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A contribution to the topography (and the interpretation)
of the so-called oriental cults from the territory of *Salona*

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present a research on the possible areas of cult spaces dedicated to 'oriental cults' on the territory of *Salona* and the influence that the knowledge on the 'topography' of these cults has on their interpretation.

KEYWORDS

'Oriental cults', *Mater Magna*, *Dei Ascaeni*, *Dei Ascalonitani*, *Dei Syri*, *Diana*, the topography of the cults, *Salona*, *Oneum*, *Dalmatia*

This paper aims to present some of the results obtained by research conducted for my PhD thesis, on the possible areas of cult spaces dedicated to 'oriental cults' on the territory of *Salona* and the influence that the knowledge on the 'topography' of these cults has on their interpretation. This analysis brought some new insights (or at least new points of view) in relation to the previous studies on this subject, and is therefore considered worthy of further attention.

Colonia Martia Iulia Salona was the largest city in the southern part of *Illyricum*. Following *Illyricum's* division into *Dalmatia* and *Pannonia*, probably at the time of Vespasian, it became the capital of *Dalmatia* and the main port of the entire region¹. Its vast territory included not only the urban space of the colony and its *ager*, but other important settlements like *Tragurion* or *Epetion*, and a number of *villae* (fig. 1)². Studies on various aspects of the history, urban and social development of *Salona* and its territory have appeared in both Croatian and foreign academic research. It seems, however, particularly regarding the subject of 'foreign' Roman 'religions', that there are still some questions that remain unanswered, or at least some new approaches that could be adopted for that matter.

Until today, different authors approached the subject of the 'oriental cults' or 'oriental religions' of *Salona*. They are sometimes studied as a group of distinct cults gathered under this common name, mostly using the criteria established by Franz Cumont of

¹ It's difficult to make a selection from the vast bibliography on this subject. For the founding of the city and the deduction of the colony see ABRAMIĆ 1917, pp. 1-6; SUIĆ 1958, pp. 11-38; RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 1975, pp. 23-30; WILKES 1969, p. 38; for the topography and urbanism, DYGGVE 1928, pp. 9-32; RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 1983, pp. 529-545; SUIĆ 2003, p. 199, *passim*; JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ 2008, pp. 35-44; JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, SEDLAR 2009, pp. 7-32; JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, SEDLAR 2011, pp. 67-86. For the first archaeological excavations and discoveries of *Salona* see JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, PEREŽA 2010, pp. 167-203 and the papers by F. Carrara and F. Bulić in *Antička Salona* 1990, pp. 99-253 and papers by E. Dyggve in BUŽANČIĆ 2014.

² According to Suić *ager saloniensis* originally extended from Kaštel Stari (located in the middle of the Kaštelan Bay) in the north-west, Klis in the north and *Epetion* (Stobreč; river Žrnovnica) in the south-east. It seems, however, that from the time of *Claudius* it expanded in size, so that the areas of *Tragurion* in the west and the community of *Pituntium* located south-east of *Epetion* were also included. SUIĆ 1955, pp. 17-19. It is hard to say whether this or perhaps some other later expansions also involved the territory of *Narestae* and *Oneum* located more south-east (in the mainland), and the island of Brač. The area of the city itself is marked by its position in the deep and protective Bay of Kaštela (Kaštelanski zaljev), the stream of the river Jadro, and the steep cliffs of the Klis Mountain in the hinterlands. The rest of the territory includes three vast, mainly agrarian areas of the Fields of Kaštela, Solin and Split (Kaštelansko, Solinsko and Splitsko polje), with a few zones of deciduous forest, while on the north-western and south eastern borders of *ager*, the fertile soil belt narrows towards the coast in favour of the karst terrain. In short, the territory of *Colonia Maria Iulia Salona* could be defined as agrarian and maritime. It is considered the biggest in the territory of *Dalmatia*, but not bigger than, for example, the *ager of colonia Pola* in *Histria*. On the territory of *Salona*, SUIĆ 1955, pp. 17-20; BORZIĆ 2014, pp. 81-82; JADRIĆ-KUČAN 2014, 167-168.

the cults that originated from the roman Orient³. 'Egyptian' or 'Isiac' cults, the cult of *Mater Magna* and *Attis*, cult of Mithras, *Iuppiter Dolichenus*, *Dei Syri*, etc. are in that case usually considered as part of this 'group'⁴. There are some examples, like the theme of the PhD thesis of J. Medini which was dedicated to the 'Asian cults' in the Roman province of *Dalmatia* which implied the study of 'only' the cult of *Mater Magna* and *Attis*, *Iuppiter Dolichenus* and *Sabasion*, the cults that originated from the territory of Middle Eastern Asia⁵. There are more papers and several PhD theses which analyse 'individual' monuments or phenomenon related to the cited cults in *Salona*⁶. However, it seems that the specific subject of the 'topography of the cults' was often treated only marginally⁷. Information is usually brought regarding the name of the location(s) where the monument(s) were found and the circumstances, while the individual positions of these places were only occasionally analysed, compared and included in the interpretation of the cult itself. This 'situation' can be explained by the lack of systematic archaeological research and the lack of knowledge on the archaeological context of almost all the findings related to the 'oriental' and/or 'Asian' cults in *Salona*⁸. Furthermore, there is a great discrepancy between a large number of epigraphic and archaeological materials and an almost total absence of related architectural structures. These are actually 'hard evidence' which could explain a sort of a neglect towards this particular subject. For the purpose of defining the arguments 'in favour' of the studying the topography of the 'oriental cults'

³ CUMONT 1929.

⁴ BUGARSKI-MESDIJAN 2003, pp. 563-717; SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012.

⁵ MEDINI 1981.

⁶ Attention has been given to various aspects of worshipping these cults such as private munificence, legal and social status of their devotees, the iconography and the meaning of the cult images, etc. They were based mostly on the content of the monuments (the content and the analysis of the inscriptions and iconography) and, when possible, interpreted in the particular urban and historical context of *Salona*. It can be stated with certainty that these cults are well studied and analysed. It's also difficult to make a selection of bibliography on this subject. For the so-called Egyptian cults see SELEM 1997, pp. 62-106; for the cult of *Mater Magna* and *Attis*, KUBITSCHER 1896, pp. 87-89; GRAILLOT 1912, pp. 492-493; VERMASEREN 1989, pp. 40-52; MEDINI 1982b, pp. 15-27; ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, pp. 780-791; NIKOLOSKA 2010, p. 47, *passim*; VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2013, pp. 93-118; for the cult of Mithras, GABRIČEVIĆ 1987, pp. 174-181; ŠAŠEL KOS 1993, pp. 145-147; MILETIĆ 1996, pp. 162-169; MILETIĆ 1997, pp. 69-78; LIPOVAC VRKLJAN 2001, p. 85, *passim*; on the cult of *Sabasion*, MEDINI 1980, p. 67, *passim*; on the cult of *Iuppiter Dolichenus*, MEDINI 1982a, pp. 53-90; BUGARSKI 2000, p. 233, *passim*.

⁷ The subject of the topography of the metroac cult places I briefly presented within a paper on *archigalli* at an international scientific symposium in Skopje in 2013. The proceedings of this symposium were published in 2015; KARKOVIĆ TAKALIĆ 2015b, pp. 377-383. On this subject see also VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2014, pp. 119-134; VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2018, pp. 149-166.

⁸ See *supra* nt. 1 and nt. 6.

in *Salona*, in the following lines I will shortly underline the methodological choices and characteristics of this paper.

