

LIFE AFTER MARRIAGE

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When Rome became the ruler of the known world in the last few centuries B.C., Roman civilization first entered through the Greek cities in the Adriatic. In the first half of the 1st century B.C., conventa of Roman citizens were established in some Illyrian cities on the coast. Many remains which point to the wealth of Roman Dalmatia were found in the past. Among the remains held by the Museums in Dalmatia are also many stone monuments depicting women as wives and mothers. Women are depicted on funerary monuments, surrounded by their families and are presented during their daily routine. A woman or wife is also depicted on the monuments dedicated to the deities and gods. Based on the ancient sources and archaeological moveable and immovable remains the answers to those questions will try to be obtained.

Freeborn women in ancient Rome were citizens (*cives*)¹, but of their limited public role, they are named less frequently than men by Roman historians. But while Roman women held no direct political power, those from wealthy or powerful families could and did exert influence through private negotiations². Some vivid snapshots of daily life are preserved in Latin literary sources such as comedy, satire, and poetry, particularly the poems of Catullus and Ovid, which offer glimpses of women in Roman dining rooms and sleeping rooms, on sports and theatrical events, in shopping, applying makeup, practicing magic, worrying about pregnancy – all, however, through male³. The published letters of Cicero reveal informally how the self-proclaimed great man interacted on the domestic front with his wife Terentia and daughter Tullia, as his speeches demonstrate through the various ways Roman women could enjoy a free-spirited sexual and social life⁴. The one major public role reserved for women was in the sphere of religion: the priestly office of the Vestals. Accordingly freed of any obligation to marry or have children, the Vestals devoted themselves to the study and correct observance of rituals which were deemed necessary for the security and survival of Rome but which could not be performed by the male colleges of priests⁵.

The life of each individual in Rome, free citizen or a slave was subjected to the power of a father (*pater*) who governed over the family to which he himself belonged. Father (*pater familias*)

¹ SHERWIN-WHITE 1978, pp. 211, 268.

² MILNOR 2009, p. 278.

³ OLSON 2008, p. 139.

⁴ CICERO, *Pro Caelio*

⁵ STAPLES 1998.

is a person of the highest reputation. The proper form of the word with archaic genitive shows the old age of this institution. *Familia* was a congregation of people who lived under the same roof and were accordingly under the rule of the same father. The family was composed not only by children (*liberi*) and wife (*uxor*) but by the daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren, servants, male and female slaves and freed men who lived in the house and owed their respect and some degree of obedience to the father.

In Rome free borne women were considered citizens (*cives*) but they couldn't vote or perform political functions⁶. Because of their limited role in public life, Roman sources mention women less frequently than men. Although women didn't have direct political power, the ones from the rich or powerful families could exert influence through private negotiations. Among important Roman women it is important to mention Lucretia and Claudia Quinta whose adventures took on a mythical character; women from the Republic: Cornelia (*Cornelia Scipionis Africana*), Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus' mother and Fulvia (*Fulvia Flacca Bambula*) who commanded an army and who's image appeared on coins; women from Julius-Claudius dynasty: Livia (*Livia Drusilla*, *Iulia Augusta*) who contributed to the establishment of imperial customs (*mores*) and empress Helena (*Flavia Iulia Helena*), Constantine the Great's mother who contributed to the spread of Christianity⁷.

Marriage ceremony was the most solemn moment in the life of Romans from the moment when the whole Roman society was based on family and its resilience. Marriage had a social significance and very often it represented an alliance of two families which was very important for political life. The wedding procession from the Basilica of St. Lawrence Outside the Walls in Rome (Basilica S. Lorenzo fuori le mura) is very interesting showing newlyweds clasping each other's hand according to the ceremony in the presence of witnesses Cybele, Juno, Pronuba and Suada (the goddess of persuasion). In the middle, the servant is holding a wedding cake which will be eaten by the newlyweds.

