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IUPITER DEPULSOR IN DACIA

The cult of the supreme god of the official pantheon knew a special development in the province of Dacia. The frequency of votive dedications and the abundant figurate representations were generally considered a sign of loyalty for the state's cults. Yet, we must not neglect the genuine religious feeling and the popularity of this divine figure during the Principate. Now Iupiter, with the epithets *Optimus Maximus*, shows an imperialist character tending to include similar divine figures belonging to the native inhabitants of the empire and to attract monopolist lots of dedications. The origins of the syncretizing process of Zeus, the Greek supreme god with different oriental Baalims can be found during the Hellenistic epoch: in Tracia, Asia Minor, Syria, Zeus is identified with each μέγιστος θεός of any population within the Hellenistic block.

During the Roman imperial epoch a number of local epithets (names of indigenous gods) are associated to Iupiter, at this time already being syncretized with Olympian Zeus. Composed forms as Iupiter Dolichenus, Balmarcodes, Heliopolitanus, Maleciabrades, Damascenus occur in East, while in West we notice Iupiter Poeninus, Solutorius Eacus, Teutanus etc.¹

Iupiter Depulsor is attested in the province of Dacia where six votive altars were dedicated to him. The cult of this god was not expressly dealt within Romanian bibliography. The altars dedicated to him were mentioned in synthesis concerning the cult of Iupiter, being mentioned especially in an inscription at Apulum dedicated to *Iovi Victori, Iovi Depulsori*, a distinct hypostasis of god Iupiter.²

This Iupiter has a name composed with a Latin epithet *depulsor*, but the analysis of the occurrence of this term points out that he is a distinct god brought into the Trajanic province from another part of the empire.

Iupiter Depulsor in the Roman Empire

Up to date, Iupiter Depulsor counts about 50 votive pieces (among which there is only one figural representation, all the others being exclusively epigraphic) and that places him among the average popular in the Roman Empire. Most of the dedications come from the Norico-Pannonian area: Pannonia Superior (12), Noricum (7), Dalmatia (3), Istro-Venetian area (2), adding to these Pannonia Inferior (1), Dacia (6), Moesia Superior (3), Moesia Inferior (1), central and meridional Italy (2), Gallia (6), Hispania (4), Africa (3)³.

The directory of epigraphic monuments contains three etymological forms of the epithet accompanying the name of the god: *Depulsor*, *Depulsorius* and *Repulsor*, the three epithets not being mentioned by the literary sources. *Depulsor* might be translated as "the one who removes", equivalent with the Greek ἀλεξίκακος and *Depulsorius* is a

¹ P. Perdrizet, DA III 1, 1900, 699-700.

² M. Bărbulescu, Cultele greco-romane în provincia Dacia, diss. Cluj-Napoca 1985, 26; I. Piso, ad IDR III/5 232.

³ H.-G. Pflaum, *Iupiter Depulsor*, AIPho 13, 1954, 445 - 469; J. Kolendo, Le culte de Iupiter Depulsor et les incursions des Barbares, ANRW II 18. 2, 1989, 1062 - 1076; Liubica Zotović, Le culte de Iupiter Depulsor, Starinar XVII 1966, 37 - 43.

derivation of the mentioned epithet. *Repulsor* has a similar meaning, actually being a synonym of *Depulsor*. The epithet occurs either next to the name of god Iupiter, or subsequent to the frequent *Optimus Maximus*⁴.

Charting the epithets shows that Iupiter Depulsor was worshipped mostly within an area around Poetovio, and also in east Noricum, Iupiter Depulsorius is worshipped in Gallia Narbonensis (where Mercurius Depulsorius⁵ is also attested), while Iupiter Repulsor is only attested in the western Iberic Peninsula. Starting from this geographical situation doubled by the analysis of ethnical origin of the dedicator, H. G. Pflaum stated the existence of three similar gods, easy to confuse with one another, which originate from the indigenous religious backgrounds in the three areas. Later, starting from the three mentioned centers, the cults moved also to other provinces⁶. Concerning Iupiter Depulsor, having accepted Pflaum's theory, Marjeta Šašel Kos definitely states that this is a pre-Roman god, initially Celtic. Moreover, the author reduces the ethnic frame traced by Pflaum for this god, even naming Depulsor a Norico-Pannonian god and states the Norican / Tauriscan origin of the god⁷.

