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On one unpublished Roman inscription from Nevesinje*

Abstract: The paper presents Latin inscription discovered in Kifino Selo, near Nevesinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The monument — limestone funerary altar, dated to the third century, was erected for a prominent Roman citizen from the Publicii family, by his mother. It is worth mentioning that another inscription, also from the third century, was discovered in the immediate vicinity of the church, at the site of Drenovik. It is a dedication made by *Lollius Concessus*, a consular beneficiary from the *legio I Adiutrix*. Although no archaeological research has been conducted so far, considerable remains of ancient architectural constructions on the site of Drenovik, as well as the strategic position of the place where the inscriptions were found in Kifino Selo, may point to the existence of an unknown settlement near the important road connection, which led from *Narona* to Nevesinjsko Polje and northwest via Konjic to Sarajevsko Polje.

Keywords: Roman period, inscription, funerary altar, Kifino Selo, Drenovik.

The funerary altar was discovered in 2018, during the renovation, plastering and wall painting of the interior of the church of Sv. Trojica in Kifino Selo near Nevesinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Fig. 1). It is built into the eastern wall, directly next to the apse, i.e., inside the altar area. As it was covered with a thick layer of mortar, the inscription was not visible. The monument represents the front part of a grave altar made of limestone. The surface of the stone is heavily damaged by cracks and erosion, especially in the right part of the inscription, where the letters are difficult to identify (Fig. 2). The monument has been probably exposed

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to atmospheric influences for a long time before it was built into the wall of the church. Dimensions: height 74, width 40cm; inscription field; height 62, width 26 cm. Letter height 4–3cm.

We present the following reading:

D M
PVBLCIIIO
IVS []
DVMVIR Q []
INQVENNA
LICIO EQ RO
MANO V []
FVNCTO []
OR [] FIII AE
IVSTINA MA
TER CON []
VOTVM
SVVM.

D(is) M(anibus) / Publiciio (!) / Ius[tino?] / du(u)mvir(o) q[u]/inquenna/⁵licio
eq(uiti) RQ/mano V[---] / functo [o(mnibus) hon]/or[i(bus)?] fili(o?) Aē(lia?) /¹⁰
Iustina mā/ter con[tra?] / votum / suum.

The inscription informs us that the deceased was a respectable Roman citizen of the equestrian class, from the family of *Publicii*, to whom his mother, named *Aelia* (?) *Iustina*, erected the monument “*contra votrum suum*”.¹

Although it is not known in which municipality *Publicius* served or lived, it is clear that he held important positions during his lifetime. As a *quinquennial duumvir*, he was at the head of a Roman city in the province, as a one of the two magistrates who reconstituted the citizens’ list every five years.² What makes this inscription particularly interesting is precisely the information that he performed the function, in past tense. This is expressed by the form *quinquennialicio*,³ which

¹ The formula *contra votum suum* has not been hitherto attested on inscriptions from Dalmatia. The construction that is most often found on inscriptions from *Aquileia* expresses the pain of parents who, *contra votum suum*, erect a monument to their loved ones (*Aquileia*: AE 1987, 426, AE 1989, 324; MAZZOLENI 1982, 324, 325; Germany: NESSELHAUF / LIEB, 1959, 166, Nr. 117; EHMIG 2012, 201–215).

² One possibility is *Narona*, where the *nomen Publicius* is very widespread, and which was connected to Nevesinjsko polje by an important road; another possibility is the nearby municipium of *Diluntum* (see: BOJANOVSKI 1987, 63–174; BOJANOVSKI 1988; SERGEJEVSKI 1948, 43–61).

