

A Curved *Vitis* or a Pair of Twisted Ropes?

The Iconography of Maritime Command on the Stele of Liccaeus, Apsorus

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Izvleček

Zvita *vitis* ali par prepletenih vrvi?

Ikonografija oblasti na morju na Likejevi steli iz Apsorja

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek

V članku je obravnavana nagrobna stela mornariškega centuriona Likeja, ki je bila najdena v naselju Osor (*Apsorus*) na otoku Cresu. Sodeč po napisu, je bilo zanjo izbrano javno mesto, kar priča o centurionovi pomembnosti za kraj. Likej je oblečen v tuniko in *sagum*, nenavaden pa je predmet, ki ga drži v roki. Največkrat je bil interpretiran kot vrv, zvezana v voz, kakršnega so uporabljali za privez ladij. O videzu poveljniške palice (*vitis*), ki je bila prepoznavni znak tudi mornariških centurionov, je malo znanega. Prav upodobitve na ravenskih stelah zgodnjega cesarskega obdobja, na katerih je upodobljen nekakšen voz, so spodbudile domnevo, da je bila vsaj v tej dobi *vitis* pri mornariških centurionih upodobljena drugače. Glede na to, da na steli ni nobenega atributa, ki bi pokojnika povezoval z njegovim činom, bi lahko Likej v rokah držal prav *vitis*, ki bi z videzom obenem lahko namigovala na Likejeve pomorske sposobnosti.

Ključne besede: *Apsorus*, Likej, mornariški centurion, *vitis*, ravenska flota, stela, Dalmacija, julijsko-klavdijsko obdobje

Abstract

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1.01 Original scientific article

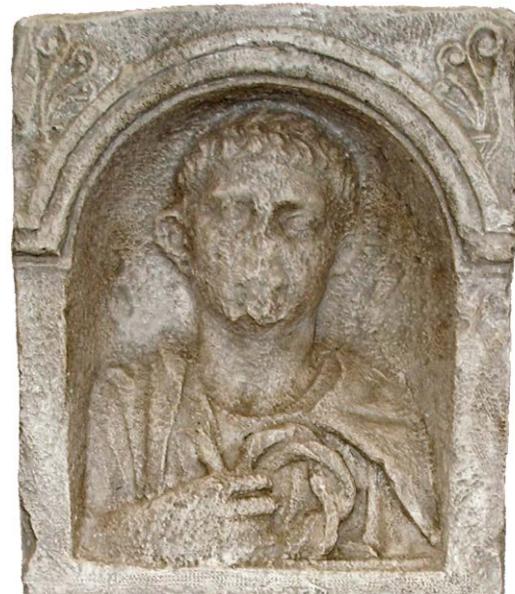
The article examines the tombstone of the naval centurion Liccaeus, which was discovered in the village of Osor (*Apsorus*) on the island of Cres. According to the inscription, it appears that a public site was allocated for the monument, indicating the honorand's significance to the local community. Liccaeus is depicted wearing a tunic and a *sagum*, but the most unusual feature is the object he holds in his hand. This object has often been interpreted as a rope tied into a knot, similar to those used for mooring ships. Little is known about the appearance of the command staff, *vitis*, that was a distinctive symbol of also naval centurions. However, depictions on Ravenna tombstones from the Early Imperial period which feature an object similar to knot suggest that, during this era, the *vitis* for naval centurions may have been represented differently. Given the absence of any attributes on the tombstone that would directly associate the deceased with his rank, it is possible that Liccaeus is holding a *vitis*, which, by its appearance, could also refer to his maritime skills.

Keywords: Apsorus, Liccaeus, naval centurion, *vitis*, Ravennate fleet, stele, Dalmatia, Julio-Claudian era

The Roman *municipium Apsorus*, located in what is now the small port village of Osor (Italian Ossero) was of significant commercial and naval importance and had a trans-regional influence on the route to the Northern Adriatic.¹ This importance was likely due to the Liburnians' long-standing maritime tradition and the strategic positioning of the settlement.² However, by the end of the 1st century BC, the typically gradual Romanization process of the islands *Crexa/Crepsa* and *Apsorus* had accelerated,³ which has been attributed to economic prosperity driven by the Liburnians' maritime tradition⁴ further supported by the arrival of Italic settlers during the Julian dynasty.⁵

