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MELISOCO SACRUM - DVA NOVA NATPISA IZ JAME GOLUBINČINE KRAJ KRNICE

MELISOCO SACRUM - TWO NEWLY DISCOVERED INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE GOLUBINČINA PIT NEAR KRNICA

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U radu su predstavljena dva najnovija nalaza antičkih, rimskodobnih zavjetnih žrtvenika posvećenih Melisoku (Melosocus), jedinom do sada zabilježenom muškom božanstvu među histarskim kultovima. Sami pronalasci spomenika obilježeni su specifičnim okolnostima, jer su ih otkrili članovi Speleološke udruge “Pula” u krškoj jami Golubinčina kraj Krnice u Istri. Premda je prvi nalaz zabilježen već 2012. godine, izvlačenje spomenika iz jame uslijedilo je tek iduće godine, nakon nalaza još jednog spomenika istog tipa. Jedan od ovih dvaju žrtvenika, premda oštećen u predjelu profilirane baze i uzglavnice, uključujući i stražnju stranu, sačuvan je u gotovo potpunoj visini i širini, s cjelovitim natpisnim poljem, na kojemu se nalazi tekst s punim imenom dedikanta, kao i imenom božanstva kojemu je žrtvenik bio posvećen - Melisocus. Drugi je žrtvenik nepotpun. Od cijelog je spomenika sačuvan samo fragment s uzglavnicom (pulvinus), ispod koje se nalazi manji dio natpisnog polja s tekstom koji navodi ime istog božanstva u neznatno izmijenjenoj formi u odnosu na prethodno - Melesocus. Ime dedikanta je nepotpuno. Ovi nalazi pripadaju skupini od sveukupno pet do sada pronađenih zavjetnih žrtvenika posvećenih istom božanstvu - Melosoku, svi s područja oko crkve sv. Teodora i jame Golubinčine između Krnice i Raklja.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: zavjetni žrtvenici, Melisocus/Melesocus, krška jama Golubinčina kraj Krnice, Istri

The paper presents two recent finds of antique, Roman votive altars dedicated to Melisocus (Melosocus), up to now the only recorded male deity among the Histrian cults. The finds of the monuments were recorded under specific circumstances, as they were discovered by members of the Pula Speleological Society, in the karst pit Golubinčina near Krnica in Istria. Though the first find was recorded back in 2012, the retrieval of the monuments from the pit took place only the following year, after the discovery of another monument of the same type. One of these two altars, though damaged in the front section of the base and headstone, including the rear side, has been preserved almost completely in terms of its height and width, along with the entire inscription field, which the text containing the full name of the dedicant, as well as the name of the deity to whom the altar was dedicated - Melisocus. The other altar was incomplete. Of the entire monument, only a fragment with the headstone (pulvinus) has been preserved, under which there is a smaller inscription field that cites the name of the deity in a slightly altered form with respect to the previous monument - Melesocus. The name of the dedicant is incomplete. These finds belong to a group of a total of five currently known votive altars dedicated to the same deity - Melosocus, all of them from the area around the Church of St Theodore and the pit Golubinčina located between Krnica and Rakalj.

KEY WORDS: votive altars, Melisocus/Melesocus, karst pit Golubinčina near Krnica, Istri

Jedan od najintragantnijih predrimskih histarskih kultova u Istri, koja je s Liburnijom vrlo bogata svjedočanstvima autohtone duhovne kulture, zacijelo je onaj Melosokov, donedavno posvjedočen na tri natpisa pronađena kraj Krnice (Opć. Marčana), odnosno između Krnice i Raklja (Degrassi 1970, 617; Šašel Kos 1999, 74; Girardi Jurkić 2005, 128-130). Prvi je natpis prije 1870. pronađen u ruševinama crkve sv. Teodora kraj Raklja, odakle je prenesen u selo, zatim u vodnjanski lapidarij, a danas se nalazi u zbirci kamenih spomenika Arheološkog muzeja Istre u Puli (CIL 5, 8127 = ILS 4891 = Inscr. It. 10, 1, 661: *Numini Me/losoco Aug(usto) / sacrum / Cn(aeus) [P]apiriu[s] / Eumelu[s] / ex / voto*). Stotinjak metara istočno od ruševina crkvice u suhozidnim ogradama ima mnogo antičke građevinske i druge keramike (amfore, *dolia*) (Schiavuzzi 1908, 92; Matijašić 1988, 38). Drugi je natpis, jako oštećen, pronađen 1900. na istome mjestu, u ruševinama crkve sv. Teodora, prenesen u Vodnjan, a odatle također u Arheološki muzej Istre u Puli (Inscr. It. 10, 1, 662: *M[e]llosoc[o]/ [...] / ...Aug[usti servus vel libertus] / ...*). Treći je pronađen 1998. u kraškoj jami Golubinčina, kraj ceste Krnica - Rakalj, oko 800 m od Sv. Teodora, i jedini je Melosokov natpis na grčkom jeziku i pismu (Matijašić 2000, 44-50: $\Theta\epsilon\tilde{\omega} / \text{Μελισώκω} / \Sigma\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho / \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma / \theta\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$). Nalaz dva nova žrtvenika s posvetom istome božanstvu povećao je njihov broj na pet te ih ovdje predstavljamo.

