imperial family (CIL III, 2808). It may be supposed the similar religious significance for the colonies of Salona and Narona, although it has been suggested that in the southern area of the province of Dalmatia the focus of the imperial cult was centred outside the centres of conventi, first at Epidaurum (CIL III, 1741), then later at Doclea²³.

Some general remarks about the historical, administrative and cultural background: an important number of imperial lands was in Histria and a strong connection existed between imperial family and inhabitants of Histria, reflected also in the sphere of religion. The oldest patrimonial imperial lands in Histria were concentrated in the close vicinity of Pola, in the fertile fields of Medulin, Ližnjan and Valtura²⁴. They go back to the 2nd triumvirate, or even to the beginning of the Pola colony, which was founded by Julius Caesar. The inscriptions by the slave families of Maecenas (*Ilt X/1 575*), Antonia Minor (*Ilt X/1 39*; *Suet.Vesp.3; Dom.12*) and Augustus himself (*Ilt X/1 593*) gave evidence to that. During Vespasianus reign the patrimonial lands in Histria became more affluent probably through senators' legacies, which included agricultural and production complexes of Laecanius Bassus between Brijuni-Fažana-Štinjan in the ager of the Pola colony and lands owned by

23. WILKES, J.J., *Dalmatia*, London 1969, 373; SUIĆ, M., *Antički grad na istočnom Jadranu*, Zagreb 1976, 152.

24. STARAC, A., *Rimsko vladanje u Histriji i Liburniji. Društveno i pravno uređenje prema literarnoj, natpisnoj i arheološkoj građi I. Histrija (Monografije i katalogi 10/1)*, Pula 1999, 77-87.

Statilius Taurus Sisenna, successively by Calvia Crispinilla in the area of Loron-Vabriga in the Parentium colony ager. The main produce from imperial lands in Histria was the olive oil, which was transported in amphorae of type Dressel 6 B, produced in the imperial workshops in Fažana and Loron²⁵. The production of amphorae with imperial stamps continued from Vespasianus to the end of Hadrian's reign. From the beginning of the Principatus, Rome was the centre of administration for the imperial lands in Histria. For the first time the patrimonial department for administration of the imperial property in Histria became independent in the Pola colony at the time of Flavius (*IIt X/1 50, 598*). The significance of the imperial lands in Parentium ager and the scope of busi-

ness grew so much that, during Marcus Aurelius, at the latest, a separate Parentium fiscal office, inferior to this at Pola, was established. Finally, at the beginning of Dominatus reign, the imperial lands in Histria were extended to the regions of Novigrad and Umag (*IIt X/3 50, 53*).

Finally, it may be concluded that the inscription dedicated to imperial divinity originally was the base of a standing statue of a divine emperor, Augustus, probably as augur, and consequently it belongs to the first third of the 1st century AD. On the missing left lateral side of the monument probably was represented the relief of an urceus, like the other known decorated altars (Tarragona, *AE 1924, 6 + AE 1946, 198*).

25. STARAC, A., "Napomene o amforama Dressel 6 B", *Međunarodni znanstveni skup "Arheološka istraživanja u Istri". Poreč 25-28.X 1994. (Izdanja HAD-a 18)*, Zagreb 1997, 143-161; BEZECZKY, T., *The Laecanius Amphora Stamps and the Villas of Brijuni*, Wien 1998, 3-28; MARION; STARAC, "Les amphores...", o.c., TASSAUX, F.; MATIJAŠIĆ, R.; KOVAČIĆ, V., *Loron (Croatie), Un grand centre de production d'amphores à huiles istriennes (I^{er}-IV^e s.p.C.)*, Bordeaux 2001, 97-125.