The role of *Apsorus* in the Early Imperial period is also indirectly highlighted by the limestone grave stele of Liccaeus, a naval centurion⁶ of *liburna Lucusta* (dimensions of the stele: 140 x 44 x 17cm; Osor, Lošinjski muzej, Arheološka zbirka Osor, inv. no. 1869; figs. 1–2).⁷ The stele was discovered near the bay of Jas (Jaz)⁸ in the southeastern part of Osor in 1905.⁹ It was found in a secondary context, having been repurposed as the lid of a funerary urn in a later Roman grave.¹⁰

The majority of the limestone shaft stele is occupied by an inscription field. Above this field, there is a niche containing the bust of the deceased male. He is depicted beardless with a short haircut and dressed in a tunic and *sagum*. His right hand holds a circular object with interlaced



¹ Mohorovičić, "Prilog analizi razvoja historijske arhitekture," 215–16; Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, 196; Faber, "Osor – Apsorus iz aspekta antičkog pomorstva," 302–06; Zaninović, "Apsorus i Crexa," 16–18 with the cited literature; Čus-Rukonić, "Antički plovidbeni putevi," 395–96; Blečić Kavur, *Coherence of Perspective*, 18–21; Ettinger Starčić and Čus Rukonić, "Pregled povijesti arheoloških istraživanja," 11–12; Draganits et al., "Geoarchaeological Evaluation," 9–11; Cambi, *Umjetnost antike u hrvatskim krajevima*, 81–82.

² Tassaux, "Sur quelques rapports entre l'Istrie et la Liburnie," 141, 145–48; Matijašić, "Le isole di Cherso e Lussino," 259.

³ Indirect evidence of Romanization is also provided by contemporary construction activities, which include the fortification of walls, the establishment of street grids, the implementation of canalization and the development of plumbing systems; cf. Faber, "Osor – Apsorus iz aspekta antičkog pomorstva," 298–99.

⁴ Tassaux, "Sur quelques rapports entre l'Istrie et la Liburnie," 141, 145–48; Matijašić, "Le isole di Cherso e Lussino," 259; Čače, "South Liburnia," 67.

⁵ Faber, "Osor – Apsorus iz aspekta antičkog pomorstva," 298–99. The Italic settlers, however, never outnumbered the native inhabitants; cf. Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, 197.