Recentni nalazi dvaju antičkih, rimskodobnih zavjetnih žrtvenika od vapnenca posvećenih histarskom božanstvu Melosoku (*Melosocus*), zabilježeni su u dva navrata. U veljači 2012. godine, tijekom rutinskog pregleda kraške jame Golubinčina, koja se nalazi nedaleko od Krnice u Istri, članovi Speleološke udruge "Pula" uočili su jedan ulomak kamenog spomenika s uklesanim latinskim natpisom. Kako je o nalazu bio obaviješten Arheološki muzej Istre, ubrzo je ustanovljeno da ovaj nalaz predstavlja dio zavjetnog žrtvenika posvećenog Melosoku.

Nešto više od godinu dana kasnije, isti su speleolozi na istoj lokaciji pronašli još jedan kameni žrtvenik, nakon čega su započeli izvlačenje oba spomenika na površinu. Samo izvlačenje iz jame, koje je trajalo dva dana, predstavljalo je vrlo zahtjevan zadatak, jer su se spomenici nalazili na samom dnu velikog sipara, s nagibom od 40 stupnjeva.¹ Dana 12. svibnja 2013.

¹ Ovom prigodom srdačno zahvaljujemo članovima Speleološke udruge "Pula" na prepoznatim i ukazanim nalazima te na uloženom trudu prilikom vrlo zahtjevnog procesa izvlačenja spomenika iz kraške jame Golubinčina. Prvi spomenik s natpisom pronašao je speleolog Haris Vojniković, dok je drugi otkrio Matej Mirkac, predsjednik Speleološke udruge "Pula".

One of the most intriguing Pre-Roman Histrian cults in Istria, which along with Liburnia is very rich in inscriptions testifying to the autochthonous spiritual culture, was most certainly that of Melissocus, until recently documented on three inscriptions near Krnica (Municipality of Marčana), between Krnica and Rakalj (Degrassi 1970, 617; Šašel Kos 1999, 74; Girardi Jurkić 2005, 128-130). The first inscription dates prior to 1870 and was found in the ruins of the Church of St Theodore near Rakalj, from where it was transferred to the village, and then to the lapidarium in Vodnjan. Today it resides in the collection of stone monuments at the Archaeological Museum of Istria in Pula (CIL 5, 8127 = ILS 4891 = Inscr. It. 10, 1, 661: *Numini Me/losoco Aug(usto) / sacrum / Cn(aeus) [P]apiriu[s] / Eumelu[s] / ex / voto*). A hundred meters or so east of the ruins of the small church in the drywall boundaries, there are numerous fragments of Roman pottery (roof-tiles, amphorae, *dolia*) (Schiavuzzi 1908, 92; Matijašić 1988, 38). The second inscription, severely damaged, has been found in 1900 at the same place in the ruins of the Church of St Theodore, and was transferred to Vodnjan from where it ended up at the Archaeological Museum of Istria in Pula (Inscr. It. 10, 1, 662: *M[e]llosoc[o]/ [...] / ...Aug[usti servus vel libertus] / ...*). The third one was found in 1998 in the karst pit Golubinčina, near the road on the Krnica - Rakalj route, some 800 metres from St Theodore and is the only inscription dedicated to Melissocus in the Greek language and script (Matijašić 2000, 44-50: $\Theta\epsilon\tilde{\omega} / \text{Μελισώκω} / \Sigma\lambda\omicron\upsilon\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho / \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma / \theta\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$). The discovery of two new altars with a dedication to the same deity has increased the number of inscriptions to five, and here we will be presenting them.

