

## THE PANTHEON OF MARCUS HERENNIUS FAUSTUS, *LEGATUS LEGIONIS XIII GEMINAE*

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**Abstract:** By shedding more light over the votive altars erected by Marcus Herennius Faustus at Apulum, the aim of this study is to set a clearer picture over the diversity of the pantheons that operated within the provincial religion of Roman Dacia. The study attempts to identify the personal pantheon of Marcus Herennius Faustus as a reflection of the Punico-Lybian triad Baal-Hammon, Baal-Addir, Tanit-Astarte, whose cult the commander of the legion must have adopted during his stay at Lambaesis as a *tribunus militum* in *legio III Augusta*. Furthermore, the article tries to unravel the possible motifs that determined Marcus Herennius Faustus to choose these rather unusual and definitely rare epithets for his gods: Saturnus *Securus*, Mercurius *Hilaris*, Minerva *Supera*.

**Keywords:** Roman Dacia; Roman religion; Saturnus *Securus*; Mercurius *Hilaris*; Minerva *Supera*.

**Rezumat:** Prin cercetarea amănunțită a altarelor votive ridicate de Marcus Herennius Faustus la Apulum, studiul urmărește să ofere o imagine mai clară asupra diversității panteonurilor care operau la nivelul religiei provinciale în Dacia romană. Lucrarea încearcă să identifice panteonul personal al lui Marcus Herennius Faustus ca o reflecție a triadei punico-libiene Baal-Hammon, Baal-Addir, Tanit-Astarte. Comandantul legiunii trebuie să fi intrat în contact cu aceștia în timpul șederii sale la Lambaesis ca *tribunus militum* în *legio III Augusta*. În plus, articolul încearcă să deslușească motivele care au stat la baza alegerii acestor epitetate neobișnuite și cu siguranță rare pentru zeii adoptați de Marcus Herennius Faustus în panteonul personal: Saturnus *Securus*, Mercurius *Hilaris*, Minerva *Supera*.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Dacia romană; religie romană; Saturnus *Securus*; Mercurius *Hilaris*; Minerva *Supera*.

Two of the votive altars dedicated by Marcus Herennius Faustus to Saturnus *Securus* (Cat. no. 1) and Minerva *Supera* (Cat. no. 3) were discovered in 1948,<sup>1</sup> while a third one, dedicated this time to Mercurius *Hilaris* (Cat. no. 2) was reported on the shore of the Mureș River fifty years later.<sup>2</sup> The monuments raised contradictive opinions in the specialty literature ever since, on one hand due to the unusual epithets of the gods,<sup>3</sup> but mostly regarding the exact function fulfilled by Marcus Herennius Faustus during his stay in Dacia.<sup>4</sup> Due to the fact that the inscriptions only mentioned Marcus Herennius Faustus as a *legatus Augusti* the main question raised back then was related to his tenure in Apulum: was he the governor of the province or the legion's legate?

<sup>1</sup> Berciu 1947-1949, 200-209.

<sup>2</sup> Rodean, Ciută 1998, 151-154.

<sup>3</sup> Bărbulescu 1994, 70; Nemeti 2005, 109-111.

<sup>4</sup> Berciu 1947-1949, 200-209; Daicoviciu 1959, 188; Moga 1985, 86; Piso 1993, 214-217; Piso 2013, 43-45.

This problem was solved by Ioan Piso who, based on a series of inscriptions, reconstructed his career in *Fasti provinciae Daciae*.<sup>5</sup> Two of these inscriptions recall him as *consul suffectus* in 121,<sup>6</sup> while an inscription found on the famous “vocal Memnon” from Karnak, Theba, describes his entire career.<sup>7</sup> He was *decemvir stlitibus iudicandis, seviri turma equitum Romanorum, tribunus militum legionis III Augustae* that stationed at Lambaesis, *quaestor, tribunus plebis, praetor, legatus Augusti legionis XIII Geminae* that stationed at Apulum and finally *consul suffectus* in 121.

The inscription also mentions him having two high honorific titles with religious character. He was one of the *sodales* or *sacerdotes Augustales*, an order instituted by Tiberius to attend the maintenance of the cult of Augustus and finally he was also one of the seven *virii epulonum*, a religious college that was in charge with arranging feasts and public banquets at festivals and games.