With the phrase ‘the topography of the cults’ I refer to the occurrence and distribution of cult-spaces in certain, defined areas, and their subsequent interpretation regarding the characteristics of these ‘areas’ (their geographical position, the type of territory – urban, extra urban, agrarian, present architecture, the type of landscape, *etc.*). It has been more than ten years since authors such as John Scheid, Olivier de Cazanove, Filippo Coarelli and others started the project dedicated to taking inventory of the cult places of Roman Gaul and Italy, based on the ‘concept’ and the theory of Roman religion as the religion of *ritus* which should be analysed and interpreted primarily by the study of its cult places (as the places where *ritus* is performed)⁹. In this context, the aspect of the ‘topography of the sacred’ plays only a secondary role, after, for example, the definition of the cult’s *status*, public or private, or the type of *ritus ibi* performed¹⁰. Nevertheless, different studies have shown that the topography of the cult spaces in a certain territory, both in Italy and provinces, was rarely the result of a random distribution¹¹. Their locations are mostly ‘planned’, or at least ‘responded’ to certain criteria: the ‘importance’ of the divinity in question, its ‘relationship’ with the municipality, the community, certain social groups or individuals, particular aspects of its worship, viability, *etc.* Therefore, it is considered that the ‘location’ of a cult space can surely say a lot about its accessibility, visibility and importance for its community, and that it can contribute, as it will be shown, to the interpretation of the cult in general¹². However, the question arises if there is any possibility or purpose in conducting research dedicated to the topography of the cults, having in mind the particular ‘situation’ of *Salona*: the lack of architectural discoveries and the lack of knowledge on the precise archaeological context of finds? According to John Scheid, cult places can be identified by the presence of architecture but also by the presence of specific objects like an altar, a cult statue, *ex voto* figurines, archaeozoological remains of scarified animals, *etc.*¹³. The discovery of these kinds of monuments outside of an archaeological context cannot definitively guarantee the presence of a cult space in the same location, but it can give «un quadro di ipotesi generale, nell’ambito del quale focalizzare l’attenzione su alcune ipotesi di lavoro. Che possano essere confrontate e

⁹ See, for example, CHRISTOL, FICHES, SCHEID 2007, pp. 9-13; COARELLI, SCHEID 2008, pp. 5-6; DE CAZANOVE, SCHEID 2008, pp. 699-705.

¹⁰ SCHEID 1997, p. 54.

¹¹ See, for example, the cases of *Tergeste* and *Aquileia*, FONTANA 2001, pp. 89-124; FONTANA 2004, pp. 401-424.

¹² VAN ANDRIGA, VAN HAEPEREN 2009, p. 26; SCHEID 2013, p. 287.

¹³ SCHEID 2013, p. 287.

anche smentite da nuovi ritrovamenti o nuove valutazioni di materiali già noti»¹⁴. For this reason it is considered worthy conducting such research for *Salona*. Research should take into account the stated methodological difficulties as well as the cult-material in the narrow sense of the meaning: altars, are by themselves almost direct evidence of the performance of a *ritus*, dedicatory inscriptions that mention a cult space or a sanctuary such as *templum*, *aedes*, *fanum*, and in some cases, monuments like statues or other dedicatory inscriptions which were found in groups or close to altars, which could indicate their cult purpose with more certainty¹⁵.

Another task of this introduction is to explain the use and the definition of the 'oriental' cults. With this term (and with respect to all the difficulties that the term's introduction and use signify in today's scholarly research)¹⁶, I refer to those cults which did not originate from Italy, but from the territories of the eastern Roman provinces, such as Phrygia or Syria, and yet were part of the Roman or diverse Italic and provincial 'religious systems'. These are cults such as *Mater Magna* and *Attis*, *Iuppiter Dolichenus*, *Dei Syri*, *Sabasios*, etc. Since their *status* and form of worship differ from their 'home-land' to Rome, from one Roman community or municipality to another, they should be studied 'separately', as 'individual' cults. However, since there is an uneven number and type of monuments originating from *Salona* related to these cults, and, primarily for practical reasons, they will be gathered under the common name and studied within the same paper. The adjective 'oriental' is also used for practical reasons, for their pro-

¹⁴ FONTANA 2004, p. 401.

¹⁵ See *supra* nt. 10.

¹⁶ The use of the term 'oriental cults' or 'oriental religions', which was introduced by Franz Cumont at the beginning of the 20th century and largely accepted by the academic community, is today considered to be too generic and limiting for different reasons. Every Italic or 'foreign' cult is specific for its myth, forms, aspects, places of worship, etc. They also differ from the place of their 'origin' (Italy or provinces) to the places where they were 'accepted' or 'introduced' (from Rome, one Roman city or community to another). A study which is too broad risks neglecting some of these particularities. The adjective 'oriental' is also quite generic. Does it refer to a geographical term, i.e. the provinces that are located east of Rome (like the ones that will be part of the Eastern Roman Empire) or the provinces of the Asian continent? Is 'oriental' by default something that is 'exotic' and different from 'Greek', 'Roman' or 'European'? Is a Greek cult, like the one of *Dionysus*, a god who 'originated' from Nysa, a mythological land/location outside of Greece, an 'oriental' or 'Greek' cult? Because the answers to these questions differ from one scholar to another and depend on different points of view, it is better to try to avoid the use of too generic terminology. However, there are cases, like this particular paper which studies a small group of findings in a relatively restricted 'provincial' area, which all have in common the fact that they were (1) 'introduced' into the Roman *pantheon* from a specific 'oriental' geographical area and (2) introduced in the particular community of *Salona*. Maybe this is not the most felicitous choice in terms but, at the time, it is considered the most practical. For the critics on Cumont's terminology and its use in modern literature, see for example, BONNET 2006, pp. 9-10; SFAMENI GASPARRO 2006, p. 181; BURKERT 2009, pp. 105-117.

venience from the territories located east with respect to the 'Old continent', i.e. in this case from Asia¹⁷.

From a preliminary bibliographical examination of the 'oriental cults' of *Salona* (cults that originated from the Asian continent), the idea of a *corpus* containing about sixty monuments, among which in greater number are those referable to the cult of *Mater Magna*, can be extrapolated. If we exclude 'secondary' testimonies/monuments from this group like the statues depicting gods for whose use as cult-statues we cannot be sure of, depictions of *Attis tristis* which come from verified funeral contexts¹⁸ or inscriptions with theophoric names, and following previously cited methodological outlines, we reach a quite smaller group containing about sixteen monuments: fourteen referable to the cult of *Mater Magna*, one of which is also dedicated to *Dei Ascaeni* or *Ascalonitani* and one dedicated to *Dei Syri*¹⁹. Out of these, thirteen monuments were found in a period between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century²⁰, while others were discovered between the 1920s and 1994²¹. For only two of them the more precise place of their discovery is unknown²². The monuments which were found in the earlier period were mostly published in *Bullettino di Archeologia e Storia Dalmata*, with basic

¹⁷ As for the 'Egyptian' or 'Isiac' cults, which are in some studies also included in the group of 'oriental cults', my opinion is that they do not belong to it. Even though they were 'imported' into the Roman *pantheon*, the Roman province of Egypt geographically lies eastern in relation to Italy and Rome, but it is part of the 'southern' continent of Africa, so they cannot be considered 'oriental', at least in the geographical sense of meaning. As far as the cult of Mithras is concerned, which is another cult often included in 'oriental religions', I consider it to be 'more' Roman than oriental. Authors such as R. Gordon, R. Merkelbach, *etc.* demonstrated that the Roman cult of Mithras, as it is known from the monuments discovered in the territory of the Roman Empire, dating from the time of the first Principate onward, was actually created in that period, most probably in Italy. Furthermore, the iconography or *tauroctoniae*, the form and layout of the *spaela* as well as the initiatory form of acceptance and promotion of the devotees, are considered to be a combination of different Greek, Roman and oriental ('Asian' and/or Persian) influences. Therefore, we cannot say that the Roman cult of Mithras was 'imported' from the Orient as a 'variant' of the Persian cult of Mithras, but that it was created as a 'new' cult that displayed some distant Persian influences. GORDON 1975, pp. 215-249; MERKELBACH 1984, p. 153; BECK 1998, p. 119.