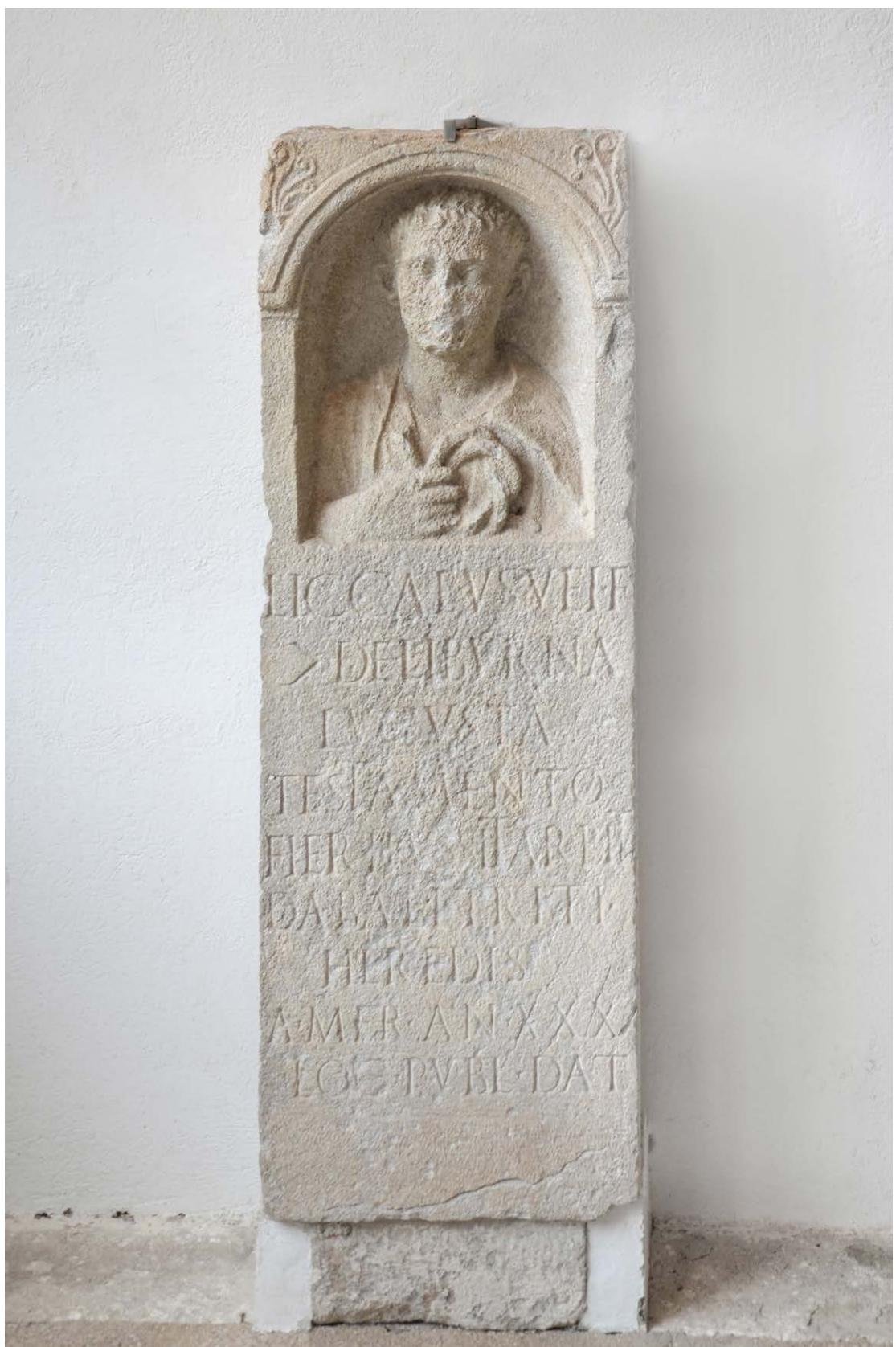
⁶ About the role of naval centurions within the Roman navy, see Casson, *Ships and Seamanship*, 312–13.

⁷ Cambi, "Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru"; Kurilić, "Roman Naval Bases at the Eastern Adriatic"; Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus"; "Porträtsstele des Liccaeus."

⁸ Petris and Kubitschek, "Grabstein eines römischen Flottensoldaten in Ossero," 294–96. Because of the uncritical citation of Piero Sticotti ("Nuova rassegna di epigrafi romane," 89), who erroneously identified Punta Križa (Ital. Punta Croce), a village near Osor, as the place where the stele was found, this spot was frequently annotated as the location of the find instead; cf. Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 112–15).

⁹ In the database *Ubi erat Lupa* it is stated that the stele was found in 1903; cf. "Porträtsstele des Liccaeus."

¹⁰ Petris and Kubitschek, "Grabstein eines römischen Flottensoldaten in Ossero," 294.



1.-2. The grave stele of Liccaeus, Osor, Lošinjski muzej, Arheološka zbirka Osor, inv. no. 1869 (© Lošinjski muzej)

loops pressed against his chest. The bust is emphasized by a semicircular moulded arch, with a half-palmette adorning each of the outer cornices.

According to the epitaph, the stele was erected in honour of Liccaeus, who served as centurion of the *liburna*, named *Lucusta*:¹¹

Liccaeus Vei f(ilius) / >(centurio) de liburna / Lucusta / testamento / fieri iussit arbit(ratu) / Dabali Triti / heredis. / A(mico) mer(enti) an(norum) XXX. / Loc(o) publ(ice) dat(o).¹²

Liccaeus was likely a member of the Fleet of Ravenna (*Classis Praetoria Ravennatum*), as the other Early Imperial naval forces, *Classis Praetoria Misenatum*, primarily recruited from the East (Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor).¹³ Furthermore, it is plausible that a detachment of the Fleet of Ravenna was stationed just in *Apsorus*.¹⁴ The indication that a public place was designated by the local community (*loco publice dato*) for his funerary monument suggests that Liccaeus commanded the crew stationed there and enjoyed a high status, being recognized as a distinguished individual among the inhabitants of *Apsorus*.¹⁵