Fathers very often chose a bride or a groom for their children, a right deriving from an old *patria potestas*⁸. Customs changed and young people got the right to decline suggested bride or groom⁹. Girls married very young at the age of twelve while boys could marry at the age of fourteen but never did so young. Marriage took place after longer period of engagement. Daughters and sons were subject to *patria potestas*, the power wielded by their father as head of household (*familia*). A Roman household was considered a collective over which the *pater familias* had mastery (*dominium*). Slaves were also part of the household as property. In the early Empire, the legal standing of daughters differed little if at all from that of sons¹⁰. If the father died without a will, the right of a daughter to share in the family property was equal to that of a son, through legislation in the 2nd century B.C. had attempted to limit this right. Even apart from legal status, daughters seem no less esteemed within the Roman family than sons, though sons were expected to ensure family standing by following their fathers into public life¹¹.

There were several forms of marriage, three of which put woman under absolute husband's control *in manu mariti*¹². At the end of the Republic this forms of marriage got out of the custom and the fourth form of marriage was applied which left woman independent. Three old forms of marriage were *coemptio* (marriage based on purchase of woman in the presence of witnesses;

⁶ FRIER/McGINN, 2004, pp. 31–32, 457, et passim.

⁷ RAWSON, 2010, p. 256.

⁸ FRIER/McGINN 2004, p. 66.

⁹ RAWSON 1986, p. 21

¹⁰ FRIER/McGINN 2004, pp. 19–20.

¹¹ RAWSON 1986, p. 18.

¹² JOVANOVIĆ 1997, pp. 157–182; HERSCH 2010.

the husband became wife's "owner"), *confarreatio* (marriage based on "sharing of bread" (*panis farreus*), possibly the oldest form which had religious character; it was performed in the presence of Pontifex Maximus and Jupiter's priest) and *usus* (marriage based on cohabitation was very simple – a pair would live together and after a year woman would fall under the *potestas* of a husband). In the early Republic, the bride became subject to her husband's *potestas*, but to a lesser degree than their children¹³. By the early Empire, a daughter's legal relationship to her father remained unchanged when she married, even though she moved into husband's home¹⁴. According Rawson "if adults sons or daughters and their children had lived in the same household as the pater familias, they may well have found the constant awareness of his powers and position a great strain".¹⁵ A daughter was expected to be deferential toward her father and to remain loyal to him, even if it meant having to differ with her husband.¹⁶ "Deference" was not always absolute. After arranging his daughter's first two marriages, Cicero disapproved, rightly, as it turned out of her choice to marry the unreliable Dolabella, but found himself unable to prevent it.¹⁷ A daughter kept her own family name – *nomen* for life, not assuming that of her husband, but children usually took the father's name. In the Imperial time, children might sometimes make their mother's family name part of theirs, or even adopt it instead.¹⁸

In this last form of marriage if the woman spent three days and nights away from their home before passing of the first year she wouldn't fall under the husband's tutelage but she would stay under her father's tutelage and after his death under the tutelage of a guardian selected by praetor.

During the classical period marriages were real "freely chosen relationships" based on mutual agreement of newlyweds. The beginning of life together was marked by mostly traditional and ancient ceremonies. Although these ceremonies lost their meaning, they were nevertheless performed because they "brought luck". Daily life of women began by early rising and scheduling domestic tasks. Women freely born were freed by tradition of all humiliating tasks and the only duty they had was "spinning wool" thought of as a noble profession. They had a multitude of servants, from small slave girls to freed older women slaves who served as overseers and housekeepers. Noblewomen trusted housekeepers to manage the whole household while they only thought of personal beauty and care. It was their main occupation during the morning. Specialized slave women helped them, each with special skill: brushing or curling the hair, hairdo, applying makeup and other cosmetic products. These women enjoyed visits during the day. Matrons visited each other and met in the streets. Some matrons maintained gatherings where there was a vivid discussion about various subjects such as politics, literature and sometimes philosophy.

In the old days in Rome the customs forced matrons to stay at home spinning, weaving and making clothes for all male members of their family. This tradition was almost extinguished by the end of the Republic but August insisted on women staying at their homes, specially his daughter Julia, making clothes.