¹⁸ KARKOVIĆ TAKALIĆ 2015a, pp. 97-108.

¹⁹ Out of these sixteen monuments, four are altars, nine are dedicatory inscriptions on plates that mention a cult place (five- *aedes*, one- *aedes* and *ara*, two- *fanum*, two- *templum*, one- *aedicula*), two are statues that were found together with an altar or other monuments of this type and one is an architrave linked to a dedicatory plate that mentions a *fanum*.

²⁰ *BASD* 1883, p. 98; *BASD* 1888, p. 10; *BASD* 1893, p. 33; *BASD* 1895, p. 3; *BASD* 1896, p. 41; KUBITSCHER 1896, p. 87, n. 2; p. 88, n. 6; LANZA 1850, pp. 10-11; BULIĆ 1898, pp. 141-144; BULIĆ 1923, pp. 81-84.

²¹ RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 1953, p. 261 (author published this monument which he found in the depot of the Archaeological museum in Split for the first time); *AE* 2001, 1606 (monument was found in 1994).

²² *CIL* III, 1954; *CIL* III, 8810.

information regarding the place of discovery, description of the monument and relatively short interpretation of its content²³. The place of discovery is most often indicated by the former name of the location (or neighbourhood, if it is 'commonly' known), by the number of the cadastral particle and/or the name of the landowner, while in other cases there is an indication of some visible Roman or early Christian architecture of *Salona*, such as the amphitheatre, basilica or similar. Thanks to the insight into the old cadastral maps of Solin, which are kept in the Map Archive in Split, I was able to locate almost all cadastral particles that were indicated in the 'old' bibliography. Based on this and other information provided by literature, I created different maps (figg. 2-3) thanks to which I was able to get a more precise idea of the spatial distribution of these cults within the territory of the colony, hypothetically of the areas of their cult spaces.

Based on the epigraphic evidence, with respect to other oriental cults, there were numerous cult spaces dedicated to *Mater Magna* and they were almost entirely connected with private munificence²⁴. The topographical distribution of metroac cult-monuments confirms this 'particularity'. The places of discovery are mostly located *extra muros Salonae*, in the area of the Salonitan *ager* or some smaller settlements like *Tragurion*, *Epetion*, etc. (figg. 2-3). There are only a few that could be located *intra muros*²⁵. We can only assume that the cult was worshiped within suburban or extra urban private properties, most of which, based on the inscriptions, included private temples or chapels. What was the number of devotees which were gathered around these cult places? Was it, for example, only one larger family or a few neighbour families? A clue can be found in an inscription from *Salona* which mentions the restoration of a previous metroac *aedes* by *Iunia Rhodine*, her husband and children (fig. 4)²⁶, a plate that stood in *aedes Matri Magnae* at today's Seget, near *Tragurion*, erected by *L. Stallius Secundus, seviri augustalis, Stallia Callihore* and their children (fig. 5)²⁷, or an inscription from Srinjine (10 km north-east from *Salona*) which mentions the restoration of a *templum Matri Magnae*

²³ See *supra* nt. 20.

²⁴ For a list of inscriptions related to the metroac cult in *Salona* see ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, pp. 782-783; SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, nn. 14-34. In this paper I refer to the following: *CIL* III, 1952=8567; *CIL* III, 1953; *CIL* III, 1954; *CIL* III, 2676=9707; *CIL* III, 6428=8474; *CIL* III, 8544=12814; *CIL* III, 8675; *CIL* III, 13903; *CIL* III, 14243; *CIL* III, 14674; *AE* 1925, 61; *AE* 1994, 1348; *AE* 2001, 1606.

²⁵ *CIL* III, 14674 (BULIĆ 1898, pp. 141-144) and maybe *AE* 2001, 1606 (MARŠIĆ, MATIJEVIĆ 2000, cat. n. 13).

²⁶ *CIL* III, 14243. The inscription dates back in the 1st century A.D., SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 14.

²⁷ *CIL* III, 2676=9707. The inscription dates between the 1st and 2nd century A.D., SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 15.

by liberta *Statilia Lupulla* and her family²⁸. The chronology of these inscriptions lies between the 1st and 3rd century A.D.²⁹. Another clue can be found in monuments dedicated to *Mater Magna* by members of *cognationis*.

In another paper of this edition series I dedicated few lines to this subject³⁰. There are at least three inscriptions mentioning a *cognatio*, an association of followers gathered around the figure of *Mater Magna* from *Salona*. Two of these came from an extra urban area of *Salona*³¹ while another is also most probably from a suburban or extra urban part of the city³². One of these *cognationis* most likely had a gathering place with *aedes* and *ara* dedicated to Cybele in a picturesque area located north of the city, on the right bank of river Jadro, not far from its spring (fig. 6). The inscription on a plate found in this location states as follows: *Matri Magnae / cognationis / C(aius) Turranius Cronius / IIIII vir august(alis) / voto suscepto aedem et / aram d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) fecit / et expoli(vi)t / idemque dedicavit* (fig. 7)³³. The inscription dates to the period between the 1st and 2nd century A.D.³⁴. The *cognatio Matri Magnae* obviously had significant support from one of *Salona*'s higher priests and officials such as *Cronius* who performed his duty in *Salona* as *sevir augustalis*. We can only guess whether *Cronius* himself was a member of this association or not³⁵. Šašel Kos believes that the official religious function of *Turranius* «confirms the official character of the goddess»³⁶. In an attempt to define cult's *status* (public or private), the interpretation of this and similar evidence puts us in a doubt. On one hand, the inscription reveals *Cronius* personal involvement (...*d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) fecit / et expoli(vi)t / idemque dedicavit*), not the action of the entire community. On the other, the statement of his role of *sevir augustalis*, one of the officials, i.e. representatives of the Salonitan community, supports Šašel's hypothesis³⁷. A similar 'problem' we

²⁸ *CIL* III, 8544=12814. The inscription dates between the 2nd and 3rd century A.D., SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 30.

²⁹ See *supra* nt. 27 and nt. 28.

³⁰ KARKOVIĆ TAKALIĆ 2018, p. 381.

³¹ *CIL* III, 8675 (found near Jadro's spring); *AE* 1925, 61 (found in the locality of Trišćenica).

³² *AE* 2001, 1606 (linked with Jadro's island, today's Gospin Otok).

³³ *BASD* 1883, 98; *CIL* III, 8675; reconstruction of the text by SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 16.

³⁴ SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 16.

³⁵ Marjeta Šašel Kos consider that the name of this *cognatio* was *Turrania* or *Turraniorum*, ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, p. 788.

³⁶ ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, p. 788.

³⁷ See also the case of the already cited inscription from Seget near *Tragurion*: *L(ucius) Stalli[us -] / Secundus VI[us -] / aug(ustalis) et Stallia Cal[i]hore -] / uxor cum liberis a[edem] / Matri Magnae ex vo[to] / suscepto fecerunt*. The inscription also dates to the period between the 1st and 2nd century A.D. *CIL* III,

encounter, for example, in Aquileia. Among few dedications made to the Goddess by private, the 'involvement' of *L. Decidius Eucarpus, sevir augustalis/Aquileiae*, suggests the public instead of private status of the cult³⁸.

