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NEW LIBURNIAN TOMBSTONES FROM ASSERIA

Summary

Recent archaeological research in Asseria has enriched the corpus of Liburnian tombstones, so-called Liburnian cippi, with six more examples, four of them having the complete grave inscriptions. Up to now the total of Liburnian cippi has reached the number of 110 examples. Fifty-two specimens originate from Asseria and its close vicinity which represent 47,27% of the total, concerning all three typological groups (Asseriate, Iadertine and of the island of Krk provenance) together with the mixed – characteristic one. However, to the Asseriate group of Liburnian tombstones (closer area of Asseria + Liburnian region) belong some 72 examples (52 + 20), which make 65,45% of all finds throughout Liburnia. While the Krk group retains the same number of nine examples, some 20 recently found cippi from the excavations at T. C. Relja in Zadar have been added to the Zadar group. Two more examples should be added to the mixed – characteristic group after the research in Asseria in 2004. Liburnian cippi with Asseriate features outnumber the rest with 65,45% compared to other monuments. 18,2% belong to the Zadar group, while the Krk and the mixed – characteristic groups both have 2,2% of the total. On the other hand, of the total of 72 cippi with Asseriate features, 52 examples have been enearthed in Asseria (+ two of the mixed – characteristic group). It means that from Asseria itself there are 72,2% Asseriate cippi. This fact confirms to the very name of the group whereas Asseria represents the epicentre of erecting such a tombstone over the buried, regardless of its spiritual or ideological meaning. All the six monuments are being rather homogenous in their tectonics, as well as in all stylistic and decorative elements, which together with the unfinished monuments reinforce the statement that Asseria was the centre of production of such a type of tombstone, proving its origin from the local Asseriate stone- masons' workshops.

These recent researches have completed the idea of concurrence of different name formulas even at the same category of epigraphic monuments. Onomastic analysing put forth some new names of citizens of the ancient Asseria, that is, four female and six male persons. Eight persons have been confirmed as being commemorators or commemorants – *Baebia Saturnina*, *Elvia Maximila*, *Lupa*, and *Lucius Cassius*, *Ursio*, *Lucius Papius Rufus* and *Lucius Papius Didimus*. One person is being known indirectly through filiation, while the gentilicium *Kaninius* comes to us via slaves of the family of *Kaninii* – *Lucius Elvius* and *Lupa* and *Ursio Kaniniorum*. The onomastic analyse has shown again

the names formulas to be irregular, that is, the nomenclature of men and women being written without filiation or patronyms as being confirmed so far, the inscriptions of such monuments lack in more detailed data about the commemorants and those erecting the monuments. These monuments lack in *tribus* and *domus* of the deceased ones, as well as the functions they were in during lifetime. Concerning the relationships there are only a brother (Cat. No. 3) and a father (Cat. No. 4) as commemorators. One inscription mentions a female friend/companion at food and drink (Cat. No. 1), while in another example there is no relationship between the deceased and the commemorator at all (Cat. No. 2). Very often the votive D(is) M(anibus), and laudative formulas are missing. Occasionally laudative formulas may appear as - *posuit*, *viva posuit*, or *bene merita viva posuit* and *se viva posuit*.

Out of four epigraphically relevant monuments the two were erected during lifetime, monument No. 1. - *viva posuit* to a friend of hers, i. e. to his son and to himself, during lifetime, monument No. 4. - *pater filio se vivus posuit*.

Such a case on the Liburnian monuments seems to be rather specific for the Asseriate group. Although it looks quite logical to erect gravestones „*post mortem*“, a number of the Asseriate cippi were erected „*ante mortem*“ either in case of erecting it to oneself – *se viva (vivus)*, *se viva (vivus) fecit*, or both, to oneself and to the siblings – *sibi et*. This did not occur very often in the west of Roman Empire from the 1st to the end of the 3rd century AD, except in Noric. The inscriptions with „*ante mortem*“ do not exceed 1% of the total in the west of Roman Empire. Liburnian tomstones of the Asseriate group together with these four recently found „*ante mortem*“ examples (Cat. Nos. 1 and 4) make the total of ten inscriptions, that is, 13,8%. This must have resulted out of a clear wish of a person to insure during lifetime the erection of such a monument for her/himself, for a member of the family, or for both her/himself and someone from the family. It is interesting and indicative that there were but Liburnian cippi.

As for the paleographic analyse of the monuments it is obvious that inscriptions are well arranged over the inscription fields; words rarely being continued in the following row, except for the gentile name – *Ka/ninioru/m* (No. 3). Ligatures occurred on two inscriptions with the letters AE in the first and second rows, and letters IL in the second row – monument No. 2, as well as FO in the first row on the monument No. 4. (little letter F within the letter O). In any case the letters appear to be cut as regular capital letters with more or less deep furrows.

As no systematic paleographic analyse has been done up to now concerning particular letters in various categories of the epigraphic texts, any detailed paleographic work of the mentioned monuments would not result in a precise chronology.

Concerning either the ethnic origin or social status recently discovered inscriptions may reveal the persons of Italic provenance or the domicile citizens bearing Italic nomen and civitatem, directly or indirectly connected to Asseriate aristocracy. *Lupa* and *Ursio* must have been the slaves of the *Caninii*. The very gentilicium *Kaninius* was found on the stone beam of a public building in Asseria indicating the person who served as a magistrate and priest.

None of all four inscriptions found recently express any precise element for a certain date. In the first place that are tectonic and stylistic together with decorative elements of the particular group which confirm to given frames starting with the early 1st century to the very beginning of the 3rd century AD. These six Liburnian cippuses found in 2006 according to their features belong to dated Asseriate group of Liburnian ones. They are all monolithic and monumental, rather balanced in ornaments, standing on a ring base, double lined on both upper and lower parts of the body, (one example bearing the floral ornament), ring chord between cylindrical body and callote, ring relief at the base of the callotte (in one case it is an astragal). The complete callottes bear nicely cut in squanae, double lines surrounding the inscription fields on all four sides. The paleographic appearance of the inscription and a rather rare ligatures indicate the somewhat earlier date, that is, the end of the 2nd and beginning of the 3rd century. The omission of the votive formula D(is) M(anibus) could not be a sufficient element for establishing the date prior to the end of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd century AD.

However the epigraphic, onomastic (gens *Iulius*, *Baebius*, *Helvius*, *Caninius*, *Papirius*) and paleographic characteristics indicate these recently found Liburnian cippi to be of the earlier date. Most probably they were erected over the deceased in the second half of the 1st c. or during the 2nd c. AD.