The recent finds of two Roman votive altars made from limestone and dedicated to the Histrian deity Melissocus (*Melosocus*) have been recorded on two occasions. In February 2012, during a routine inspection of the karst pit Golubinčina located not far from Krnica in Istria, members of the Pula Speleological Society noticed a fragment of a stone monument with a carved inscription in Latin. Once the Archaeological Museum of Istria was notified of the find, it was quickly concluded that the find was part of a votive altar dedicated to Melissocus.

About a year later, the same speleologists found another stone altar at the same location, after which they began organising the retrieval of both monuments to the surface. The actual retrieval from the pit, lasting two days, was a very demanding task, because the monuments were located at the very base of a large



Sl. 1 Izvlačenje jednog od žrtvenika iz jame Golubinčina (foto: S. Petešić).
Fig. 1 Retrieval of one of the altars from the pit Golubinčina (photo by: S. Petešić).

godine, uz prisutnost stručnih djelatnika Arheološkog muzeja Istre i mnogih kolega iz struke te predstavnika raznih medija i ostalih zainteresiranih pojedinaca, privedena je kraju i posljednja faza izvlačenja spomenika iz jame (sl. 1-2).

Nakon izvlačenja iz jame, žrtvenici su istoga dana preneseni u Muzejsko-galerijski prostor Sveta Srca u Puli, izložbeni prostor gdje se u to vrijeme pripremao postav izložbe "Histri u Istri".² Time su ova dva novopronađena spomenika svoje privremeno mjesto zauzela u ambijentu ispunjenom eksponatima koji predstavljaju materijalnu ostavštinu predrimskih, željeznodobnih Histra, naroda čija je duhovna kultura, pored ostalog, bila obilježena i štovanjem jedinog muškog božanstva - Melosoka.

1. Žrtvenik od vapnenca s oštećenom bazom i uzglavnicom (pulvinom) (vis. 54 cm, šir. 35 cm, deb. 32 cm, vis. natpisnog polja 32 cm, šir. 33 cm), pronađen u kraškoj jami Golubinčina kraj Krnice 2013. (sl. 3). Natpis je cjelovito sačuvan, oblikovan u pet redaka koji su pravilno raspoređeni i uglavnom centrirani prema središnjoj okomitoj osi. Slova su u svim recima ujednačene visine (1. red 3,3 cm, 2. red 3,2 cm, 3. red 3,8 cm, 4. red 3,3 cm, 5. red 4 cm), s vrlo malo odstupanja, a nema povezanih slova ili smanjenih slova zbog nedostatka prostora, odnosno loše procjene raspoloživog prostora.

² Mihovilić 2013. Izložba "Histri u Istri" je bila postavljena od 16. svibnja do 15. listopada 2013. godine. Po završetku izložbe žrtvenici su pohranjeni u čuvaonici Arheološkog muzeja Istre.



Sl. 2 Članovi speleološke udruge "Pula" neposredno nakon izvlačenja dvaju zavjetnih žrtvenika posvećenih Melosoku (foto: S. Petešić).
Fig. 2 Members of the Pula Speleological Society just after retrieval of the two votive altars dedicated to Melosocus (photo by: S. Petešić).

talus, at an inclination of 40 degrees.¹ On 12 May 2013, in the presence of the professionals from the Archaeological Museum of Istria, many colleagues from the profession, representatives from various media and other interested individuals, the last phase of retrieving the monuments from the pit was finalised (Fig. 1-2).

After completing the retrieval from the pit, the altars were transferred to the museum gallery Sacred Hearts in Pula, an exhibition area where the exhibition named Histri in Istria was being prepared at that time.² Hence, these two newly discovered monuments assumed their place in an ambient filled with artefacts representing the material heritage of pre-Roman, Iron Age Histri, a people whose spiritual culture, among other things, was characterised by the adoration of the male deity called Melisocus.

1. The first altar is made of limestone and has a damaged base and headstone (pulvinus) (54 cm high, 35 cm wide, 32 cm thick, inscription field height 32 cm, width 33 cm), found in the karst pit Golubinčina near Krinca in 2013 (Fig. 3). The inscription has been completely preserved,

¹ We would like to take this opportunity to extend our cordial appreciation to members of the Pula Speleological Society for recognising the finds and notifying AMI of their existence, and their endeavours in the very demanding process of retrieving the monuments from the karst pit Golubinčina. The first monument carrying an inscription was found by speleologist Haris Vojniković, whereas the other one was found by Matej Mirkac, president of the Speleological Society.