³ SALOMIES 2010, 219.

has not been hitherto attested on inscriptions from Dalmatia. This form (*Ilviro quinquennialicio*) is found on several monuments in Italy and the African provinces from the third and fourth centuries.⁴ Urban dignitaries of the equestrian class are also documented on several inscriptions from the province of Dalmatia, such as those from *Salona*, but also in the interior of the province, on honorary inscriptions from around Sarajevo and Komini near Pljevlja in Montenegro (*Municipium S...*).⁵ The formula *omnibus honoribus functus* is attested in a funerary inscriptions in Dalmatia, but the epitaphs of dignitaries in the province rarely provide an extensive cursus. It is also found in the honorific inscriptions in the province, such as the one from Glamoč (Bosnia and Herzegovina).⁶

His *nomen*, *Publicius*, is particularly well represented in *Narona* and *Salona* and its surroundings.⁷ Several members of the *Publicii* family known from *Narona* participated in the city administration or held clerical and other positions, such as *Publicius Nicephorus* (aedile), *Publicius Romanus* (decurion), *L. Publicius Diadumenus* (augustal), etc.⁸ It is interesting that the largest number of *Publicii* bear a Greek *cognomen*, such as *Nicephorus*, *Telesphorus*, *Paroclus*, *Asclepius*, *Trophimus* or *Eutychus*.⁹ On the other hand, the *cognomen* of the deceased on the Kifino Selo inscription, which is most likely *Iustinus* (as his mother), was recorded only on a few inscriptions in the province, mostly from *Salona*, and on one other inscription from Bosnia.¹⁰ This suggests that the birthplace of *Publicius Iustinus* might be *Narona* or *Salona*, where the *Publicii* are well represented.

Monuments such as this one occur in the territory of the Dalmatia province mainly within the *area maceria cincta* family tombs, also known as the Aquileian type. In the third century, they were especially numerous in the eastern/south-eastern part of the province, where members of the city councils and their families were mostly buried.¹¹

The palaeographic characteristics of the inscriptions from Kifino Selo indicate that the monument was most likely erected in the third century. A stronger cursive influence is noticeable in the letters F, L and N, with the letter L with a second

⁴ *Italia, Numidia, AE* 2000, 1718, *CIL* 8, 883, *ILS* 6816.

⁵ *ILJug* 678; *ILJug* 95; *ILJug* 1702, *AE* 1998, 1026.

⁶ *CIL* 3, 9941; *ILJug* 1806; *ILJug* 1655.

⁷ *ILJug* 2019; *ILJug* 1882, *AE* 2004, 1096; *ILJug* 1885; *CIL* 3, 1875; *CIL* 3, 8441 etc. See also ALFÖLDY 1969, 112, 113.

⁸ *ILJug* 1885; *CIL* 3, 8441; *CIL* 3, 14624, *ILJug* 1866.

⁹ ALFÖLDY 1969, 112, 113.

¹⁰ *Iustinus* — *Salona*: *CIL* 3, 2279; *ILJug* 2136; *ILJug* 2087; Rab: KURILIĆ 2006, 137, Nr. 2; Breza: *ILJug* 1586. *Iustina* — *Salona*: *CIL* 3, 8626, *CIL* 3, 2377; *ILJug* 2413; Cavtat: *CIL* 3, 8412; ALFÖLDY 1969, 225.

¹¹ СРЕЈОВИЋ 1975, 177–189; СЕРМАНОВИЋ 1990, 227–234; ЦЕРМАНОВИЋ КУЗМАНОВИЋ 1998; VASIĆ 1973; ЗОТОВИЋ 1995.

slash on the downward stroke being documented mainly in inscriptions from the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century, and it also appears in Christian inscriptions in the neighbouring Upper Moesia.¹² Finally, the formula *contra votum suum* was recorded mostly on late imperial and Christian inscriptions, mainly in *Aquileia*.¹³ This formula has not been hitherto recorded on inscriptions from Dalmatia.¹⁴ The word *votum*, which was very often in religious use, appears in funerary inscriptions, mostly on grave-altars, with a meaning “vow” made to the *Manes*. The expression *contra votum* (especially in early Christian inscriptions)¹⁵ as well as *adversus vota*, implies a sense of regret for the unfortunate event, in this case an unexpected death and the erection of a tombstone, against the will of the dedicator. In other words, it “refers to the death that came against hopes and wishes in order to show the pain of the survivors”.¹⁶ In this particular case, it expresses a profound sorrow of a mother who had lost her beloved son.