Generally, recruitment into naval forces favoured provincials, mainly *peregrini*, over citizens and was especially promoted in the provinces with a well-established seafaring tradition. Consequently, numerous sailors were recruited from the territories of *Liburni* and *Delmatae*.¹⁶ According to preserved military diplomas, recruited *peregrini* were granted Roman citizenship upon their dismissal.¹⁷

Nothing definitive can be stated about the origin of the deceased.¹⁸ Liccaeus retained his native name and filiation (*Liccaeus Vei*) and had not yet acquired the full name of a Roman citizen.¹⁹ Based on his age and the absence of a *nomen gentile*, it is inferred that he died during his service.²⁰ Both names on the cenotaph, Liccaeus and Tritus, were common in the northern Adriatic area, whereas the name Dabalus, Liccaeus' successor, has been documented only once: on the tombstone of a sailor

¹¹ *Lucusta* most likely refers to a crustacean, a type of lobster, rather than a grasshopper, as it is far more plausible to name a ship after a sea animal than an insect; cf. Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 120–21.

¹² "Liccaeus, son of Veius, centurion of the *liburna* *Lucusta*, had by his will ordered (his tombstone to be erected) according to the decision of his heir Dabalus, son of Tritus. To his deserving friend who lived 30 years. The place of erection was awarded officially." Transcribed and translated after Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 116, who cites some alterations in the older literature (117) and brings an in-depth epigraphic analysis (117–121). Cf. *ILJug*, 2956; Domić Kunić, "Classis praetoria," 109, no. 38.

¹³ Domić Kunić, "Classis praetoria," 98.

¹⁴ Domić Kunić, "Classis praetoria," 96; Zaninović, "Apsorus i Crexa," 19; Ćus-Rukonić, "Antički plovidbeni putevi," 398; Kurilić, "Roman Naval Bases at the Eastern Adriatic," 117; Cambi, *Umjetnost antike u hrvatskim krajevima*, 92.

¹⁵ Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 119.

¹⁶ Domić Kunić, "Classis praetoria," 98–99; Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 118–19.

¹⁷ D'Amato, *Imperial Roman Naval Forces*, 13. Reddé, "Navy," 679. It should be emphasized that even as late as the 3rd century, higher-ranking navarchs and trierarchs could still hold peregrine status; cf. Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 117.

¹⁸ The disputes about his origin are summarised by Marjeta Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 117–20.

¹⁹ In addition, some other naval centurions, *Liccaeus Verzonis filius* and *Plator Veneti filius*, retained their native names, although Plator received Roman citizenship after the end of his service – *honestata missio*; cf. Domić Kunić, "Classis praetoria," 99–100.

²⁰ Emperor Claudius granted legal privileges and Roman citizenship to those who had served in the fleet for at least 26 years, extending these privileges to the families of the beneficiaries as well; see Saddington, "Classes," 212.

from the *liburna Margarita* found at Puteoli (Ann Arbor, Kelsey Museum, inv. no. 2985).²¹ The name Veius has not been attested elsewhere.²² In the scholarly literature to date, the deceased *centurio* has been identified as Liburnian,²³ perhaps a native of *Apsorus*,²⁴ Pannonian,²⁵ or lately as *Delmata*.²⁶

The most distinctive detail of Liccaeus' portrait is the round object held against his chest. Stefan Petris interpreted the object as a wreath,²⁷ while Piero Sticotti understood it as a rope twisted into a ring – an interpretation that closely aligns with what contemporary sailors would refer to as a *gassa piombata* (a weighted bowline).²⁸ Sticotti emphasized that this object not only highlights the sea or navigation, but also symbolizes command and serves as an instrument for the corporal punishment (*laqueus?*) akin to the *vitis*, a vine cane staff used also for the corporal punishment of subordinates²⁹ and above all a symbol of military centurions.³⁰ By way of comparison, he notes a stele of Vescelesis Petronius³¹ from *Alvona* in Liburnia (Narodni muzej Labin; dating to the 2nd half of the 2nd century; fig. 3),³² where the deceased is depicted weighing anchor (*in procinto di levar l'ancora*).³³ However, he acknowledged a limitation in his conclusions, noting the absence of evidence in Greek and Roman sources, and suggested that this hypothesis requires further development through comparisons with naval imagery in the visual arts, such as on Trajan's Column.³⁴