As for *cognationis*, studies by authors such as Alföldy, Medini, Šašel and Bekavac suggested that they were religious (not professional) associations of people gathered, at least at their beginnings, on a familial basis³⁹. In the particular case of the plate from the area of Jadro's spring, it is believed that it was erected by a member of the Liburnian family *Turrania*, which most probably came and situated on the territory of *Salona* in the course of the 1st century A.D., in relation to the rising importance of the colony as a political, administrative and economic centre⁴⁰. Based on this, and on other already cited inscriptions in which the devotees are often spouses, or female, we can assume that Cybele was worshipped in *Salona*, at least in some of her aspects, as the protector of family. Authors such as Šašel Kos and Nikoloska believe that Cybele in *Salona* represented a sort of «archetype of a divine mother as is known to have been venerated in *Venetia, Histria, Liburnia* and elsewhere»⁴¹. This would be additionally confirmed by two monuments from *Salona* dedicated to *Dea Barbarica* and *Matres Magnae*⁴². I do not believe that the acceptance of Cybele was influenced by the autochthonous 'religion' of *Delmatae* where *Salona* developed, or at least, by their female divinity/divinities closely related to the concepts of fertility and 'motherhood'. I am under the impression that the 'religion' of *Delmatae* was oriented more to the figures of 'wild' nature such as *Silvanus*, *Diana* and *Nymphae*, with whom, as it will be seen later, Cybele engaged, at least on the 'territorial' basis. I would possibly prefer to interpret this familial aspect of Cybele as an 'echo' of some Greek cult, such as the cult of *Demeter*, who was probably worshiped by Greek communities of pre-Roman *Salona, Tragurion, Epetion*. But, in the absence of concrete sources this remains only a hypothesis.

In other two monuments built by members of metroac *cognatio* dating to the vast period between the 1st and 2nd century A.D., there is no mention of a family or any name. Some authors interpret the absence of personal names in later inscriptions as the

2676=9707; *BASD* 1888, p. 10; SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 15.

³⁸ *InscrAq* 285. On the cult of *Mater Magna* in Aquileia: DE FRANZONI 2008, with bibliography.

³⁹ ALFÖLDY 1963, pp. 81-87; MEDINI 1985, pp. 5-43; ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, pp. 787-791; VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, p. 96, *passim*; BEKAVAC 2013, pp. 187-203.

⁴⁰ ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, pp. 785-786.

⁴¹ Citation ŠAŠEL KOS 1994, p. 788. This aspect of the worship of the Goddess would be a sort of a continuity from the worship of ctonic Liburnian and Histrian female cults such as *Terra Histria, Eia, etc.* NIKOLOSKA 2010, p. 40.

⁴² *CIL* III, 14663/2; *AE* 1912, 42; Šašel Kos believes that *Dea Barbarica* is nothing else but *Mater Magna; ibidem*.

members eventually becoming ‘spiritual brothers’ or ‘*inter pares*’, and were no longer strictly linked by familial ties⁴³.

We can also only speculate what the particular meaning in the selection of the area of Jadro’s spring for the settlement of one of Salonitan’s *cognatio’s aedes* was. In addition to the beauty of the nature, the entire area can be considered relatively isolated since there is no evidence of large-scale navigation along the river, while the road that connected *Salona* to Klis passed more to the west in respect to Jadro’s flow (fig. 2)⁴⁴. Jadro’s spring was, however, an important *topos* because the aqueduct of *Salona*, and later the one of the Diocletian’s palace, were both supplied by its waters⁴⁵. The question arises if there was some kind of special devotion related to this spring, if the waters of Jadro were considered remedial or important from a medical point of view, or if there were some more practical reasons for the selection of this location, related to the performance of *riti*⁴⁶. Can this location reveal something about the characteristic form of worship of Cybele?

Besides the monument of a *cognatio* erected by *Cronius*, four other monuments dedicated to Cybele were found in a wider area of Jadro’s spring: a statue of the goddess⁴⁷, a plate⁴⁸ whose place of discovery could be located more to the south of the river’s spring, and two altars found more to the north⁴⁹, associated with a Roman settlement identified on the territory of today’s community of Klis. The texts on these inscriptions, in a relatively detailed way, talk about the almost complete restoration, furnishing and/or founding of metroac shrines. The mentioned plate was erected by *C. Agrius* and *Agria*⁵⁰, while the two altars from Klis were dedicated respectively by *Curia Prisca* (fig. 8)⁵¹ and

⁴³ MEDINI 1985, p. 7; BEKAVAC 2013, p. 199.

⁴⁴ JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ 2006, p. 43.

⁴⁵ MARASOVIĆ, MARGETA 2017, pp. 509-532.

⁴⁶ «L’existence d’une source, d’un nymphée ou de thermes ne suffit pas pour attribuer cette qualité à un lieu de culte», BEN ABED, SCHEID 2003, p. 7.

⁴⁷ SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 2.

⁴⁸ *AE* 1994, 1348; SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 24.

⁴⁹ *CIL* III, 1952=8567; *CIL* III, 13903. On the place of discovery of the first monument, LANZA 1850, p. 10, cites only Klis, while in other publications there is mention of Jadro’s spring. Today, the border between the two communities of Solin and Klis passes slightly to the north of Jadro’s spring and it seems that it belongs to the community of Solin.

⁵⁰ *AE* 1994, 1348; *M(atri) [d(eorum/leum) M(agnae)] / C(aius) Agri[us-] / et Agria[-] / templu[m corruptum] / vetusta[te restituerunt] / item Mat[ris statuas?] / duas cognat[as argenti] / p(ondo) ((unius librae et sextantis)) easde[m corruptas] / sumptu su[o refecerunt]*. The inscription dates back in 2nd century A.D. reconstruction of the text and date by SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 24.

⁵¹ *CIL* III, 1952=8567; *Curia Prisca Matri Magnae / fanum r[is]e[re]fecit / signa posuit laro/phorum*

Servilia Copiesilla with her husband *M. Cotius Cretius*⁵². It is difficult to tell whether all of these monuments belonged to the same cult place in a wider sacred area or whether they were different, ‘individual’ private shrines. Inscriptions mention diverse names: *fanum*, *templum*, *aedicula*, without a record of some form of a *campus* or *temenos*, so that the second option, individual cult places, for the moment seems more probable. Besides the above mentioned, there were no other cult-monuments, *ex voto*, medical or similar instruments found in this area, or at least none that I am aware of. There is no mention of Jadro as a ‘healing’ river in the local ‘collective memory’, so it probably had something to do with the *cognatio*’s activities and *riti* performed for the Goddess.

The role of the *Tiber* River in the cult of *Mater Magna*, her arrival and introduction in the Roman *pantheon* is very well known⁵³. It is directly related to the inclusion of this cult in Rome’s calendar of *fasti*, which involved, among other, the ritual bathing of the goddess’s statue in Tiber’s tributary Alamo during the April festival of *Megalesia*⁵⁴. On the other hand, thanks to the character and the act of *Claudia Quinta*, who liberated Cybele’s ship and allowed it to continue on its course to Rome, the cult of the Goddess became a ‘family’ cult of *gens Claudia* to whom some of the members of this family were particularly committed⁵⁵. The same story or myth probably influenced the creation of another cult figure, that of *Navisalvia*, more related to the worship of the ‘sacred’ ship on which Cybele arrived, to the *emporium* of Rome and its employees⁵⁶.

Is it possible that metroac *cognationis* of *Salona* in some way staged or reinterpreted some of these ‘Roman’ metroac traditions related to fluvial water? The hypothesis could be supported by the place of discovery of another plate dedicated to Cybele by a *cognatio* which is linked with one of the islands located on the lower part of Jadro’s flow (fig. 9), near its mouth, and the ‘third’ inscription of metroac *cognatio* that came from the locality of Triščenica (or Trstenik, ‘the place where reeds grow’) (fig. 10) which was also etymologically and geo-morphologically characterised by different water sources (fig. 2). It is not hard to imagine a sacred procession on boats, with the Goddess’s cult-statue, that started from *Salonas emporium*, entered Jadro, stopped near

cymbala / ty{n}[m]pana catillum / forfices aram don(avit); 1st- 2nd century A.D., by SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 19.