J. Kolendo has a different position against the theories we already mentioned. Following Pflaum, he accepts the beginning of Iupiter Depulsor cult in the Norico-Pannonian area and its spread throughout all the empire by colonists or soldiers, but rejects the pre-Roman origin of the god. The argument is that Depulsor has a Roman name, while most of the local Norican divinities kept their name. Moreover, Kolendo chronologically limits the evolution of this god's cult during the time that followed the Marcomanic wars, considering this Iupiter "that removes" as a protector god against the barbarian hordes and also against the pestilence coming from East⁸.

We deem it is hard to admit the idea that a cult can suddenly appear after certain military confrontations. In addition, the Depulsor – Depulsorius – Repulsor triplet occurs in three different Roman provinces that share the Celtic indigenous background, that revealing a wide religious phenomenon, animated by the same system. Starting with this reason we reject the theory stated by J. Kolendo, preferring Pflaum's one, also adopted by Marjeta Šašel Kos. We consider significant two of the counterarguments the latter author brings against Kolendo's theory. First, the chronological limits of the cult are framed by two general facts – generalization of votive offerings practice during second and third centuries until the military anarchy time. Secondly, the author emphasizes that some originally barbarian deities have epichoric names since their original names could not possibly be translated, and gives as an example the issue of Nutrices deities, by excellence Norican -Tauriscan goddesses, which were worshipped exclusively under their Roman names.⁹

Not only Depulsor's origin generated talks and arguments, but also his nature. The cult's restoration has been made only based on the epigraphic material, lacking more generous literary sources, adding to these only one representation. It is a marble plate found at Colatio, which shows Iupiter standing, seminude, holding the bunch of thunders and being accompanied by an eagle. This hypostasis is inspired from the monetary legends about Iupiter *Fulgurator* or Iupiter *Propugnator* that have as prototype Zeus' iconography as the defeater of the giants¹⁰. Since it fits within

⁴ H.-G. Pflaum, op. cit., 445 - 450.

⁵ E. de Ruggiero, *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romana II*, Roma 1961, 1706.

⁶ H.-G. Pflaum, op. cit., 450.

⁷ M. Šašel Kos, *Pre-roman divinities of the Eastern Alps and Adriatic*, Ljubljana 1999, 126.

⁸ J. Kolendo, op. cit., 1073 - 1075.

⁹ M. Šašel Kos, *Juppiter Depulsor – a Norican Deity?*, *Živa Antika*, 45, 1-2, 1995, 378-380.

¹⁰ R. Egger, *Ausgrabungen in Norikum, 1912-1913*, *JÖAI*, 17, 1914, 65-67.

classic iconography, the plate does not provide any hint concerning particular features of this god.

What can be said about Iupiter Depulsor's nature? The fact that he was considered equivalent to the supreme god of the classical religion and represented using that particular iconography, points out that he must be a Pantheon god. The personalities of this type of deities are always complex and cannot be explained through one "specialized" god or by assigning only one competency domain.

The epithet *Depulsor*, and its variations *Depulsorius* and *Repulsor* as well, certainly attest a protector god. According to Egger's opinion, this god assures security against the enemies being protector of the Empire's borders, and also against the maladies. The saving nature of the deity was supported by the many dedications *pro salute*, and also through the association with the Nymphs in an inscription at Virunum¹¹. Without rejecting completely this hypothesis, we deem necessary to stress the issues. All major divinities have multiple abilities, including the healing. On the other side, *pro salute* dedications are associated to more gods, without necessarily involving a healing deity. The association with the Nymphs also should not be explained unilaterally through the connection to the health domain, since Nymphs have a larger action area. Accepting that Depulsor has Celtic origins, we also need to see the Nymphs he is associated with, deities of the same kind. But all female Celtic divinities are merely patronizing – that is protecting a place, an area, alongside with the inhabiting community. The same feature of the Norican Nymphs must have been the reason of their association with Depulsor.