The rope to which the anchor is attached extends along the right side of the inscription field and appears to be an attribute of Vescelesis Petronius. There is no indication that the deceased was a naval centurion, as it would certainly have been mentioned in the epitaph. The rope held in his left hand is not interlaced into rings but instead runs freely to the lower edge of the epitaph, making it an unsuitable point of comparison. It is likely that Vescelesis Petronius was a member of a ship's crew, with the anchor serving as a symbol of his profession, a motif also observed on other funerary monuments of sailors.³⁵

²¹ Šašel Kos, “A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus,” 117. *[---]us Dabalif(ilius) / [---] Jo de lib(urna) Margarita / [sibi et] Q(uinto) Valerio Apro et Valeriae / [---]ae contubernali suaet / liberti]s libertabusque suis / [---posteri] sque omnibus testament(o) / [---]; transcribed after “Inscription from Puteoli.”*

²² Šašel Kos, “A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus,” 117–18; Kurilić, “Liburnski antroponimi,” 125–26, n. 24.

²³ Cambi, “Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru,” 152.

²⁴ Cambi, “Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru,” 152.

²⁵ Kurilić, *Pučanstvo Liburnije*, 181–82, 449; Kurilić, “Roman Naval Bases at the Eastern Adriatic,” 119.

²⁶ Šašel Kos, “A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus,” 116, n. 28.

²⁷ Petris and Kubitschek, “Grabstein eines römischen Flottensoldaten in Ossero,” 294.

²⁸ Sticotti, “Nuova rassegna di epigrafi romane,” 89–90.

²⁹ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.23.

³⁰ The *vitis* is primary attribute signifying the status of a centurion, though the specifics of their overall equipment, which undoubtedly evolved over time, remain unknown. Cf. Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 155, 165). On *vitis*: Speidel, “Dressed for the Occasion,” 238–39, n. 19; Ward, “Centurions,” 26–30; Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 165–68.

³¹ Transcription after “Epitaph from Albona”: *Vescelesis / Petronio / Triti f(ilio) is in / provincia d(e)f(unctus) e(st) iturus*. Géza Alföldy (“Zu einer römischen Inschrift aus Alvona,” 75) differently read it as: *Vescelesis / Petronio / Triti f(ilio). Is in / provincia d(efunctus). / Fe(cit) I(ulius) Turus*.

³² CIL III, 1, 3058; Sticotti, “Nuova rassegna di epigrafi romane,” 89, n. 4; Alföldy, “Zu einer römischen Inschrift aus Alvona,” 75–76.

³³ CIL III, 1, 3058 (*homo stans funem tenens et ancoram, quasi in eo situ ut hanc tollat*); Sticotti, “Nuova rassegna di epigrafi romane,” 89, n. 4.

³⁴ Sticotti, “Nuova rassegna di epigrafi romane,” 89–90.

³⁵ Cf. Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen*, 43.



3. Stele of Vesklevesis Petronius, Narodni muzej Labin (© Narodni muzej Labin)

Sticotti's interpretation of the object on Liccaeus' stele garnered wide acceptance and was further developed by subsequent scholars.³⁶ Nenad Cambi emphasized that the sailor's knot represents a distinctive feature of the deceased on the Roman funerary monument, symbolizing his profession,³⁷ while Ana and Jaroslav Šašel in their description of the stele noticed that Liccaeus holds the anchor rope in his hands.³⁸

³⁶ E.g. Cambi, "Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru," 153; Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 115–16.

³⁷ Cambi, "Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru," 153.

³⁸ *ILJug*, 2956.

Liccaeus is depicted wearing a tunic and a *sagum*. Regrettably, primary sources offer no specific information on the attire of the Roman navy members, so conclusions must be drawn from depictions on monuments, with funerary steles being particularly significant. A considerable number of steles featuring busts of deceased fleet members have been preserved in the Ravenna region, dating from the Augustan era to the 1st century AD. However, their garments do not exhibit any distinctive iconographic features,³⁹ suggesting that the dress and equipment likely resemble those of the Roman army.⁴⁰

There is no evidence in written sources either to support the idea that the rope tied into a kind of knot served as a symbol for naval centurions. As is displayed on the stele of the naval centurion C. Aemilius Severus (Ravenna, Museo Arcivescovile, Lapidario)⁴¹ that dates from the late 2nd century to the early 3rd century,⁴² the *vitis* was evidently a symbol of authority for both military and naval centurions at least from that period.