² Mihovilić 2013. The exhibition named Histri in Istria was held from 16th May to 15th October 2013. Upon completion of the exhibition, the altars have been stored in the depot of the Archaeological Museum of Istria.

Melisoco
sac(rum)
C(aius) Septidius
Pilumenus
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibenter)

Ako je *Septidius* iskrivljeno od *Settidius*, ta je obitelj vrlo dobro zastupljena u Puli i pulskom ageru (petnaestak imena: Inscr. It. 10, 1, kazalo na str. 283), a neki su njeni pripadnici očito potomci oslobođenika. Tako je i *Pilumenus* (također iskrivljeno, umjesto *Philumenus* / *Philumenes*) ime koje svojim helenskim izvorom svjedoči o vjerojatnom oslobođeničkom statusu osobe, no troimeni obrazac pokazuje da je bio punopravni rimski građanin. Od jezičnih nesigurnosti, uzrokovanih nedovoljnim poznavanjem ortografije, osim *Septidius* i *Pilumenus*, treba upozoriti i na oblik teonima *Melisocus*, koji predstavlja inačicu od *Melosocus*, poznat s druga dva spomenuta natpisa, ali i treći spomenuti, grčki, ima Μελισώκος. Seoska sredina na krajnjem sjeveroistoku pulskog kolonijskog agera, blizu granice s Liburnijom, jamačno nije pretjerano marila za jezičnu ispravnost, ali već sama činjenica da se na takvom mjestu nalazi kvalitetan natpis (zanatski i estetski) svjedoči o dubini romanizacije.



Sl. 3 Zavjetni žrtvenik posvećen Melosoku, s inačicom imena božanstva - *Melisocus* (foto: S. Petešić).

Fig. 3 Votive altar dedicated to Melosocus, a variant name given to the deity - *Melisocus* (photo by: S. Petešić).

has five rows, orderly laid out and mostly centred with the perpendicular axis. The letters have a uniform height across all rows of text (1st row: 3.3 cm, 2nd row: 3.2 cm, 3rd row: 3.8 cm, 4th row: 3.3 cm, 5th row: 4 cm), with very little deviation, and there are no connected letters or smaller letters due to lack of space or poorly estimated available space.

Melisoco
sac(rum)
C(aius) Septidius
Pilumenus
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibenter)

If *Septidius* is a misspelling of *Settidius*, the former referred to a family that is very well known in Pula and the territory of Pula (fifteen or so names: Inscr. It. 10, 1, index on pg. 283), where some of their members were obviously descendants of freedmen. Hence, *Pilumenus* (an incorrect spelling of *Philumenus* / *Philumenes*) is the name which in its Hellenic origin refers to the probable freed status of persons, however the triple-name pattern indicates that the person was a fully-fledged Roman citizen. Regarding linguistic uncertainties, caused by insufficient knowledge of orthography, besides *Septidius* and *Pilumenus*, caution should also be given to the form of the theonym *Melisocus*, which is a variant of *Melosocus*, found on the other two mentioned inscriptions, and the third one, in Greek, has Μελισώκος. The rural surroundings at the very end of the north-eastern Pula colonial territory, close to the border with Liburnia, certainly did not overly care for linguistic correctness, but the very fact that a good quality inscription (in terms of craftsmanship and aesthetics) at that location testifies to the intensity of Romanisation.

2. The second fragment of altar made from limestone (height: 53 cm, width: 29 cm, thickness: 27 cm, preserved height of the inscription field 27 cm, preserved width: 26 cm), was found in the karst pit Golubinčina near Krnica in 2013 (Fig. 4). Only the middle upper section of the inscription across three rows has been preserved, along with the section of the headstone (pulvinus), broken off on all sides except the upper side. The letters have been somewhat unskilfully shaped in a rustic capital but at a uniform height (4 cm) and with sufficient spacing. Despite the separation of letters, the ligature TI in the third row was carried out just like a Latin cross.

[Me]lesoco
sac(rum)
 [...]*Iusti*[...]
 ...