⁵² *CIL III, 13903; Servilia M(arci) fil(ia) / Copiesilla / aediculam M(atri) Mag(nae) / faciendam curavit / ipsa inpe (n) o <n>sa sua, quam / voverat pro ea M(arcus) Cot(tius) Certus / vir eius; 1st- 2nd century A.D., by SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 20.*

⁵³ See, for example, GRUEN 1990, 5, *passim*.

⁵⁴ On *Megalesia*, VERMASEREN 1977, pp. 124-125; VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, p. 26.

⁵⁵ ZEVI 1997, pp. 435-466; VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2009.

⁵⁶ COARELLI 1982, pp. 43-44.

or on the Island of Jadro and continued to Jadro's spring. Maybe these *cognationis* and private devotees, some of which had important public duties⁵⁷, practiced and/or supported traditions related to the devotion of Cybele that were usually performed on the official level? As far as the gender of the devotees, their legal status and provenience are concerned, they are both female, male, Roman citizens and freedmen, of Italic, local and 'oriental' origin. Hopefully, some of these questions will be clarified by future archaeological research.

If we go back to the site of Trišćenica located in the southern part of the Salonitan ager (on the territory of today's Split), another relatively complex theme can be touched upon related to both the topography and the 'character' of the metroac cult in *Salona*. In 1923, different materials dating back to the Roman period were discovered in an old well of Trišćenica. Among those the 'third' plate dedicated to *Mater Magna* by a *cognatio*, a statue of the goddess and a relief depicting Diana stood out (figg. 10-12)⁵⁸. The marble plate bears the following inscription: *M(atri) M(agnae) / cognatio / fanum d(e) s(uo) v(oto) / ampliavit*, and it dates back to the second half of the 2nd century A.D.⁵⁹. We can only assume that *fanum* was originally located somewhere in the immediate vicinity of the well and that its 'expansion' had to do with increased activity and/or the number of followers of the *cognatio* in that particular period. The statue represents the lower part of the goddess in long garments, seated on a throne flanked by two lions. On the base of the statue there is a fragmented inscription: *[-]attius v(otum) [s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)]*⁶⁰. It dates back to the period between the 2nd and 3rd century A.D.⁶¹. Because of the iconography of the statue and the content of the inscription, the same place of the discovery and the proposed chronology, I assume that the plate and the statue were part of the inventory of the same *fanum*, maybe in the same period. As far as the relief of Diana which depicts the goddess as a huntress is concerned (fig. 12), J. Medini considers it to be a part of the same *fanum* mentioned in the metroac inscription and maybe an indication of syncretism of these two goddesses⁶². Regarding the first hypothesis, there could have theoretically been sculptures of different gods and goddesses (such as Cybele

⁵⁷ Ather than two *seviri augustalis*, one of which worshipped Cybele together with his family, there is also *L. Staius Facula, quinquennalis* (CIL III, 1954).

⁵⁸ BULIĆ 1923, pp. 81-84.

⁵⁹ BULIĆ 1923, pp. 83-84; *AE* 1925, 61; MEDINI 1981, cat. n. 43; reconstruction and chronology of the inscription proposed by SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ, 2012, n. 26.

⁶⁰ BULIĆ 1923, p. 83; MEDINI 1981, cat. n. 44; SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ, 2012, n. 1.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² MEDINI 1981, p. 188, *passim*.

and Diana) placed in the same shrine, other than the cult statue itself⁶³, but, in my opinion, that is not a sufficient argument for the theory of a syncretic figure of Cybele-Diana or Diana-Cybele.

Diana is the goddess of rural 'wildlife' and its animals, the goddess of hunting, of all the things that lay outside the defined urban territory (*extra muros*)⁶⁴. Judging by the finds from the prehistoric Latin sanctuary of Nemi, she is also a healer, protector of fertility and parenthood⁶⁵. Through the assimilation with the Greek goddess Artemis, she became the goddess of the night and the moonlight. Additionally, Diana is known as the protector and guardian of the law, especially those laws that precede or are part of the process of organisation and/or foundation of a settlement or a territory (before the definition of laws, calendars, *etc.*)⁶⁶. The example of the famous *Lex arae Dianae in Aventino* shows that she guarded the laws and was therefore the patron of all the members of the Latin league, and also the one who provided shelter for asylum seekers, since her sanctuary in *Aventinus* was, at that time, located *extra muros*⁶⁷. Although both Diana and Cybele are the goddesses of the official Roman *pantheon*, the Great Mother, unlike Diana, is not ancient Italic, but an 'imported' deity. She also rules over the 'wild' nature, that which is considered wild for its 'primordial' character, such as the nature which preceded the emergence of humans⁶⁸. She is the goddess of the 'first generation' and is most often associated to other goddesses of the 'first' generation such as *Rhea, Demeter, Hera, Isis, etc.* That is also why she is stated to be the mother of gods and mother of humans (and of all life) by ancient authors⁶⁹. I believe that for the same reason she is also the protector of cities and city institutions, as well city walls and city gates. In other words, both goddesses are related to 'wild' nature, but in the case of Cybele it is nature before the emergence of humans, while Diana as a patron of wildlife and hunting is closely related to the history of the human race. Cybele is the protector of cities and urban institutions, while Diana protects political institutions that are in

⁶³ On the subject of statues that were part of a sanctuary, PIRENNE-DELFORGE 2008, p. 103, *passim*; MYLONOPOULOS 2010, pp.1-19.

⁶⁴ LIMC II, *s.v. Diana*, pp. 792-855 (E. SIMON, G. BAUCHHENS); SIMON 1990, pp. 51-58.

⁶⁵ PAIRAULT 1969, pp. 425-471.

⁶⁶ ALFÖLDY 1961, pp. 21-39.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*. A famous Salonitan inscription of the so-called *Ara salonitana* (CIL III, 1933) speaks of the dedication of ara to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus* and guarantees the execution of the laws (in the colony of *Salona*) such as those that are cited at the Temple of Diana on the Aventine Hill. The inscription dates in 137 A.D.; GIUNIO 2013, pp. 103-116.

⁶⁸ On different aspects of Cybele, SEAMENI GASPARRO 1985, p. 44, *passim*; SABBATUCCI 1988, pp. 150-151.

⁶⁹ *h. Hom.* 14.1; LIV. 29.10.4.7; ARNOB. 5.5; SALLUST. 4.7-8.

emergence or in the process of organisation. Cybele is a mother (of gods and people) and, as it was shown by the previously cited inscriptions, the protector of families, while Diana is also a protector of mothers but, unlike Cybele, she is not a mother (she remained a virgin). So, despite some apparent similarities, the two goddesses seem to be more different than alike, so I can hardly believe that they would have been assimilated and/or worshipped as a single deity. There are also only few inscriptions, of which I'm aware of, that link the two goddesses together⁷⁰.

If we go back to the hypothesis regarding the relief of Diana that possibly stood in a metroac *fanum*, I propose adopting a different point of view of this subject. The cult of the Italic goddess Diana was very well attested to on all the territory of the Roman province of *Dalmatia*, especially in the area previously occupied by *Delmatae* (which includes *Salona*) in which the cult found a way to merge with the local worship of *Silvanus* and *Nymphae*⁷¹. In that particular 'religious assembly' Diana was worshipped in her aspects of a rural goddess connected with wild nature and hunting. The worship of Diana's aspect of a healer goddess is also attested to, for example, in *Narestae* where an altar dedicated to *Dianae* and *Asclepios* was found⁷². As for the narrower area between Trišćenica, Lovrinac and Pazdigrad, which is located on the south-eastern edge of Split field and was characterised by a woody landscape with lots of water springs and marshes, two other monuments of *Silvanus* and *Nymphae* were found (figg. 1-2)⁷³. While in the broader area, there is a record of at least three other similar monuments⁷⁴. They all date back to the period between the 2nd and 3rd century⁷⁵. A theory which can be assumed from an article by A. Rendić-Miočević dedicated to these monuments, is that the entire area between these localities was actually occupied by these divinities and/or 'religious assembly'⁷⁶. Taking into account the type of landscape, at least for Trišćenica-Pazdigrad-Lovrinac, I would maybe dare to say that it was in their 'propriety' (although no inscriptions can explicitly confirm this). The question arises whether Cybele was the one who 'invaded' their territory, instead of Diana 'entering' in Cybeles *aedes*, or there was an actual 'overlapping' of their characteristics? In any case we are again faced with a cult place dedicated to the Great Goddess in a relatively unusual 'setting'.