Military personnel depicted on funerary monuments typically display insignia that denote their rank, particularly those of higher status.⁴³ It appears highly improbable that the *vitis*, a distinctive and significant emblem of a centurion's rank and authority, would be excluded from the visual representation. Liccaeus or his heir may have chosen to replace it with a symbol associated with the longstanding maritime tradition of his homeland and his naval service. In this context, the curved rope should be interpreted in a similar way to objects symbolizing certain professions or crafts on funerary monuments.⁴⁴ This substitution of attributes could also suggest that Liccaeus felt a stronger allegiance to his personal heritage than to Roman supremacy and military hierarchy.

Nonetheless, given the prominent role of the *vitis* in the portraiture of centurions and its near-universal depiction on preserved funerary monuments of these officers,⁴⁵ it is highly unlikely that Liccaeus, who was awarded a grave in *loco publico*, would be represented without it. Although the staff is typically depicted as straight and smooth, there are instances where it is shown as slightly curved and gnarled.⁴⁶

Judging by some Early Imperial steles of naval centurions from Ravenna, in all probability at least during the Early Imperial period the *vitis* used by naval centurions differed from that used by

³⁹ Cf. Bollini, *Antichità classiarie*, 88.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bollini, *Antichità classiarie*, 86; Casson, *Ships and Seamanship*, 313, n. 60.

⁴¹ CIL XI, 340; Starr, *Roman Imperial Navy*, 59–60; Bollini, *Antichità classiarie*, fig. 23; Franzoni, *Habitus atque habitudo militis*, 64–65, no. 44.

⁴² Franzoni, *Habitus atque habitudo militis*, 64–65, no. 44.

⁴³ Cf. Speidel, “Dressed for the Occasion,” 238. In the provinces of *Achaia* and *Macedonia*, several funerary monuments depict soldiers who did not attain the rank of centurion, yet are portrayed holding a staff resembling the *vitis*. The precise function or symbolism of this object remains unclear; it may even represent a weapon; cf. Šašel Kos, “A Latin Epitaph of a Roman Legionary,” 23–24. However, it is more plausible that these figures are in fact depicted holding a *fustis* – a knotted, club-like instrument similar in appearance to the *vitis*, commonly used for crowd control. On stone reliefs, the object is typically shown being gripped from above, in contrast to the *vitis*, which is held in a more formal and dignified manner (cf. Speidel, “Fustis,” 138–44).

⁴⁴ Cf. Zanker, “Grabreliefs römischer Freigelassener,” 300; Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen*, 13–16.

⁴⁵ Ward, “Centurions,” 27–28. It is absent on only two Severan tombstones, one from *Castra Regina* (Regensburg, Historisches Museum, inv. no. 6; “Grabrelief der Familie”) and another from Lobot (Zagreb, Arheološki muzej, inv. no. 360; “Porträtsstele des Marcus”). Cf. also Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 165–66.

⁴⁶ Padova, Museo Civico agli Emeritani; Este, Museo Nazionale Atestino inv. no. 1378; Colchester, Colchester and Essex Museum, inv. no. 24604 (cf. Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 167).

military centurions.⁴⁷ This is suggested by the representations of two naval centurions from Ravenna, both dating to Julio-Claudian period:⁴⁸ C. Anarius Felix (Ravenna, Museo Nazionale di Ravenna, inv. no. 10017; fig. 4)⁴⁹ and M. Creperius Primus (Ravenna, chiesa Santa Giustina).⁵⁰ On both steles, the *vitis* depicted beneath the epitaph is curved resembling a large knot. Although Graeme A. Ward proposed that it might represent a coiled vine branch, “perhaps suggesting the living branch on which the tool was based,”⁵¹ I argue that, given the *vitis*’ significance as a prominent status symbol and the fact that both Anarius Felix and Creperius Primus held the rank of naval centurions, it is more plausible that, at least during the Early Imperial period, this element of military equipment exhibited distinct variation. Thus, it is more than plausible that Liccaeus holds a *vitis* curved into rings, similar to ropes, used into maritime affairs or to anchor the ship. Nevertheless, the military equipment on the funerary monuments of centurions could exhibit some unrealistic iconographic elements⁵² and by holding a commanding *vitis* that closely resembles a rope, twisted into a ring, this attribute would simultaneously highlight his seafaring capabilities.