Matrons enjoyed spending late mornings or early afternoons in shops selling fabric or clothes while slaves or men took care of groceries. This was the ordinary day of persons of certain status and importance in society.

¹³ FRIER/McGINN 2004, p. 20.

¹⁴ FRIER/McGINN, 2004, pp. 19–20.

¹⁵ RAWSON 1986, p. 15.

¹⁶ HALLETT 1984, p. 139.

¹⁷ RAWSON 1986, p. 21.

¹⁸ RAWSON 1986, p. 18.

Raising children was mother's duty but in ancient Rome raising children was considered one of the holiest duties of a father (*pater familias*). Even Cato the Elder wasn't ashamed to swaddle his children and teach them how to walk. Nevertheless it was primarily mother's concern as she also nursed her children. At the end of the Republic wet nurses appeared, mostly slave women, but middle and lower class of society was against it. In Ptuj (*Poetovio*) reliefs dedicated to the cults of patron goddesses of wet nurses and nurses (*Nutrices Augustae*) were found.¹⁹

Tacitus writes that in some patrician families some older relative (for example unmarried aunt) was entrusted with children. Authors counsel against entrusting children to slave educators of foreign descent but Nero had, for a while, a stable groom for an educator because his father was dead and mother was in exile.

Roman moral and the role a woman had in society influenced the way of raising girls. In ancient Rome girls were accustomed to obedience, modesty and spinning wool. It was thought that this is enough to make them good wives, but soon it was insufficient and they started to be educated in the same way as their brothers.

Inscriptions and epitaphs from entire Roman Empire contain names of many women but very seldom they provide additional information about them. Some descriptions of everyday life were preserved in Roman literary works, especially in comedy, satyr and poetry like Catullus' and Ovid's poems which depict women in Roman dining rooms and sleeping rooms, on sports and theatrical events, in shopping, applying makeup, visiting sorcerer or during the care of pregnancy – but all of these images were seen through the eyes of men. Plutarch, Titus Livius, Cicero, Pliny the Elder, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger have also written about women.²⁰

Based on epigraphic material we will talk about the role of women in the life of the Roman province of Pannonia and Dalmatia. Mostly we will talk about epigraphic material from Siscia. Development and progress Siscia owed to favorable position at the confluence of Kupa and Sava rivers.

Among sources for ancient history a large role is played by sepulchral monuments. Data provided by epigraphic material is very useful because it fills in and confirms very scarce and selective literary sources and brings the details of the events that are otherwise unknown from the works of ancient historians. This data provides information about economic and social status of persons mentioned in the inscription, their *cursus honorum*, occupation and background as well as cultural and religious circumstances in their community and its administrative structure, political rise of individuals or whole families, family relations, age – in short a variety of historiographic, ethnographic and demographic data.²¹

Of course, they primarily allow introduction of higher and privileged classes of society, while the lower classes usually remain hidden by the veil of secrecy.²²

The status of women during the Roman period in Pannonia and Dalmatia for now is possible to explore by studying of epigraphic material of sepulchral and votive character. Material about women is focused on the name and age, origin and social status, family and other relations, religious affiliation and preferences.

There are 42 inscriptions from Siscia of which 29 mention only women, 11 mention only female deities and 2 mention both women and female deities. The most prominent woman

¹⁹ HOFFILLER/SARIA 1938, No. 324, No. 325, No. 326, No. 327, No. 328, No. 329, No. 330, No. 331, No. 332, No. 333, No. 334.; VOMER GOJKOVIĆ 2014, pp. 148–153.

²⁰ PLUTARCH, *Life of Cato the Elder* 20.2; 20.3; TITUS LIVIUS, 2006, 182; CICERO, *De legibus* 2.9.21; PLINY THE ELDER, *Natural History*, 35, 147; TACITUS, *Annals* XVI, 6; XV, 37; XV, 51; XV, 71; PLINY THE YOUNGER, *Letters*, Book 1, letter IV.