⁷⁰ *AE* 1933, 113; *CIL* III, 6428=8474.

⁷¹ On the cult of *Silvanus*, *Diana* and *Nymphae* in *Dalmatia*, RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 1955, pp. 5-40; RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 1989, pp. 401-506.

⁷² *AE* 2004, 01098a.

⁷³ RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 2007, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴ RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 2007, pp. 13-30.

⁷⁵ RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 2007, p. 26.

⁷⁶ RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 2007, pp. 13-30.

To further ‘complicate’ things, I will also cite a lost inscription from an altar found in Omiš, roman *Oneum* that mentions *Dei Ascaeni* or *Ascalonitani*, *Mater Magna* and *Iana*⁷⁷. There are two (or three) different proposals for its reconstruction which results in different interpretations of the monument as a whole. Selem and Vilogorac Brčić bring the following text: *Dis Asca(enis) et / Matri Magn(a)e / Ian(a)e [l(ibens)] m(erito)*⁷⁸, while N. Cambi proposes a somewhat different version: *...Posuit / d(e)is Asca(lonitanis) et / Matri Magn(a)e [et] Ian(a)e M...*⁷⁹. Depending on the reconstruction of the text one can find a dedication to the Gods of Ascania, a land identified with ancient *Phrygia*, and Cybele-Iana or to the Gods of Ashkelon, a city in ancient *Judaea*, Cybele and Iana. The general opinion is that *Iana* represents a form of the name of the goddess Diana⁸⁰. Before confronting the ‘problem’ of ‘union’ of the gods mentioned in the *Oneum* inscription, I will also try to define who these *Dei Ascaeni* and *Dei Ascalonitani* were in short, and how their presence in a settlement located in the southern border of the Salonitan ager, such as *Oneum*, can be explained?

Medini continued the previous discussions stating that *Dei Ascaeni* were probably the patron gods of Phrygia since Ascania was sometimes identified with this ancient region⁸¹. There are only a few inscriptions in which the name of Ascania appears, and in some of these the Phrygian moon god *Menes* is called *Askaenos*⁸². Medini links the figure of *Menes* with *Attis* who is also known by the name *Menotyranos*, the Lord of the Moon⁸³. He assumed that *Dei Ascaeni* referred to the moon god *Menes* and other affine deities of Ascania/Phrygia, in particular *Attis*. In this context the assimilation of Cybele, the ‘consort’ of *Attis*, with Diana, is based on the characteristics that Diana had ‘taken’ from Artemis, the goddess of the moonlight. As for *Dei Ascalonitani*, Medini does not give further explanations other than the opinions of former scholars that they could represent Baal and Astarte⁸⁴. I would reject Medini’s hypothesis and the ‘cosmic and lunar’ link between the cited gods in favour of the latter. My assumption is that the inscription cited *Dei Ascalonitani*, which could be identified with Syrian gods (*Dei Syri*) Atargatis

⁷⁷ CIL III, 6428=8474; MEDINI 1981, p. 536, n. 69. Altar was most probably found in *Oneum*, although some authors cite *Pituntium*; MEDINI 1987, p. 176.

⁷⁸ Lecture, following *Codex Opiterginus*, by SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 31.

⁷⁹ Lecture, following *Codex Rota*, by CAMBI 2017, p. 26.

⁸⁰ The previous identification with *Ianus* is now abandoned. MEDINI 1981, cat. n. 69; SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 31, with bibliography.

⁸¹ MEDINI 1987, p. 176.

⁸² MEDINI 1987, p. 177, nt. 7.

⁸³ MEDINI 1981, cat. n. 69; MEDINI 1987, p. 177, *passim*.

⁸⁴ GRILLOT 1912, p. 191; MEDINI 1987, p. 177.

and Hadad, or some of their local ‘versions’, and that, in theory, the unidentified follower of *Dis Ascalonitanis* of *Oneum* likely recognised the same features in the local worship of Cybele and Diana that his protector gods had in his homeland⁸⁵.

Another possible interpretation of this monument could be the relation of these gods, at least of Cybele and Diana as protectors of laws or institutions, or simply as protectors of the community of *Oneum* itself. In Croatian literature, there is a discussion on the *status* of the communities of *Pituntium*, *Nerastae* and *Oneum*, located on the southern border of Salonitan ager and their inclusion into Salonitan territory and/or juridical convention (fig. 1)⁸⁶. The question arises if their *status* of *pagi*, evolved to the status of *civitates peregrinorum*, or not⁸⁷. Maybe Cybele and Diana and another group of gods had the role of protectors of the community of *Oneum* in this or some other period of ‘passage’ from one legal and administrative *status* to another. This aspect of the ‘association’ between Cybele and Diana can be supported by a monument from *Germania Superior* – the base of a statue of Diana (*signum Dianae*) which was dedicated to *Mater Magna* and *Numinibus loci*⁸⁸. However, in absence of more concrete

⁸⁵ Ashkelon was one of the urban centres and the most important harbour of the province of Judaea. Since its role of an emporium, from pre-history to late antiquity, the particular material and ‘spiritual’ culture of its inhabitants is considered to be a result of different influences, from Graeco-Hellenistic, Phoenician, Egyptian, Roman, Syrian and various local cultures. The inscriptions published in different epigraphic databases do not indicate towards the predominance of specific or a few deities in Ashkelon. On the coins from the Ashkelonian mint, which was active from the Hellenistic period, and rebuilt by the members of the Flavian dynasty, the most common are depictions of a female figure identified with Astarte or local female deity *Derketo*, or, sometimes, with *Atargatis* and *Tyche*. Diodorus also mentions a shrine to Syrian gods as one of the most important in Ashkelon. My assumption is that the Gods of Ashkelon were Syrian gods (*Dei Syri*) *Atargatis* and *Hadad*, or some of their local ‘versions’. On this subject see LE BLANC 2010, p. 10, *passim*.

⁸⁶ The Roman *Oneum* developed from a pre-Roman community whose settlement was located on Baučići hill north of today’s Omiš. The settlement, which was primarily organised as a fort, gradually expanded towards the coast. On the juridical and administrative status of *Oneum* see MARŠIĆ 2003, p. 439, *passim*; JADRIĆ-KUČAN 2014, p. 165, *passim*; MILETIĆ, BEKAVAC c.s.

⁸⁷ There is no evidence that their status evolved over time. According to Miletic and Bekavac «these were lower-order administrative communities (*pagus* or *praefectura*) within the territory of *Salona*, so they did not have the status of autonomous *civitates peregrinorum*. The expansion of centuriation land to the territory of those three *pagi* did not produce administrative changes in any of them». They were, however, important religious centers; MILETIĆ, BEKAVAC c.s. On the other hand, Jadrić-Kučan believes that *Oneum* wasn’t located in Salonitan territory and that these communities retained certain autonomy and importance. In support of this she interprets the presence of the Imperial cult in *Oneum* at the time of *Tiberius*. JADRIĆ-KUČAN 2014, p. 168.