Liccaeus’ funerary monument is a shaft stele with a semi-circular niche (*Schaftstele mit eingerückten Bogen*) classified by Hermann Pflug as type IIb.⁵³ Specifically, Liccaeus’ stele represents a rather rare subtype having an indented arch, which has been attested in Northern Italy, particularly in Aquileia.⁵⁴ Shaft steles in Northern Italy (*regiones Italiae VIII-XI*) developed and were to an extent adapted from Hellenistic steles. The Greek East was well-connected to these regions through the ports along the Adriatic coastline and, as indicated by some of the names on the steles, this type was chosen especially, though not exclusively, by individuals of Eastern Mediterranean origin.⁵⁵

During the Julio-Claudian period, this form of the stele was still rare in *Dalmatia* and was likely produced under the influence of steles from Northern Italy.⁵⁶ It was probably made in *Apsorus*, as evidenced by the findings indicating that several skilled high-quality stonemasons capable of

⁴⁷ Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 168. In comparison, the *vitis* held by M. Aemilius Severus on the aforementioned Severan stele is depicted as straight.

⁴⁸ Although Creperius Primus is not explicitly mentioned as a centurion, this rank is suggested by the location of the finding, its dating and the presence of the *vitis*.

⁴⁹ Franzoni, *Habitus atque habitudo militis*, 60–61, no. 39; Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 167–68, 170, no. 11.

⁵⁰ Franzoni, *Habitus atque habitudo militis*, 61–62, no. 40; Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 167–68, 170, no. 18.

⁵¹ Ward, “Centurions”, 28, 276.

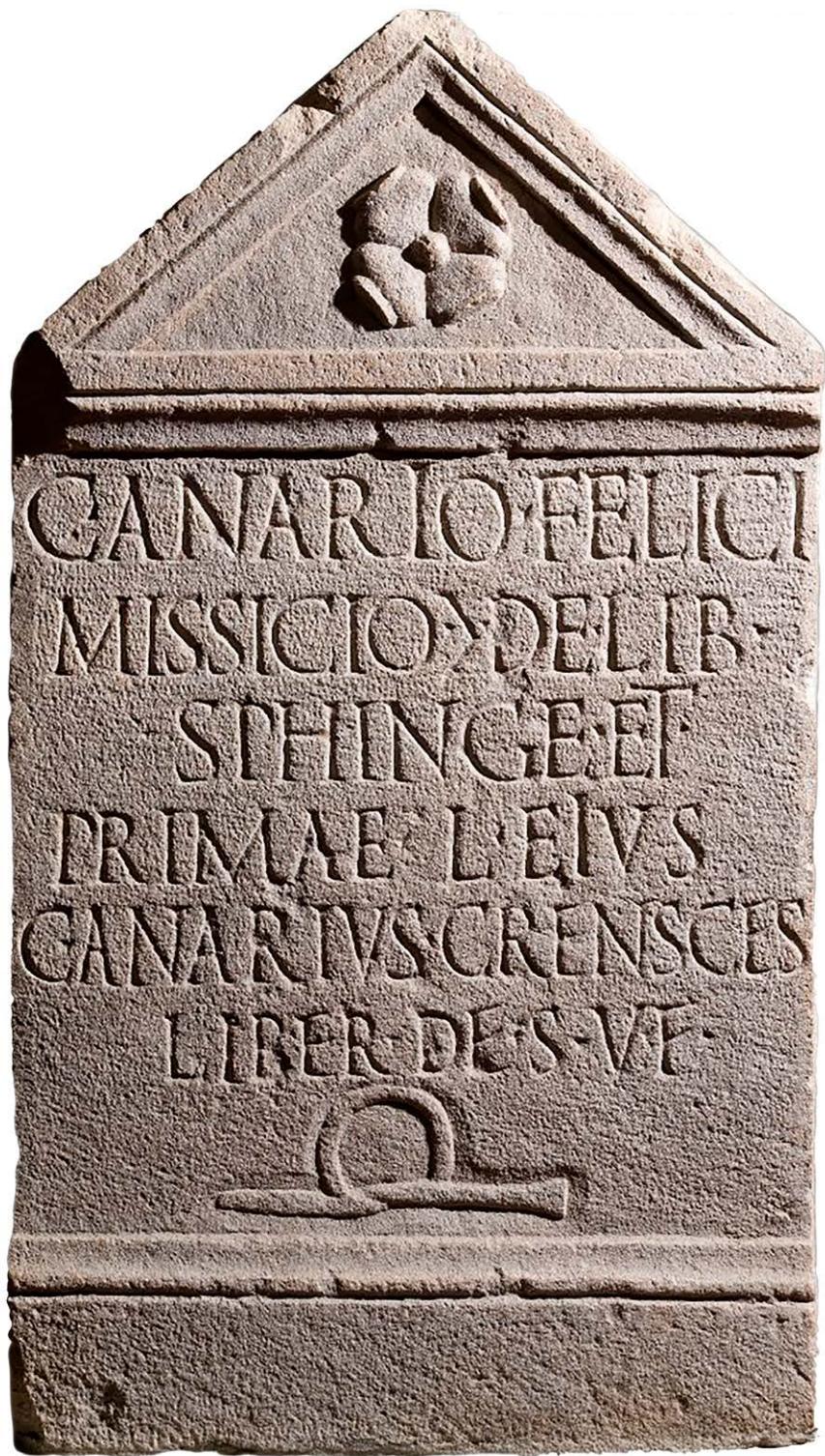
⁵² Cf. Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 160–65. One unrealistic element is the helmet with a transverse crest, as seen on the stele of M. Petronius Classicus from Poetovio (Ptuj, Pokrajinski muzej Ptuj-Ormož, inv. no. RL 825) and on the stele of T. Calidius Severus from Carnuntum (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. III 365); see “Grabstele des Marcus Petronius;” “Grabstele des Titus Calidius.” It is likely that the helmet is depicted using a combination of different perspectives, as its actual existence has not been confirmed (cf. Stockinger, “Dressed to Drill,” 160).