All these made I. Piso believe that Marcus Herennius Faustus was the *legatus Augusti XIII Geminae* between the years 115–117,<sup>8</sup> period during which he erects three rather unusual votive altars to Saturnus *Securus*,<sup>9</sup> Mercurius *Hilaris*<sup>10</sup> and Minerva *Supera*.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of Saturnus *Securus* (Cat. no. 1) among his dedications correlated with the fact that he served as a *tribunus militum* in the third legion Augusta that stationed at Lambaesis, in Numidia, made M. Bărbulescu<sup>12</sup> and S. Nemeti<sup>15</sup> rightfully believe that the dedication does not refer to the classical Greco-Roman Saturnus but in fact to his assimilation with the Punic god Baal Hammon. The cult of this African Saturnus enjoyed a great popularity in the provincial areas during imperial time, especially during the Severan period and is widely known today due to the extensive work of Le Glay.<sup>14</sup>

Equated already from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC with Kronos in various Greek literary sources,<sup>15</sup> the role of Baal Hammon had been overtaken by Saturnus from the Roman occupation onwards. The assimilation of Saturnus with Baal Hammon has been demonstrated by a bilingual inscription found at Sabratha, Tripolitania that equated *Dominus* Saturnus with Baal.<sup>16</sup> In fact *Dominus* is nothing more but the Latin translation of the Punic word Baal, that means “Lord”.<sup>17</sup> Other epithets and attributes used for this god give the picture of a supreme divinity, often threatening

<sup>5</sup> Piso 1993, 214–217; Piso 2013, 43–45.

<sup>6</sup> CIL VI 2080; AE 1965, 131.

<sup>7</sup> CIL III 52 = IDRE II 419.

<sup>8</sup> Piso 1993, 214–217; Piso 2013, 43–45.

<sup>9</sup> Berciu 1947–1949, 200–202, Abb. 1; AE 1962, 206 = AE 1975, 718; Le Glay 1966b, 342, no. 32; Bărbulescu, Căținaș 1979, 217; Bărbulescu 2009, 70; IDR III/5, 314.

<sup>10</sup> Rodean, Ciută 1998, 151–154; AE 1998, 1081; IDR III/5, 708.

<sup>11</sup> Berciu 1947–1949, 200–202, Abb. 2; IDR III/5, 265.

<sup>12</sup> Bărbulescu 2009, 70.

<sup>15</sup> Nemeti 2005, 109–110.

<sup>14</sup> Le Glay 1961; Le Glay 1966a; Le Glay 1966b; Le Glay 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Sophocles, *Andromeda*, 126; Followed by Pseudo-Platon, *Minos*, 315; Cleitarchus, *Scholia Platonica*, 337a.

<sup>16</sup> AE 1980, 900.

<sup>17</sup> Le Glay 1966a, 124–125.

the position of Juppiter, *Deus Aeternus*,<sup>18</sup> sovereign and master over time and death, but also *Frugifer*,<sup>19</sup> inventor and protector of agriculture, by bringing rain and assuring the fertility of the fields.

The epithet *Securus* (“the calm one”, “the one without fear”) that accompanies Saturnus at Apulum can only be found attached to the god’s name in literary sources.<sup>20</sup> It is also worth mentioning that *Securus* is also frequently met among *cognomina* in Africa.<sup>21</sup>

From this perspective it seems only legitimate to ask ourselves if the other altars dedicated by Marcus Herennius Faustus refer to other African deities hidden under Roman names or not.

Mercurius occupied a privileged place in the pantheon of Roman Africa, where he was often assimilated with the god Silvanus.<sup>22</sup> Alain Cadotte proposed as the Punico-Libyan counterpart of Mercurius the god Baal Addir, whose cult appeared already in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, particularly in Northern Africa. He was often associated with Baal Hamon and Tanit, forming a divine triad identified later on in Roman period with Saturnus, Caelestis and Mercurius.<sup>23</sup>

Besides its classical function as a patron of commerce, the god takes a wide array of forms in Africa, from a fertile agrarian divinity to a martial one, often having even a funerary function.<sup>24</sup> His plurifunctionality is mirrored by the unusual epigraphic choices for epithets like *Silvius*,<sup>25</sup> *Sobrius*,<sup>26</sup> *Potens*,<sup>27</sup> *Genius exercitus*<sup>28</sup> and *Fatalis*<sup>29</sup> among others.