2. Ulomak žrtvenika od vapnenca (vis. 53 cm, šir. 29 cm, deb. 27 cm, sačuvana vis. natpisnog polja 27 cm, sačuvana šir. 26 cm), pronađen u kraškoj jami Golubinčina kraj Krnice 2013. (sl. 4). Sačuvana je samo sredina gornjeg dijela natpisa u tri retka, s profilacijom uzglavnice (pulvina), odlomljen sa svih strana osim gornje. Slova su donekle nevješto oblikovana rustičnom kapitalom, ali ujednačene su visine (4 cm) i primjerenog razmaka. Unatoč razmaknutosti slova, u trećem je retku ligatura TI, izvedena poput latinskoga križa.

[Me]lesoco
sac(rum)
[...Iusti[...]
...

Mali sačuvani ulomak natpisa ne omogućava detaljniju analizu, no ime je božanstva većim dijelom sačuvano, i to u trećoj inačici (*Melesocus*), s uvijek istim samoglasnikom koji se mijenja (*Meliosocus - Melesocus - Melosocus*). Od imena je ostao samo dio kognomena: *Iustus, Iustinus* ili sl., koji je posvjedočen na nizu istarskih natpisa, no osim njegove datacije u 2 - 3. st. nema posebne diskriminantne vrijednosti. Paleografski se također može potvrditi datacija u razdoblje zreloga principata.

Ime Melosoka je zanimanje izazvalo od otkrića i objave prvoga natpisa (CIL 5, 8127), a Mommsen je ovaj teonim smatrao tipično histarskim (Schultze 1904, 42; Šašel Kos 199, 74), ponajviše zbog dočетка -ocus, što je karakteristika i niza autohtonih osobnih imena iz sjeverne Istre (*Clangocus, Fervalocus, Laepocus, Taesalocus*, usp. Križman 1991, 100-101, 254). Takva Mommsenova pretpostavka može se i danas smatrati vrlo vjerojatnom, dok druge pretpostavke, da se radi o orografskom ili hidrografskom pojmu (Gnirs 1925, 130), da se korijen imena može povezati s grč. μέλος (*cantus, carmen*, pjesma, Tomaschek 1885, 98), valja uzeti s rezervom. Ne može se reći da je jedna od triju inačica teonima (*Meliosocus - Melesocus - Melosocus*) ispravna, točna ili kanonska. Epigrafija sada potvrđuje sve tri, a i ranije je dio filologa njihovo postojanje smatralo mogućim (Krahe 1928, 73; Conway 1933, 219).

Isto je tako teško pretpostaviti s kojim je klasičnim grčko-rimskim božanstvom Melosok mogao biti sinkretizmom povezan, iako smo, s obzirom da je žrtvenik s grčkim natpisom pronađen u kraškoj jami (a sada i ova nova dva), oprezno pretpostavili da su Mitra, Silvan i Dijana ponekad povezani s takvim ambijentom (Matijašić 2000a, 9). Kad bi veza s etimologijom riječi grč. μέλος bila dokaziva, moglo bi se pomišljati na

The small preserved fragment of the inscription does not enable a more detailed analysis, but the name of the deity has been partly preserved, specifically the third variant (*Melesocus*), and always with the same vowel which is altered (*Meliosocus - Melesocus - Melosocus*). Only the cognomen remains of the name: *Iustus, Iustinus* or the like, which can be found on a number of Istrian inscriptions, but besides being dated to the 2nd - 3rd century, it has no particular discriminating value. In terms of palaeography, its date can also be verified as being the mature period of the Principate.



Sl. 4 Zavjetni žrtvenik posvećen Melosoku, s inačicom imena božanstva - *Melesocus* (foto: S. Petešić).

Fig. 4 Votive altar dedicated to Melosocus, with a variant of the name of the deity - *Melesocus* (photo by: S. Petešić).

The name Melosocus has incited interest since the discovery and publication of the first inscription (CIL 5, 8127), and Mommsen considered the theonym to be typically Histrian (Schultze 1904, 42; Šašel Kos 199, 74), mostly due to the suffix -ocus, which is also a characteristic of some other autochthonous personal names from northern Istria (*Clangocus, Fervalocus, Laepocus, Taesalocus*, cf. Križman 1991, 100-101, 254). This presumption by Mommsen is considered even today most likely, whereas other suppositions claiming that it is an orographic or hydrographic term (Gnirs 1925, 130), that the root of the name is linked to the Greek word μέλος (*cantus, carmen*, song, Tomaschek 1885, 98) should be taken with some reservation. It cannot be argued with certainty that one of

Apolona, Dijanu ili Orfeja (Tomaschek 1885, 98; Girardi Jurkić 1999, 129). Iako ga se pokušalo izjednačiti s likovnim prikazom itifaličkog konjanika iz Nezakcija, “uvjetno nazvanog ‘trački konjanik’” (Jurkić 1982-1985, 279, gdje je i starija literatura; Girardi Jurkić 2005, 129), to se također ne može potkrijepiti konkretnim argumentima.