It is noteworthy that another inscription, dated also to the third century, was discovered in the immediate vicinity of the church, at the site of Drenovik.¹⁷ It is a dedication made by *Lollius Concessus*, a consular beneficiary from the *legio I Adiutrix*, dedicated to *Iupiter Optimus Maximus*.¹⁸ The locality of Drenovik was already considered to be one of the Roman settlements on the important land communication (**Map 1**) that connected the Adriatic coast with the interior of the province and especially with the Sava and Danube valleys.¹⁹ Although no archaeological research has been conducted so far, a large concentration of construction rubble in the form of broken and processed stone, fragments of roof tiles, wall bricks and mortar, parts of altars and larger pieces of stone architectural elements (architrave, parapets, etc.) was recorded on the Drenovik site.²⁰ Significant remains of ancient architectural constructions as well as the strategic position of the place where the inscriptions

¹² PETROVIĆ 1974, 113, 115, 116.

¹³ MAZZOLENI 1982, 324, 325. See also: EHMIG 2012, KOVÁCS 2016.

¹⁴ This formula might be a part of one very fragmented inscription belonging to the late Roman sarcophagus from Manastirine (*Salona*), that was found at the end of nineteenth century, see: *ILJug* 2421, and also on one fragmented funerary inscription from *Aequum*; see: *CIL* 3, 9770.

¹⁵ KOVÁCS 2016, 132.

¹⁶ KOVÁCS 2016, 132; EHMIG 2012, 201–215. For funerary inscriptions ending in *votum* / *contra votum* from neighbouring Panonnia see: KOVÁCS 2016; *ILS* 9093. For *Moesia Superior*, see: *AE* 2007, 1214.

¹⁷ VUJOVIĆ 2020, 64–69.

¹⁸ The palaeographic features of the inscription correspond to the monuments of the third century, which also coincides with the period of presence of *legio I Adiutrix* consular beneficiaries in Dalmatia. This dating is also supported by stylistic similarities to the altars and tombstones from Salonitan territory, which exhibit a similar floral decoration within the triangular gable: *ILJug* 125, *CIL* 3, 8820.

¹⁹ VUJOVIĆ 2020, 68.

²⁰ Further evidence is another tombstone inscription (for certain *Aelius* and *Aelia Tata*), from neighboring Grabovica, and a coin of *Dyrrachium* discovered in Krgova; see PAŠALIĆ 1960, 61; *CIL* 3, 2766c = 8386=12755.

were found in Kifino Selo may point to the existence of an unknown settlement near the important road connection, which led from *Narona* to Nevesinjsko Polje²¹ and northwest via Konjic to Sarajevsko Polje.²²

²¹ Three milestones dated to the third century (236 and 244–249 AD), were found in Nevesinjsko Polje (Donja Bijenja and Udrežnje); see *CIL* 17, 4, 394; *AE* 1980, 681 = BOJANOVSKI 1978, 89, *ILJug* 1022, *CIL* 17, 4, 396; *AE* 1980, 680 = BOJANOVSKI 1978, 81, *CIL* 17, 4, 383.

²² PAŠALIĆ 1960, 60–74; BOJANOVSKI 1973, 137–187; BOJANOVSKI 1987, 66–108; BOJANOVSKI 1988, 106.

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AE = *L'année épigraphique*

CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

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O jednom neobjavljenom rimskom natpisu iz Nevesinja

Apstrakt: Predmet ovog rada je epigrafski spomenik iz Kifinog Sela kod Neve-
sinja, u istočnoj Hercegovini. Radi se o nadgrobnom oltaru od krečnjaka koji
je ugrađen unutar pravoslavne crkve Sv. Trojice. Spomenik je podigla žena po
imenu *Aelia(?) Iustina* za svog sina Publicija, kvinkvenalnog duumvira rimskog
grada čije ime nije naznačeno. Paleografske odlike natpisa ukazuju na to da
je spomenik iz Kifinog Sela najverovatnije nastao tokom 3. veka. Na lokalitetu
Drenovik, u blizini crkve u Kifinom Selu, otkriven je još jedan natpis iz trećeg
veka – žrtvenik konzularnog beneficijara po imenu *Lollius Concessus* iz *legio I
Adiutrix*. Iako ovde nisu vršena arheološka istraživanja, prilikom rekognoscira-
nja lokaliteta Drenovik uočeni su značajni ostaci antičkih građevina. To može
ukazivati na postojanje za sada nepoznatog rimskog naselja u blizini važnog
antičkog puta koji je iz Narone vodio kroz Nevesinjsko polje, i dalje, prema
severozapadu preko Konjica u Sarajevsko polje.