Although rarely encountered in epigraphic sources, the epithet *Hilarus* / *Hilara* can be noticed more often in ancient literary texts. Artemidorus for example, uses it in reference to divinities,<sup>30</sup> while Hesychius names the gods who receive sacrifices *Hilaroi*.<sup>31</sup> More specifically, the epithet can also be seen accompanying Bacchus<sup>32</sup> and Aphrodite.<sup>33</sup>

To the best of my knowledge, there is only one epigraphic text that registers the epithet’s feminine form *Hilara* in Roman period. The adjective appears by itself on a votive altar from Naissus, but we could easily guess that in this case at least, it masks the goddess Libera, since it appears in conjunction to Liber Pater.<sup>34</sup> In this

<sup>18</sup> Le Glay 1966a, 127.

<sup>19</sup> CIL VIII 2666 = ILS 4449.

<sup>20</sup> Carter 1902, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Kajanto 1965, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Cadotte 2007, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Cadotte 2007, 113–164.

<sup>24</sup> Cadotte 2007, 164.

<sup>25</sup> CIL VIII 26486 = AE 1906, 14.

<sup>26</sup> See footnotes 18–23.

<sup>27</sup> CIL VIII 51.

<sup>28</sup> CIL VIII 17621.

<sup>29</sup> CIL VIII 23892 = AE 1899, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Artem. 1.5.7.

<sup>31</sup> Dimartino 2010, 34–35.

<sup>32</sup> Carter 1902, 60.

<sup>33</sup> As indicated in Dimartino 2010, 35.

<sup>34</sup> CIL III 1680 = CIL III 8268 = ILS 3383 = IMS IV 25.

context we also have to mention two limestone slabs dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, which mention the epithet *Hilara* for Aphrodite at Syracuse.<sup>35</sup> The majority of scholars have seen in this epithet the association of the goddess with a species of comedy known as *hilarotragedia*, to which “laughter and eroticism must have been its chief elements”.<sup>36</sup> On the contrary Dimartino has sensed in this epithet a suggestion to the propitious nature of Aphrodite, furthermore suggesting that its Latin correspondent would be *Felix*,<sup>37</sup> known to accompany Venus on various epigraphic monuments and coins during the Roman Imperial era. If the Aphrodite *Hilara* – Venus *Felix* equalization is correct, we could analogously equate Mercurius *Hilaris* with Mercurius *Felix*.<sup>38</sup>

Although the epithet *Hilaris* has not been recorded so far for Mercurius, a statistical analysis of the epithets accompanying the African Mercurius shows that the opposite of *Hilaris* i.e. *Sobrius*, is the second most used epithet for this god, being outruled only by the appellative *Deus*.<sup>39</sup> Most of these votive inscriptions dedicated to Mercurius *Sobrius* come from Vazi Sarra,<sup>40</sup> where a vast temple has been dedicated to the god.<sup>41</sup> Other inscriptions have been found at Thuburnica,<sup>42</sup> Cincari,<sup>43</sup> and Cirta.<sup>44</sup> Other than in Africa, this epithet can be seen accompanying Mercurius only at Rome,<sup>45</sup> where this god was imported by the African immigrant population.

Charles-Picard has proposed as a possible explanation for the “sobriety” of the god, the existence of a taboo for wine within its cult.<sup>46</sup> J. Toutain believed that the epithet reflects the nature of the libations offered to Mercurius,<sup>47</sup> a hypothesis that he probably derived from Festus, who tells us that for Mercurius – Baal Haddir, *lacte, non vino supplicabatur*.<sup>48</sup> B. Combet-Farnoux thought this ritual to have had a Greek origin,<sup>49</sup> a theory that later on R. E. A. Palmer disproved with, demonstrating that the spatial layout of the cults where libations in wine were avoided refrained exclusively to Africa.<sup>50</sup>

Although there is no other analogy known, Sorin Nemeti believes that the Mercurius *Hilaris* from Apulum (Cat. no. 2) is in fact the direct consequence of Marcus Herennius Faustus’ attempt to isolate precisely this peculiarity of the African Mercurius, suggesting that the one that he worships at Apulum is open to wine and not milk libations.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>35</sup> SEG 60, 1015–1016.