⁸⁸ *Matri deum / Magnae et Numinibus loci / signum Dian(ae) / Gratinus rei p(ublicae) / civ(itatis) Vang(ionum) serv(us) arcarius et / Decorata eius / libert(a) public(a) ex voto posulerunt ll(ibentes) ll(aeti) m(erito) / Imp(eratore) d(omino) n(ostro) Traia(no) / Decio Aug(usto) et Grato co(n)s(ulibus)*; inscription dates in 250 A.D., see EDCS-11202172. See also AE 1933, 113; VERMASEREN 1989, n. 58.

proof and comparisons all of the cited 'lines of interpretation' should be postponed for the future. Whoever dedicated this inscription probably originated from the 'Orient' (Phrygia or *Judaea*), and had some trade business in *Oneum*, or generally in the wider area of *Salona*. The foreign origin of the devotee could also be supposed by the strange form of the name *Ianae* used.

As for the Syrian gods, in the territory of *Salona* only one altar dedicated to *Dis Syris* bearing the following inscription was found: *Dis Syris / C(aius) Albucius / C(ai) l(ibertus) / Restitutus*⁸⁹. The altar dates back to the period between the 1st and 2nd century A.D. The first to publish this monument was F. Lanza in 1850, who stated that the monument was found built-in in a private house in Split⁹⁰. This 'topographical' reference most likely excludes the urban area of *Salona* as the place of its first discovery, but it does not help with pin-pointing its exact location. The area of Split from the times of Lanza wasn't as wide as it is today, but it still covered a significant part of Split's peninsula (on which Diocletian's palace was built) and Splitsko polje. Today, this entire area is the urban centre of the city of Split (figg. 1-2). It has thus been impossible to carry out systematic archaeological research and to reconstruct this area from the Roman times. The territory was certainly divided into *centuriae* and single properties, such as *villae rusticae*⁹¹. It also remains unknown if there was a small *emporium* of *Aspalathos*, on the later site of Diocletian's palace⁹². In the locality of Kman-Kocunar in Splitsko polje, which I had already written about in previous volume of *Sacrum facere*, a statue of *Mater Magna* in an 'unusual' iconography was found⁹³. The statue could remotely be linked to the iconography of Atargatis. However, from this same area, the area of today's Split, numerous other cult-monuments were found, such as those dedicated to *Diana*, *Silvanus* and *Nymphae*, so that any further interpretation regarding the topography of the cult of Syrian gods is for now considered unnecessary⁹⁴. The only thing that can be deduced is that the position of a cult place to whom this altar belonged was also located in an extra urban area.

⁸⁹ CIL III, 1961; reconstruction of the text, SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 31.

⁹⁰ LANZA 1850, pp. 9-10.

⁹¹ OREB 1999-2000, pp. 441-449; MARASOVIĆ 2005, pp. 361-366; BASIĆ 2010, p. 69, *passim*.

⁹² BASIĆ 2010, p. 69, *passim*.

⁹³ KARKOVIĆ TAKALIĆ 2018, pp. 371-391.

⁹⁴ The only thing that could be added is the appearance of the same person, *C. Albucius Restitutus* in the territory of the Roman colony of *Iader*. A plate was found near today's Ljubač, that bears the inscription: *C(aius) Albucius C(ai) l(ibertus) Restitutus / IIIIII vir et flavialis / Dis Syris templum ampliavit et / a solo sua impensa fecit*, SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 207.

The final ‘case-study’ which will be presented in this paper is more closely related to the question of *status* of the metroac cult in *Salona* and to the topography of finds in the context of the actual urban development of the colony. One of the earliest dated monuments dedicated to Cybele in *Salona* is considered to be a plate erected by *Iunia Rhodine*: *Iunia Rhodine / cum coniuge et fil(iolia) / d(eae) M(atri) M(agnae) aedem / refecit / et ampliavit v(otum) s(usceptum) / s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)* (fig. 4)⁹⁵. The inscription dates back to the 1st century A.D., but speaks in favour of the reconstruction of a previous cult-space. Thanks to archival research, I was able to pinpoint the place of its discovery, indicated as the cadastral particle 3821, in the so called *Urbs Orientalis Saloniae*, near the city walls that defined the eastern perimeter of *Salona*’s *Urbs Vetus* (fig. 3)⁹⁶. However, if we follow the proposed date of the inscription and knowing the history and urban development of the city, we can immediately gather how, in that period, the *fanum* and probably the propriety of *Iunia* were at that time located *extra muros*. *Salona* expanded and involved both eastern and western ‘cities’ in the *pomerium* only after the second half of the 2nd century A.D.⁹⁷.

F. Bulić, who published this monument for the first time, connected it afterwards to another nearby discovery of two architectonic pieces of frieze and architrave that combined, that bore a very fragmented inscription (fig. 13). Bulić proposed the reconstruction of the inscription in relation to the previous discovery of *Iunias* plate, as follows: *[aedem Matri Magnae Deorum igne / co]nsumptam res p(ublica) salonitanorum / [ex voto suo sumptu a solo r]estituit.*⁹⁸ The chronology of the inscription has been proposed between the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. The reconstruction of Bulić was based on his belief that the two monuments (the one of *Iunia* and the one of *Res Publica*) were found in immediate vicinity and were, therefore, part of the ‘same’ cult place or the same cult area which was for a long period of time dedicated to *Mater Magna*. The idea was that the cult place of *Iunia* had a certain continuity from the 1st century onward, and that the frieze-architrave was a part of a later *metroon*, re-constructed in the 2nd or 3rd century

⁹⁵ *CIL* III, 14243; reconstruction of the text SELEM, VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, n. 207.

⁹⁶ *BASD* 1896, p. 41.

⁹⁷ See *supra* nt. 1.

⁹⁸ *CIL* III, 14674; reconstruction of the text according to BULIĆ 1898, p. 143. «Il completamento dell’iscrizione, come della ricostruzione ideale della facciata che proponiamo, sono puramente, come abbiamo detto, *speciminis causa*. Quel *consumptam*, esige una *aedem* e ciò *igne* e non *vetustate consumptam*. Anziché ad altra divinità, crediamo sia stata questa *aedes* dedicata alla *Mater Magna Deorum*, a Cibeles, poiché un po’ più verso N. della particella, nella quale venne trovata questa architrave e precisamente nella part. cat. 3821 di Martin Katić-Mornar fu trovata un’iscrizione della *Mater Magna* (Cfr. *Bullet.* 1896, p. 41)», BULIĆ 1898, p. 144.

See also VILOGORAC BRČIĆ 2012, p. 22, n. I.26.

in this same area by the community of *Salona* (fig. 14)⁹⁹. The part of this hypothesis on the locations where two monuments were found was confirmed by my archival research. Two cadastral particles cited by Bulić are present on the cadastral map of Solin of that period and are located very closely to each other. They are actually distant from the city neighbourhood known as Bakuša, which is indicated in literature as the place of discovery, at least according to the maps from the beginning of the 20th century¹⁰⁰. However, as far as the other arguments are concerned, I believe that this theory should be taken into account with a large amount of caution. If Bulić's hypothesis were true, the monument or the building dedicated by the *res publica* would be the only known public dedication to *Mater Magna* in *Salona*. It would confirm that the worship of the goddess had the status of a public cult and was inserted into *Salona*'s calendar of festivities. An inscription from *Iader* that mentions *archigallus salonitanus* and an inscription from *Salona* of a metroac *sacerdos*, that date back in the second half of the 2nd century could support this theory¹⁰¹.

In the period in which these inscriptions are dated, this part of the city was becoming a new urban quartier in the full sense, with the construction of the city walls, roads, *termae*, another area possibly dedicated to the imperial cult, and so on¹⁰². So, at least from the point of view of the urban history and development of *Salona* the theory on the reconstruction of a *templum* by the Salonitan community seems to be plausible. Inscriptions confirm that the troops of *Marcus Aurelius* built both the 'new' eastern and western city walls of *Salona* around 170 A.D.¹⁰³. The emergence of a public cult space dedicated to Cybele in this period could also be supported by the known sympathy or devotion that Marcus Aurelius and his predecessor Antoninus Pius with their families demonstrated in respect to the figure of *Mater Magna*¹⁰⁴. However, as tempting as it sounds, for its interpretation in relation to the metroac cult, its development and status in the history of *Salona*, we should still wait for more solid proof.