Кључне речи: Rimski period, natpis, nadgrobni oltar, Kifino Selo, Drenovik.

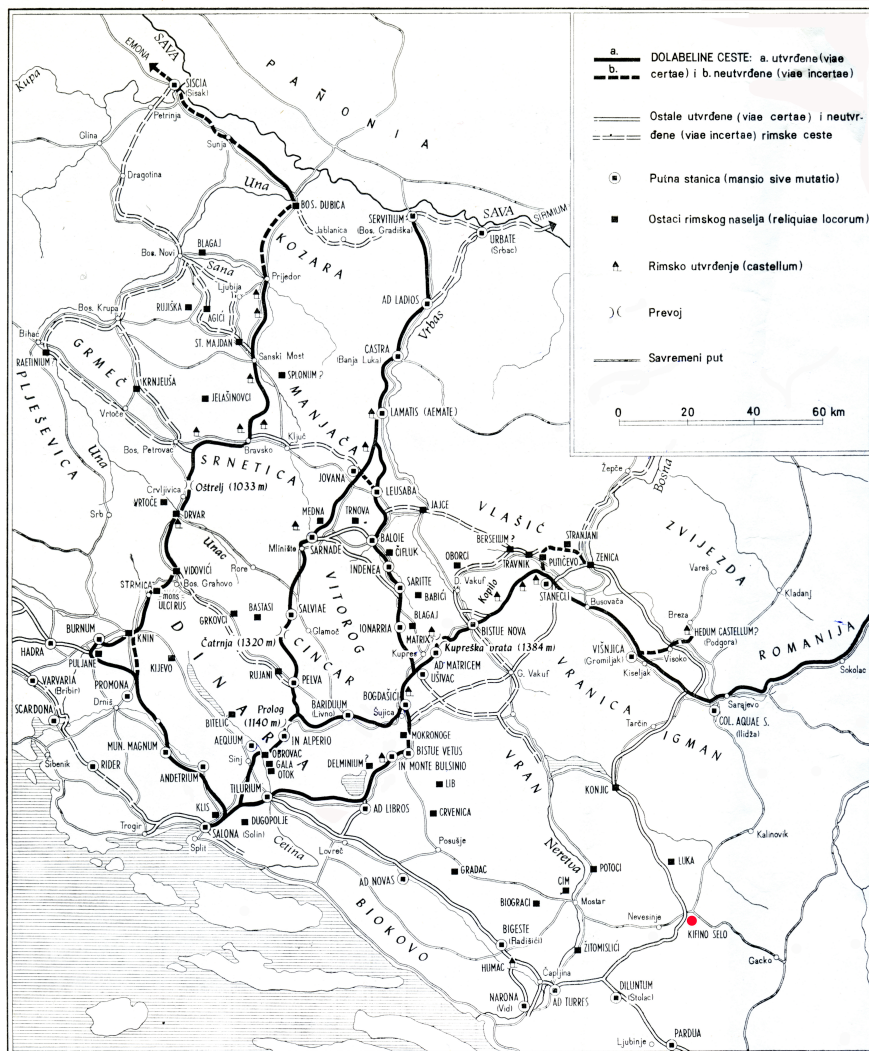
Fig. 1. St. Trojica Church at Kifino Selo by Nevesinje.



Fig. 2. Roman Inscription from St. Trojica Church at Kifino Selo.



Map. 1. Main land communications in Roman Dalmatia
(after Bojanovski 1974, drawing: P. Kurtović).



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