H. G. Pflaum explained Depulsor's character on the same coordinates, showing that the god's protector feature must be seen from a general angle. His opinion was that the preeminent aspect is his being protector of the empire borders. That made him popular among soldiers, his protection being requested in legionary forts all the way to Dacia, Gallia, Africa and Numidia. Moreover, the mentioned author considered that the very specificity of his character, of the granted protection type enforced the limited popularity of the cult and did not allow it to take over. Iupiter Depulsor provides a defensive protection as it is shown by equating the epithet *Depulsor* with the Greek ἀλεξίκακος, while the Roman *Propugnator* (Defender) was associated with πρόμαχος. That is exactly why he was popular during a time when the borders were seriously threatened. The rest of the historical moments, Romans preferred a conqueror Iupiter, not one who only pushed back the enemy and the proof of this comes through the Severian coins, which show Iupiter as *Propugnator*, *Sospitator* or *Victor*¹². We agree that *Depulsor* must be perceived as a protector god, generally, and probably as a protector of the borders, particularly. But we do not believe that this aspect of his character limited his popularity, and we should look somewhere else for the root of this phenomenon. As regards the coins, we need to notice that the other mentioned Iupiters were Roman divinities, so, the monetary types did naturally not prefer Depulsor, due to his "barbarian" origin.

Analyzing the historiographical production that surrounds this divinity and the monuments which attest its cult, we tend to believe that Iupiter is a god with a Celtic origin, a major god with combat aptitudes which was equated to Iupiter, the classical pantheon's supreme god.

¹¹ Idem, Ausgrabungen in Feistritz a. d. Drau, Oberkärnten, JÖAI, 25, 1929, 202; CIL III 4786.

¹² H.-G. Pflaum, op. cit., 454 - 459.

The analysis of the monuments in Dacia.

1. Alba Iulia (*Apulum*). Votive altar, lime stone. 73 x 40 x 36 cm. MUAJ, inv. 271. E. Zefleanu, O descoperire arheologică în Apulum, Anuarul Liceului "Mihai Viteazul" din Alba Iulia 1933-1934, 12, fig. 2; IDR III/5 109.

Ioui / Depulso(ri) / sac(rum) / Auonius Sae/claris.

2. Alba Iulia (*Apulum*). Votive altar, lime stone; 62 x 35 x 26 cm. MNIT, inv. 8243. C. Daicoviciu, AISC, I/2, 1933, 58; I. I. Russu, Inscriptiile din Dacia, Materiale 6, 1955, 889-890, nr. 28; AE 1960, 241; IDR III/5 110.

I(oui) Dep(u)l(sori) / T(itus) Val(erius) Plare(s).

3. Alba Iulia (*Apulum*). Votive altar, lime stone; 107 x 52 x 41 cm. Discovered towards 1930 on 11 Doinei Street, at the foot of Cetate hill. MUAJ, inv. 326. E. Zefleanu, O descoperire arheologică în Apulum, Anuarul Liceului "Mihai Viteazul" din Alba Iulia, 1933-1934, 10-14, fig. 1; C. Daicoviciu, Neue Mitteilungen aus Dazien, Dacia 7-8, 1937-1940 (1941), 305, nr. 1; AE 1944, 28; IDR III/5 232.

Io(ui) Victo(ri) / Io(ui) Depu(l(sori) / M(arcus) Domesti/us Restitu/tus (centurio) le(gionis) XIII Ge(minae) / (cohortis) X ha(status) pos(terior) u(otum) / s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito) Com/modo et Late/ran(o) X K(alendas) Sep/tem(bres).

4. Roşia Montană (*Alburnus Maior*). Votive altar, Orlea or Carpeni yellow grit stone; 72 x 30 x 20 cm; discovered during the archeological research in 2001 on Hăbad hill; S. Cociş, A. Ursuţiu, C. Cosma, R. Ardevan, Area sacra de la Hăbad, *Alburnus Maior*, I, Bucureşti 2003, 152-153, nr. 2, fig. 23 / 3; (R. Ardevan):

Platius / Turi / Ioui / Depulso/rio / v(otum) s(olvit).

5. Turda (*Potaissa*). Votive altar, CIL III 895.

[I(oui)] O(ptimo) M(aximo) Statori / [i]tem Depulsor(i) / [I]ul(ius) Maximi/[a]nus trib(unus) mil(itum) / u(otum) s(oluit) pro sua su[or]umq(ue) salute.

6. Valea Sângeorgiului (Călan, Hunedoara county); Votive altar, lime stone; 85 x 27 cm; discovered north of the village at the place called "Bercean Creek", where walls substructures can be seen. G. Téglás, P. Király, *Neue Inchriften aus Dacien*, AEM, XIII, 1890, 195-196, nr. 18; F. Cumont, *Revidierte und neugefundene Inschriften aus Dacien*, AEM 14, 1891, 110, nr. 9: lecture *I(ovi) O(ptimo) [M(aximo) De]p(ulsori?) / Cratti[us] P[aternus]...*; CIL III 12575; IDR III/3 18 (I. I. Russu).