⁹⁹ BULIĆ 1898, p. 143, *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ A certain confusion is drawn from a map of *Salona* published in *BASD* 1902, with the name «*templum Cybelae*?» pinpointed somewhere in the middle of *Urbs Orientalis Saloniae*, far from the cited cadastral particles and Bakuša.

¹⁰¹ *CIL* 2920a; *CIL* III, 8810. On the role of the *archigalli* in the metroac cult see KARKOVIĆ TAKALIĆ 2015a. Nikoloska believes that «the official acceptance of the cult in *Dalmatia* was affirmed by the presence of *archigallus Lucius Demetrius Barbunteius* in *Salona*», NIKOLOSKA 2010, p. 40.

¹⁰² PIPLOVIĆ 1980, pp. 90-94; JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ 1998, pp. 22-23; JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ 2006, p. 43; JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ 2011, pp. 5-28.

¹⁰³ *CIL* III, 1979; *CIL* III, 2029.

¹⁰⁴ BEAUJEU 1955, p. 279, *passim*.

At the end of this discussion, I conclude that the 'oriental cults' of *Salona*, at least according to currently available data, were generally worshiped on a private level, mostly outside *pomerium* (figg. 2-3). The location of their cult spaces in the Salonitan ager, together with known information on the devotees suggest that they were closed communities of individuals who worshipped their preferred divinity in relatively isolated places. In the case of the cult of Cybele, there were more worshippers and cult places in respect to other 'oriental cults'. They were organized in communities of the so-called *cognationis*, which, judging by the locations where their monuments were found, were of a relatively closed character. Their worship of Cybele probably involved *riti* on the river Jadro. Apart from this, it is likely that their devotion was related to Cybele as the protector of their families or their association in general. As for the other 'religions' like *Dei Syri* or *Dei Ascaeni / Ascalonitani*, due to the lack of information, little can be added to previous knowledge, besides the conclusion that there was no larger community of their devotees. The topic that could be discussed more in the future is their relation to the devotion of Cybele and Diana and, generally, the 'relationship' between the two goddesses in *Salona*. The monuments I have spoken about are certainly not the only one which could be linked to the 'oriental' cults of *Salona*. For example, a funerary inscription of a *sacerdos Iovis Optimi Maximi Dolicheni A. Germanus Barlaha* and his spouse *Syria* suggest the existence of a community of followers of the god of ancient *Doliche* region, followers who originated probably from the Roman 'orient'¹⁰⁵.

This paper posed more questions than it provided answers to. I hope that it will open some new perspectives for their research in the future.

¹⁰⁵ *CIL* III, 8785. The inscription is lost. It dates back in the period between the 2nd and 3rd century A.D.

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ILLUSTRAZIONI

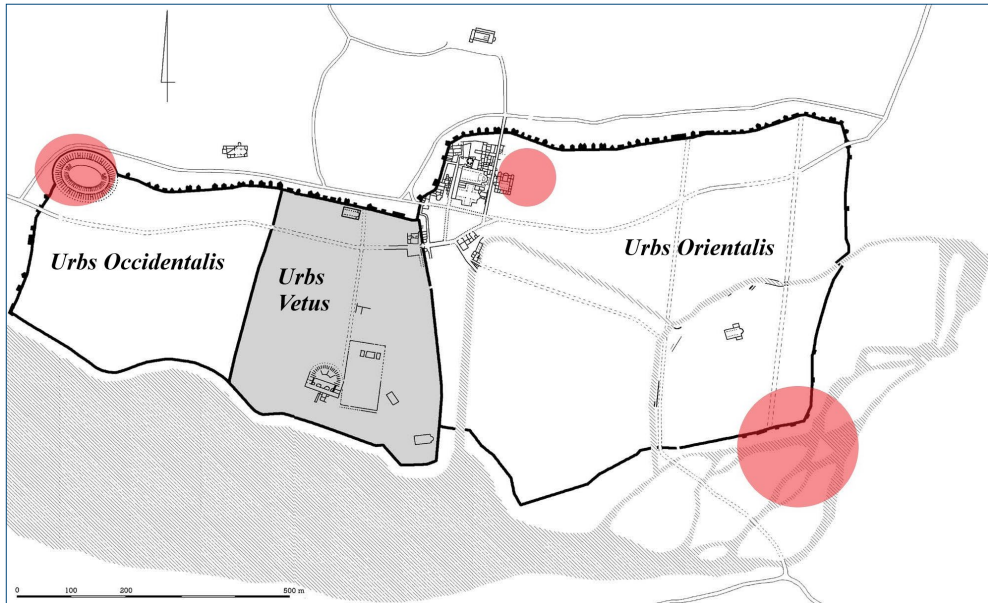
- Fig. 1 The area of *Salona* (from Google Earth).
- Fig. 2 *Ager of Salona* (from the time of the deduction of the colony), areas 'occupied' by the 'oriental cults' (in red- findings related to the cult of *Mater Magna*, in blue- to the cult of *Dei Syri*) (from Suić 1955, fig. 3).
- Fig. 3 *Salona, Urbs Vetus, Urbs Orientalis, Urbs Occidentalis*, areas 'occupied' by the cult of *Mater Magna* (from Jeličić-Radonić, Sedlar 2009, p. 8, fig. 1).
- Fig. 4 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. A 2175 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 5 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. A 1371 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 6 The spring of river Jadro (from Marasović, Margeta 2017, p. 512, fig. 1).
- Fig. 7 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. A 311 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 8 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. A 866 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 9 Split, Marko Matijević Archaeological Collection (from Bekavac 2013, p. 194, fig. 2).
- Fig. 10 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. A 5047 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 11 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. B 197 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 12 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. D 465 (from Rendić-Miočević 2007, p. 26, fig. 2).
- Fig. 13 Split, Archaeological Museum, n. inv. A 2533 (Author's photograph).
- Fig. 14 Reconstruction of a *templum* dedicated to *Mater Magna* by *Res Publica Salonitanorum*, (from Bulić 1898, p. 143).



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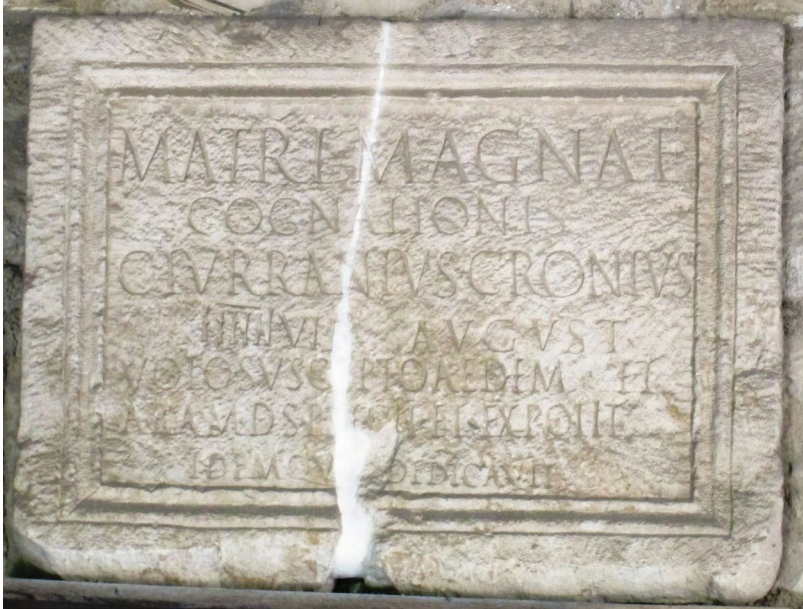
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