²¹ GRAČANIN 2004, 17.

²² CLAUS 1973, 395–417; MIRDITA 1978, 76–101; SHAW 1984, 457–497; ŠAŠEL 1992, 79–98.

mentioned is Publia Fulvia Plautilla. The inscription is on the basis of the white marble statue of the princess and later Empress Fulvia Plautilla which was erected by Siscian municipality (*respublica Siscianorum*) in her honour and on the occasion of her marriage with Caracalla.²³ This is confirmed by the inscription where she is entitled *sponsa* and *Augusta*. The inscription is dated to AD 202. Fulvia Plautilla (full name *Publia Fulvia Plautilla*) was married to Marc Aurelius Antoninus Caracalla, the eldest son of Emperor Septimius Severus, on 9th to 15th of April 202. The title *Augusta* Fulvia Plautilla may have had before, possibly from the time of engagement to which the phrase in the inscription points – *Augusta sponsa imperatoris Antonini*. Caracalla didn't like her from the start and two years later had her father Galus Flavius Plautius, the praetorian prefect of Emperor Septimius Severus, executed while he divorced her and exiled to the island of Lipara. After his father's death he became emperor and in 211 he had Fulvia killed. Her memory was subjected to *damnatio memoriae*, as suggested by deletion of her mementos from descriptions and the removal of her monuments. After her execution the monument from Siscia, i.e. the part of inscription with her name, was destroyed and her statue most probably removed. This inscription also says a lot about the character of Septimius Severus, a famous emperor. It is one of the rare preserved inscriptions of honorary character from Siscia – the citizens of Siscia, as a sign of gratitude to Emperor Septimius Severus, payed homage to the emperor's closest associate Plautianus. This is also one of the rare inscriptions with Plautilla's name preserved.

On inscriptions from Siscia 38 women names are mentioned from which 19 are two-part names, one name is uncertain, one is not completely known and 7 names have been filled in. In Siscia 4 women bare the same gentilicium: 2 are Aurelia and 2 are Septimia; 8 bare the same cognomen: 2 are Januaria, 2 are Matrona and 4 are Rufina. Four women (with possibly one more) bare the same gentilicium as the men mentioned in the inscription. One woman has a name that corresponds to gentilicium of a man from the inscription (*Urbica* and *Caius Urbicus Firmus*), and the other has a name that corresponds to gentilicium of a man from another inscription (*Volcenia Maxima* and *Caius Volcenius Lupercus*). The names are Latin but one is Greek. Women bearing imperial gentilicium are 6: 2 are Aurelia, 1 is Aelia, 1 is Julia and 2 are Septimia.

Age of women was mentioned in only 5 inscriptions from Siscia. Origins of women in Siscia show all the diversity of provincial town: they are of italic origin, from western regions, from Greece and eastern regions and of local origin. It is important to stress that the analysis of origin is an assumption. In Pannonian regions people from all parts of the Roman Empire were settled, which is no surprise because Illyricum was a border area and the link between East and West.

In social status the diversity is also visible. Most women mentioned in Siscia's inscriptions were married and had descendence. The specific case is that of a freed woman *Mucia Corinthia* who was most probably a concubine of *Marcus Mucius Hegetor* and spent her life being his slave and living in unmarried union (*contubernium*) because the Roman law prohibited the marriage between free and not free person as well as between slaves; Mucia was probably freed only after Marcus's death by his will.²⁴

Chosen descriptions show various family relations. The analysis shows predominance of core type of family in which the base consists of spouses or spouses and their children. From several Siscia's inscriptions the family relations can be determined. This is especially true of inscriptions of mortuary character in which individual epithets and choice of words truly reflect the pain for the deceased, or the love felt for them by those who survived them.

Inscriptions allow us to observe, besides the family intimacy, the religious preferences of women who are mentioned in them. *Lucilia Lucilla* together with her husband and son is a

²³ BUZOV 2008, pp.473–488.