I(oui) O(ptimo) [M(aximo)] / Io[ui] De]p(ulsori) / Grattius / [P[aternus] / d(ecurio) c(oloniae) p(osuit).

In 1967, Z. Székely published an altar discovered at Inlăceni (Harghita County) with an uncertain text that mentioned an invocation for Iupiter Depulsor¹³. Jerzy Kolendo mentioned the inscription in *addenda* of Iupiter Depulsor's monuments *corpus*, with the express mention that because of the unlikely epigraphic restoration he will not take this

¹³ Z. Székely, Descoperiri epigrafice şi arheologice pe graniţa de est a Daciei romane, ArhMold 5, 1967, 134-135, fig. 1/2: *[I(oui) O(ptimo) M(aximo)? / Dep]u[sori] ?] / [P(ublius)] Ael(ius) Aeli/anus pr/ae(fectus) coh(ortis) / IIII Hisp(anorum)...*; the same lecture in AE 1975, 721; N. Gudea, ActaMP, III, 1979, 204, nr. 16.

monument into account¹⁴. Meanwhile, I. I. Russu¹⁵ studied the altar and suggested the following reading:

[D]iana(e) / Aug(ustae) / [P(ublius)] Ael(ius) Aeli/anus pr/aef(ectus) coh(ortis) / IIII Hisp(anorum) / [u(otum) l(ibens) s(oluit)].

Thus, the Polish scientist's doubts were justified, and the altar at Inlăceni should not be connected to Iupiter Depulsor any more.

The god is called *Depulsor* on Dacian altars at Apulum (1, 2, 3), Potaissa (5) and, maybe at Valea Sângeorgiului (6), while at Alburnus Maior we meet the form *Depulsorius*, which appear in Gallia Narbonensis (4). It is associated with other forms of Iupiter, for example M. Domestius Restitutus' altar at Apulum where it is mentioned alongside Iupiter *Victor*. The altar at Potaissa is dedicated to I. O. M. *Stator* associated with (I. O. M.) *Depulsor* and if we accept the reading suggested by I. I. Russu for the altar in Valea Sângeorgiului we have here too the name of the supreme god of the official pantheon Iupiter Optimus Maximus, associated with Iupiter *Depulsor*.

Two dedications come from soldiers: M. Domestius Restitutus is a centurion in 13th Legion Gemina, and Iulius Maximianus *tribunus militum* is a centurion in 5th Legion Macedonica. There are two more dedications coming from Apulum due to people who may be Roman citizens, judging by their names – Avonius Saeclaris and T. Valerius Plares – but the inscriptions do not indicate any connection with the military medium. Grattius Paternus belongs to the municipal aristocracy and mentions his position as *decurio coloniae*, probably of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa colony. Only the contributor from Hăbad seems to be a Celt, without Roman citizenship, who had a composed name following the barbarian system (personal name and genitive patronymic): Platius Turi. The ethnic origin of the givers can be partially deduced by the name analysis. Iulius Maximianus had a Latin *nomen* and *cognomen* and is considered to be *tribunus militum laticlavius*, supposed son of Dacia's governor C. Iulius Maximianus¹⁶. Avonius Saeclaris from Apulum has an originally Etruscan *nomen*¹⁷, and a Latin *cognomen* derived from *Saecularius*, known in Latin provinces, at a higher frequency in Dalmatia¹⁸. Grattius¹⁹ Paternus, *decurio* of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa colony²⁰ has also a Latin name. The *cognomen* Paternus is originally Latin, but W. Schulze considers that people with *cognomina* like *Maternus* or *Paternus* are recent citizens²¹. Paternus is also spread mostly in Latin provinces, and especially in those with Celtic background²². M. Domestius Restitutus has a Latin cognomen very common among romanized Norican Celts, with different variations like *Restutus*, *Restitutianus*, *Restutianus*²³. The *nomen Domestius*,

¹⁴ J. Kolendo, ANRW II 18, 2, 1989, 1066.

¹⁵ IDR III/4 271, fig. 156.

¹⁶ M. Bărbulescu, Din istoria militară a Daciei romane. Legiunea V Macedonica și castrul de la Potaissa, Cluj-Napoca 1987, 66, nr. 5.