<sup>36</sup> Fountoulakis 2000, 140.

<sup>37</sup> Dimartino 2010, 35–36, 40–49.

<sup>38</sup> CIL I 2, 2689; CIL IV 812; CIL XII 5687, 10; CIL XIII 6275; AE 1958, 267; AE 1973, 341–342; AE 1982, 712, 8–9; AE 2000, 952.

<sup>39</sup> Cadotte 2007, 140.

<sup>40</sup> CIL VIII 12002, 12006, 12007.

<sup>41</sup> Cagnat, Gauckler 1898, 66–69.

<sup>42</sup> CIL VIII 14690.

<sup>43</sup> ILAf 484 = AE 1915, 40.

<sup>44</sup> CIL VIII 19490 (= 6977).

<sup>45</sup> CIL VI 9483, 9714.

<sup>46</sup> Charles-Picard 1954, 128.

<sup>47</sup> Toutain 1905, 297.

<sup>48</sup> Festus, *De verborum significatione*, 382.

<sup>49</sup> Combet-Farnoux 1980.

<sup>50</sup> Palmer 1997, 80–86.

<sup>51</sup> Nemeti 2005, 110.

Perhaps he is even identical with the drunken Mercurius that appears in the tragicomedy *Amphitryon*, a personage built by Plautus as an antagonistic character for the African Mercurius *Sobrius*.<sup>52</sup>

Other possible explanation for the occurrence of this epithet can be perhaps found in his occasional association to Liber Pater in the Danubian provinces.<sup>53</sup> In this context it is worth mentioning that the only other inscriptions that register similar epithets are the ones found in Upper Moesia and Dalmatia that mention a Liber Pater *Laetus* at Pusto Silovo,<sup>54</sup> a Liber Pater associated with Libera / Hilara at Naissus<sup>55</sup> and a Deus *Laetus* at Salona.<sup>56</sup>

Both the Latin adjective *laetus*, *-a*, *-um*, and *hilaris*, *-e*, which comes from the Greek *hilaros*, mean “cheerful” and must emphasize the role of Liber and Libera as patron gods of wine and vine-growing. Even more adequate in this case, can be the translations of the aforementioned adjectives as “propitious”, or even “fertile”. These connotations can be sensed in the epitaph of Thaleia from Asia Minor, dating from Imperial period that records the expression καρπὸς ἰλαρὸς δέξασθαι.<sup>57</sup> This Greek epigraphic formula has been equated by scholars with the Latin expression *laetae fruges*, where *laetus* is a direct reference to the fecundity of the fruits,<sup>58</sup> making thus more plausible the theory that Mercurius *Hilaris* is in fact an African Mercurius that renounces to his “sobriety” by pairing up with Liber Pater.

If Mercurius and Saturnus could easily be identified with their African equivalents, the main question remains however who is this African goddess that hides behind the flattering epithet of *Supera*<sup>59</sup> (Cat. no. 3) that Marcus Herennius Faustus equates through *interpretatio Romana* with Minerva.

To the best of my knowledge this rather unusual epithet can only be noticed so far accompanying Mercurius in a votive inscription from Badajoz, Hispania, although here with the slightly different form *Supernus*.<sup>60</sup> Although unfortunately, the inscription does not yield any significant information other than the dedicator’s name, which has the *nomen* Quintus and a *cognomen* that begins with the letter “P”, it might still offer us a vital clue in deciphering the identity of the Minerva *Supera* of Apulum.

If we consider *Supernus* to be an adjectival epithet primarily meaning “the high one”, “the superior”, “the elevated one”, than we could easily equate it with the epithet *Caelestis* that accompanies Mercurius in a votive inscription from Rome. This inscription dedicated by Quintus Munatius Trochorus to Mercurius *Caelestis Fatalis*<sup>61</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Plaut. *Amph.* 3.4.