²⁴ TREGGIARI 1981, 59–81; GARDNER 1995, 65–69; 207–234.

co-dedicator of an altar to Jupiter Nundinarius for the health of the Emperor Gordianus the Third. Many inscriptions contain invocation to deities Manii that is to the souls of the dead (*dis manibus*). In various inscriptions affiliation of women to the Christian cult can be determined.

A variety of data provided by epigraphic material reveals the diversity of the social and religious life Siscia. We learn about women indirectly in relation to men because the data about men is in general the backbone of the inscription. But when it comes to the private sphere of life the women have an advantage. Members of all social classes are represented and the diversity is also observed in relation to ethnic origin.

A look at the world of inhabitants of Siscia, in their interpersonal relationships and family ties, life experiences and religious preferences, shows that women occupied a prominent place in Roman society, especially with regard to family and cult. We conclude: «En réalité, les opinions traditionnelles sur la privation absolue de la femme et sur la soumission totale à l'homme, en droit romain ancien, sont fautives; et, l'écart entre la position juridique et la position effective de la femme n'est qu'apparent». ²⁵

Sources:

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²⁵ JOVANOVIĆ 1997, p. 158.

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Fig. 1 Funerary stele depicting a woman spinning (?), marble, unknown site 3rd or 2nd century, B.C., GM Trogir (after Cambi 2002)

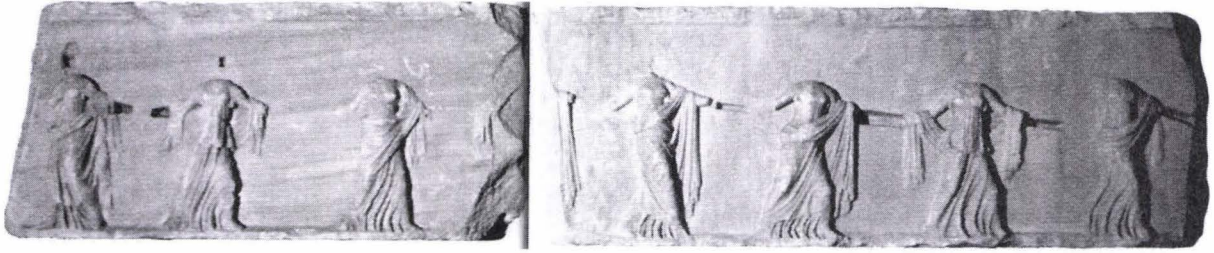


Fig. 2 Relief with dancing women, marble, Narona 2nd century B.C., AM Split (after Cambi 2002)



Fig. 3 Stele of an unknown married couple, limestone, Salona second or third decade of 1st century A.D., AM Split (after Cambi 2002)