¹⁷ I. Piso, ad IDR III/5, 109; from the Etruscan *aunaz*; are similar *nomina* derived from the same theme – Avenus, Avenius, Avinius; see W. Schulze, Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen, Berlin 1933, 72.

¹⁸ A. Mócsy, R. Feldmann, E. Marton, M. Szilágyi, Nomenclator provinciarum Europae Latinarum et Galliae Cisalpine, Budapesta 1983 (Diss. Pann. III/1), 249.

¹⁹ F. Cumont prefers Crattius, finding this *nomen* on another altar dedicated to Mars by a certain Lucius Crattius *decurio coloniae* also in Valea Sângeorgiului – Revidierte und neugefundene Inschriften aus Dacien, AEM 14, 1891, 110.

²⁰ I. I. Russu, IDR III/3, 18.

²¹ W. Schulze, op. cit., 192.

²² Nomenclator..., 216. It is considered a "Latin-Celtic name" specific for Hispania – A. Husar, Celți și germani în Dacia romană, Cluj-Napoca 1999, 43.

²³ G. Alföldy, Die Personennamen in der römischen Provinz Noricum, in L'onomastique latine (Paris 13-15 octobre 1975), Roma 1977, 257-258.

derived from a *cognomen*, is also typical for western Celtic provinces²⁴, and pleads for its Norican origin. T. Valerius Plares has an Illirian *cognomen* known mostly within the southeast Dalmatia²⁵, while both the personal name and the patronymic of the Alburnus Maior donor are originally Illirian²⁶.

The analysis of the Iupiter Depulsor's givers names in Dacia, reveals two origin areas of these: an area inhabited by Danube Celts (North-East Pannonia, Noricum) - Grattius Paternus, M. Domestius Restitutus and an area inhabited by a population speaking Illirian idioms - T. Valerius Plares, Platus Turi. The identification of the Illirians *Ansi* (inhabitants of the *kastellum Ansis*) sacred area of Hăbad hill is simplifying the issue. These *Ansi* come from North-East Dalmatia, from Corinium metropolitan area, a Liburnian contact zone of Celtic and Illirian populations²⁷. Another divinity that is offered a votive altar on Hăbad hill is worshiped mostly by Cisalpine Gaul, eastern Alps, and Adriatic Sea shore populations; it is the infernal goddess Aeracura²⁸. Platus Turi from Alburnus Maior, M. Domestius Restitutus from Apulum and maybe also Grattius Paternus come from the contact area of Pannonia Superior, Noricum, Regio X and Dalmatia, where Iupiter Depulsor's cult was popular during the imperial period. The god was brought to Dacia from the areas inhabited by Norican-Pannonian Celts, and North-West Dalmatian Illirians who were accustomed with him in its original area.

Therefore, a new local god is added to the Dacian pantheon, being worshipped through *interpretatio Romana* by colonists coming from the provinces with a Celtic background. In addition to the popular eastern gods, like Iupiter Dolichenus, Iupiter Hierapolitanus, Iupiter Heliopolitanus or like celestial Asia Minor gods as Iupiter Tavianus, Iupiter Erusenus, Iupiter Cimistenus, we notice the presence in Dacia of local gods coming from Celtic provinces syncretized with Iupiter: Iupiter (Taranis) and the snake-legged giant²⁹, Iupiter Appeninus (Poeninus). We can add Iupiter Depulsor, a god whose cult irradiates from Poetovio a Pannonic center.

²⁴ I. Piso, IDR, III/5 232; A. Husar, op. cit., 68; Nomenclator..., 105.

²⁵ I. I. Russu, Illirii, București 1969, 235; G. Alföldy, Die Namengebung der Urbevölkerung in der römischen Provinz Dalmatia, Beiträge zur Namenforschung 15, 1964, 88.

²⁶ *Platus Turi* - I. I. Russu, op. cit., 238, 258-259; Nomenclator..., 226.

²⁷ S. Cociș, A. Ursuțiu, C. Cosma, R. Ardevan, *Area sacra* de pe Hăbad, în Alburnus Maior, I, București 2003, 157-158.

²⁸ S. Nemeti, Stăpânii lumii de dincolo, in Funeraria Dacoromana, Cluj-Napoca 2003, 274-276.

²⁹ Idem, Zeul cu anguipedul în Dacia romană, Studia Universitatis Petru Maior. Historia 1, 2001, 30-36.