<sup>53</sup> Apulum, Dacia: IDR III/5, 200 = AE 1930, 9; Viminacium, Moesia Superior: IMS II 28 = Gavrilović 2010, no. 1; Carnuntum, Pannonia Inferior: CIL III 14356; Virunum, Noricum: AE 1986, 540. Besides these examples, this rare association can be seen in Gallia as well: AE 1980, 627.

<sup>54</sup> AE 1968, 449 = IMS IV 109.

<sup>55</sup> CIL III 1680 = CIL III 8268 = ILS 3385 = IMS IV, 25.

<sup>56</sup> CIL III 8673a = AE 1959, 211 = AE 1961, 306.

<sup>57</sup> SEG 27, 771.

<sup>58</sup> Dimartino 2010, 36.

<sup>59</sup> The epithet can be seen accompanying Fortuna as well in a votive inscription from Apulum: IDR III/5, 78.

<sup>60</sup> Del Rosario Hernando Sobrino 2003, 317.

<sup>61</sup> CIL VI 521.

can further be compared to a votive altar found at Khanguet el-Bey, where Mercurius is analogously qualified as *Fatalis Augustus*.<sup>62</sup> This unusual epithet seems to allude to the presence of a Mercurius *Psychopompos* that has been identified by Mustapha Khanoussi in Roman Africa through various literary, epigraphic and iconographic attestations.<sup>63</sup>

Khaled Marmouri has remarked upon the association of Mercurius-Baal Addir and Minerva in various epigraphic and archaeological sources of Africa Proconsularis and Numidia, provinces where these gods seem to share a joint cult at Lepcis Magna and Lambaesis or play the role of *dii patrii* at Gigthis and protective *genii* at colonia Thrysditanorum.<sup>64</sup>

This local divinity designated under the name of Minerva shares common traits with other Greco-Roman divinities like Juno, Ceres and in particular with Venus. In fact Alain Cadotte believes that Venus, Cybele and Minerva are the Roman interpretations of the same Punico - Libyan divinity Tanit-Astarte/Dea Caelestis, assimilation that he explains through the similarities they share, namely their fertile, poliad and respectively, warrior character.<sup>65</sup> The most numerous attestations of Minerva in Africa come from the legionary fortress of Lambaesis,<sup>66</sup> while an inscription from Vezereos, dedicated by Iulius Zeno, *optio* in *legio III Augusta* qualifies her as *dea patria*.<sup>67</sup>

Besides its association with Mercurius-Baal Addir, Minerva can also be seen accompanying Saturnus-Baal Hammon in Africa Proconsularis. A 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD statuary group from Bulla Regia shows a Saturnus *velato capite* with cornucopia in his hand,<sup>68</sup> accompanied by a winged goddess, depicted wearing a mural crown and cornucopia in her hand.<sup>69</sup> The latter has been identified with Athena-Minerva due to the shield decorated with the head of the Medusa that she carries.<sup>70</sup> This rather unusual iconographic scheme used for the goddess reminds the image of a 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC *stela* kept in the Museum of Bardo that shows Tanit with open wings and turreted crown on her head.<sup>71</sup> A very similar representation can also be observed on the reverse of some Roman *denarii* struck by Quintus Caecilius Metellus Scipio in 47-46 BC, bearing on the obverse the image of a lion-headed goddess and the legend *G(enius) T(errae) A(fricae)*.<sup>72</sup>

A votive inscription from Zoui, Numidia, associates Caelestis with Saturnus and Mercurius,<sup>73</sup> an association that recalls the triad worshipped in the punic sanc-

<sup>62</sup> CIL VIII 23892 = AE 1899, 38.

<sup>63</sup> Khanoussi 1990, 647-649.

<sup>64</sup> Marmouri 2008, 141-149.

<sup>65</sup> Cadotte 2007, 219, 225.

<sup>66</sup> CIL VIII 2611, 2612, 2636, 2647, 2648, 4198, 18060, 18225, 18226, 18231, 18234; AE 1899, 89; AE 1902, 11; AE 1914, 245; AE 1919, 28; AE 1920, 22; AE 1957, 86-87.