Na temelju činjenice da se u jednom od natpisa Melosok navodi kao *numen*, a ne *deus*, tvrdilo se da se radi o božanskom duhu nižega stupnja, “moguće duhu posvećenog mjesta” (Šašel Kos 1999, 74), ali pridjev *Augustus* u istome natpisu znači da je bio ukorijenjen u rimski panteon. Grčki ga natpis naziva “bogom” (Θεός Μελισώκος), a preostala tri donose Melosokovo ime bez pridjevaka. O karakteru kulta stoga se ne može za sada reći ništa konkretno. Imamo li na umu činjenicu da su dva natpisa pronađena u ruševinama crkve sv. Teodora, a tri u kraškoj jami udaljenoj oko 800 m, postavlja se pitanje koje je od ta dva mjesta, ako ikoje, bilo izvorno mjesto kulta. Ni za jedan od ovih nalaza nema podataka o arheološkom kontekstu. U crkvi su natpisi mogli biti iskorišteni kao građevinski materijal, no nije jako vjerojatno da su kameni blokovi doneseni iz jame, s obzirom da okolni krajolik kamenom obiluje. Je li kultno mjesto bilo negdje između, pa su neki blokovi iskorišteni kao građevinski materijal, a drugi bačeni u jamu? Ovo potonje ne bi trebalo čuditi ako takav postupak promatramo u kontekstu uništavanja poganskih spomenika u nekom trenutku konsolidacije ranoga kršćanstva. Zato ovo zacijelo nije dovoljno da se o kultnom mjestu predloži neko konkretno rješenje, barem ne do otkrića nekih, nadati se je, novih okolnosti.

the three variants of the theonyms (*Melissoc* - *Melesoc* - *Melosoc*) is correct, accurate or canonical. Epigraphy now confirms all three, though even in earlier times some philologists considered them possible (Krahe 1928, 73; Conway 1933, 219).

It is equally difficult to assume with which classic Greek-Roman deity Melosoc could have been syncretistically connected, although we did cautiously presume that Mitra, Silvan or Diana were sometimes associated with such an ambient (Matijašić 2000a, 9), given that the altar with a Greek inscription was found in the karst pit (and now these two new ones). If the relationship with the etymology of the Greek word μέλος could be proven, it may refer to Apollo, Diana or Orpheus (Tomaschek 1885, 98; Girardi Jurkić 1999, 129). Though there were attempts to link it to the itiphallic horseman statue from Nesactium, “conditionally called the ‘Thracian horseman’” (Jurkić 1982-1985, 279, with previous bibliography; Girardi Jurkić 2005, 129), this claim cannot be substantiated by solid arguments.

Based on the fact that in one of the inscriptions, Melosoc is referred to as *numen*, and not *deus*, it was believed that it referred to a godly spirit of a lower order “possibly a spirit of a consecrated place” (Šašel Kos 1999, 74), but the adjective *Augustus* in the same inscription means that it was rooted in the Roman pantheon. The Greek inscription calls it a “god” (Θεός Μελισώκος), whereas the other three have the name of Melissoc without an attribute. Hence, nothing specific can be said about the character of the cult. Keeping in mind the fact that two inscriptions were found in the ruins of the church of St Theodore, and three in the karst pit some 800 metres away, the question is posed as to which of these two places, if any, was the place of origin of the cult. There is no data on the archaeological context for any of these finds. The inscription could have been used as construction material, but it is not highly probable that the stone blocks were brought in from the pit, given that the surroundings had a lot of available stone. Is it possible that the source of the cult was situated somewhere in between, hence some of the blocks were used as construction material, and others thrown into the pit? The latter should not come as a surprise if such actions are observed in the context of destruction of pagan monuments during the period of consolidation of early Christianity. That is why this reasoning is not sufficient to propose a specific solution for the location of the origin of the cult, at least not until the discovery of some - hopefully - new circumstances.

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