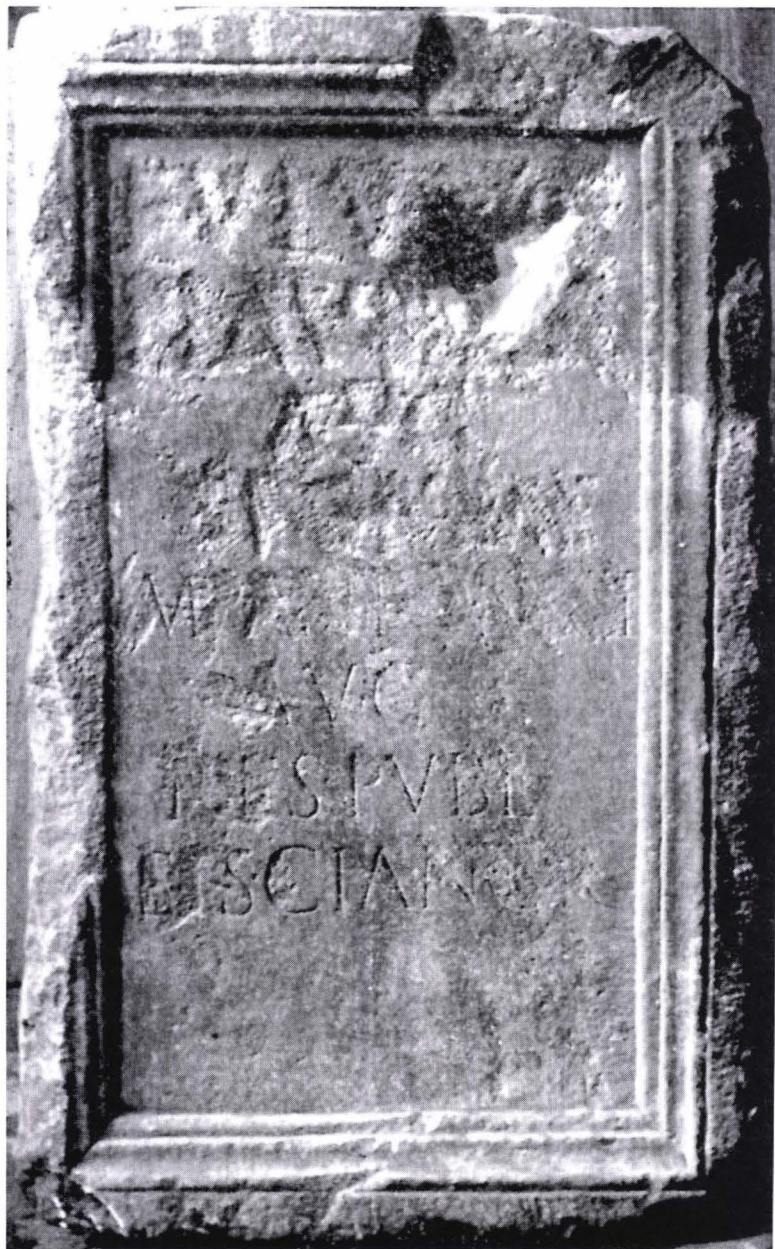


Fig. 4 The base with inscription on the statue of Empress Fulvia Plautilla

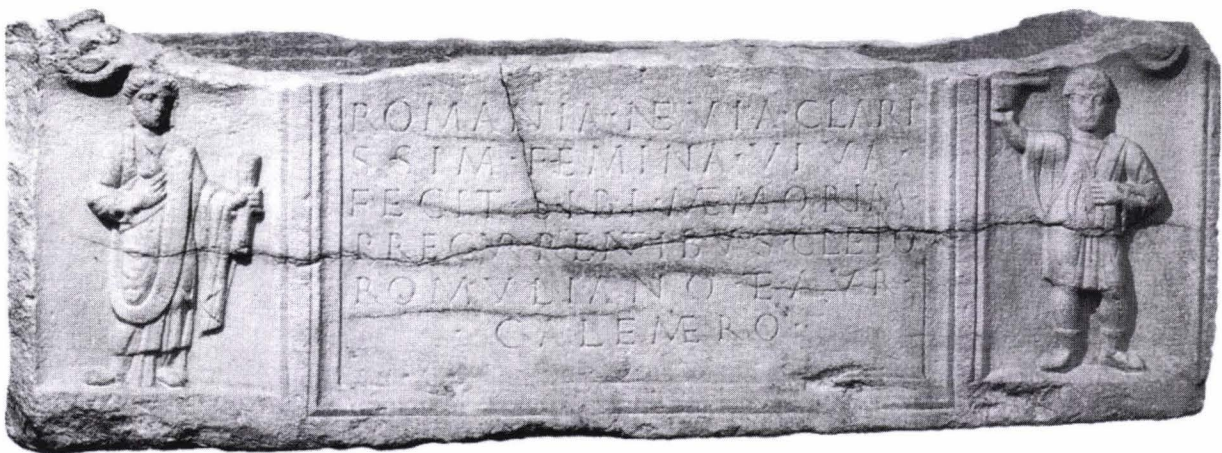


Fig. 5 Sarcophagus showing a deceased woman and a servant, marble, Siscia
late 3rd or early 4th century, A.D., AM Zagreb (after Cambi 2002)