<sup>67</sup> AE 1909, 152 = ILAf 28.

<sup>68</sup> LeGlay 1961, 270.

<sup>69</sup> LIMC II 1984, s.v. *Athena/Minerva (in Africa)*, 1109, no. 3 (G. Ch. Picard). With the same provenance and similar to the one aforementioned is no. 4 as well.

<sup>70</sup> Paz García Bellido 2010, 272.

<sup>71</sup> Paz García Bellido 2010, Fig. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Crawford 1974, no. 460, 4.

<sup>73</sup> CIL VIII 17619.

tuary of El Hofra, in Cirta, where a great number of votive *stelai* were addressed to Baal-Hammon, Tanit and Baal Addir,<sup>74</sup> later identified in Roman period with Saturnus, Caelestis and Mercurius. The strong interconnectivity that existed between these gods can also be seen from various collective votive dedications for Saturnus and Mercurius<sup>75</sup> or Caelestis and Mercurius,<sup>76</sup> while the attribute of Baal Addir-Mercurius, the *caduceus* can be seen on numerous votive *stela* dedicated to Saturnus in Africa.<sup>77</sup>

In conclusion I believe that the altars of Marcus Herennius Faustus are in fact precisely the reflections of these Punico-Libyan divinities Baal Hammon, Baal Addir, Tanit / Astarte, whose cult the commander of the legion must have adopted during his stay at Lambaesis as a *tribunus militum* in *legio III Augusta*.<sup>78</sup> In this respect pleads even the fact that they seem to have been commissioned in the same time, as it is suggested by the same structuring of the inscription on 5 lines, the shape of the letters, the fact that the name of the gods have the first letter bigger than the others and the similar decoration of the altars.

In his introduction to *La romanisation des dieux. L'interpretatio romana en Afrique du Nord sous le Haut-Empire*, Cadotte has drawn attention to the necessity of prudence when operating with concepts like “religious syncretism”.<sup>79</sup> Among other examples cited in this context, he also mentions Minerva’s case who has often been labeled *Sancta* within the Capitoline triad, without bearing any Semitic connotation. *Sanctus*, *-a* is an epithet applied mostly to Semitic or oriental divinities, being a traditional epiclesis for gods like Baal Hammon, Tanit and Astarte.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, Cadotte’s work accentuates the importance of local particularities that can enable and further ease the process of setting up a more complex and accurate picture of the regional pantheons within the Roman Empire.

Thus the evaluation of the transformation of Tanit-Astarte into Minerva during the Roman period must be done both in terms of continuity i.e. Minerva’s syncretic assimilation to Tanit through *interpretatio Romana*, perhaps mainly due to her poliadic and warrior character, but also through discontinuity expressed through intermediary phenomena like oriental influences, innovations and interactions with other gods, i.e. her frequent association to Mercurius, with whom she seems to share a joint cult at Lepcis Magna and Lambaesis and to play together the role of *dii patrii* at Gighthis and protective *genii* at colonia Thrysditanorum.

<sup>74</sup> Berthier, Charlier 1955.

<sup>75</sup> CIL VIII, 8246-8247; AE 1925, 38.

<sup>76</sup> CIL VIII 4674, 8433, 17619.

<sup>77</sup> Cadotte 2007, Chapter III, footnote 14-16.

<sup>78</sup> The possibility that he is of African origin should not be dismissed as well, but remains impossible to prove in the absence of more conclusive evidence.

<sup>79</sup> Cadotte 2007, 1-12.

<sup>80</sup> Cadotte 2007, 13-14, 38.

## Catalogue

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2. Rodean, Ciută 1998, 151-154; AE 1998, 1081; IDR III/5, 708.  
*Mercurio / Hilari / M(arcus) Herennius / Faustus / leg(atus) Aug(usti)*.
3. Berciu 1947-1949, 200-202, Abb. 2; IDR III/5, 265.  
*Min[ervae] / Su[perae] / M(arcus) Her[rennius] / Fau[stus] / leg(atus) [Aug(usti)]*.

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