

SUMMARY

**VENERATION OF LOCAL AND IMPORTED DIVINITIES' CULTS
IN HOUSES AND TEMPLES OF THE ROMAN DARDANIA**

Naser FERRI

The Dardanians mostly lived in hillforts up to the beginning of our era, or more precisely until the arrival of the Romans. When the Romans came to Dardania, they adopted the existing settlements and modified them to suit the "modern" way of life. Consequently, the colonies Scupi te Municipium Ulpianum, Municipium DD, and Municipium Naissus were founded, as were a number of small settlements and posts such as Vicianum, Vendenis, Therada and the beneficiarius posts in Mitrovica, Prizren and Kačanik. Nevertheless, a number of hillforts continued to exist even after the Roman conquest. Radical changes were also introduced into the spiritual life of the population, which had to accept the Latin language, new beliefs in line with the new way of life, and many elements of the Roman culture.

All things considered, it seems that even before the Roman conquest of Dardania, the Dardanians, as well as other Illyrian tribes, had no fixed pantheon of divinities, so little is known about the cults and divinities that the Dardanians venerated before the arrival of the Romans. Thanks to votive altars, a mosaic may be put together of divinities which the inhabitants of Roman Dardania worshiped after the Roman conquest to the beginning of the 4th century AD, or to the appearance of imperial edicts on religious tolerance and the final legalising of Christianity and the sporadic appearance of Christian epigraphic monuments in Dardania.

Consequently, it results that the following domestic divinities were worshipped in the houses in the territory of Dardania, at least in the 1st century AD: Andin(us), Dea Dardania, Zbeltiurdud, Deus Attonipal, Silvanus, Dracco and Draccena, and the unknown divinities Atta Sacra and Deus Mund. There are also several unknown domestic divinities associated with Jupiter: Jupiter Optimus Maximus Ulpianensis, IOM Propulsator and IOM Cohortalis.

The Dardanians, given that they had acquired a new way of life and new customs modelled on the Roman newcomers, started to accept the cults of the divinities of the official Roman pantheon: Jupiter (IOM) by himself or accompanied by the other two goddesses of the Capitoline Triad (Juno and Minerva), then Diana, Mars, Mercury, Neptune, Apollo, Hercules, Liber and Libera, Terra Mater and Fortuna, all of whom the Dardanians worshiped both in home shrines and in public places. The following were also worshiped: the cults of the nymphs, genii locorum and the cult of the current emperor.

Gods and goddesses of oriental origin (Greece, Egypt, Persia and Syria), such as Aesculapius, Hygia, Telesphorus, Nemesis, Serapis, Isis, dea Syra (the Syrian goddess Atargatis), Eros, the muses, and oriental divinities which were identified with the supreme Roman god according to interpretatio romana: Jupiter Dolichenus, Jupiter Melanus and Jupiter Melcid, all seem to have been worshiped mostly in temples and public places. The veneration of the Indo-Persian god Mithra has been attested, although on rare occasions and only in temples. This god arrived in the area through the Danube basin provinces and was a serious candidate alongside Christianity to become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Based on data gathered from the mentioned monuments, it can be concluded that divinities were worshiped in domestic shrines and temples, and that in the 1st century AD the venerated of different cults and autochthonous Dardanian and official Roman and oriental divinities were members of the local population, Roman citizens and newcomers whose origins were in the East. All this speaks of a liberal Roman religious policy.