⁵³ Pflug, *Römische Porträtsstelen in Oberitalien*, 35–36.

⁵⁴ Pflug, *Römische Porträtsstelen in Oberitalien*, 36, n. 221, with cited examples. The presence of Aquileians in the territory of *Dalmatia* is concentrated especially in the coastal towns (*Iader, Salona, Issa, Aenona*) since the 1st century AD. Although it is challenging to differentiate Aquileians from other Italic inhabitants, the significant number of imported stamped bricks and tiles of Aquileian origin attest to the well-established contact between these regions; cf. Zaccaria, “Testimonianze epigrafiche dei rapporti tra Aquileia e l’Illirico,” 105.

⁵⁵ Pflug, *Römische Porträtsstelen in Oberitalien*, 36.

⁵⁶ Cambi, “Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru,” 154.



4. Stele of C. Anarius Felix, Ravenna, Museo Nazionale, inv. no. 10017
(© su concessione del Ministero della Cultura – Musei Nazionali di Ravenna)

carving a monument based on a given template were stationed in that town.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the use of cheaper limestone, rather than higher-quality marble, more suitable for a person of higher rank, supports the notion that it was a local product rather than an import. A material analysis has not, to my knowledge, been conducted yet.

The dating of the stele was proposed based on epigraphic analysis and hairstyle. The epitaph suggests a mid-first century AD date,⁵⁸ while the short haircut led Nenad Cambi to propose a dating to the 1st half of the 1st century.⁵⁹ Considering that the most elaborate stone sculptures from *Apsorus* date to the 1st half of the 1st century,⁶⁰ it seems plausible that the settlement reached one of its peaks during this period.

Nevertheless, Liccaeus' tombstone also reflects the significant status of *Apsorus* during the Early Imperial period. In addition, it indicates that during this time, the *vitis*, a prominent symbol of centurions, could be curved resembling a knot in the case of naval centurions, as seen also on the aforementioned steles from Ravenna. The interlaced rings on Liccaeus' stele, rather than a single one, likely at the same time allude to his maritime skills. It seems improbable that a man of his rank would forgo such an important status symbol and be portrayed to posterity with a simple sailor's rope, just like an ordinary sailor, as there is no other visual detail that signifies his status or distinguishes his image from that of common crew members.

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⁵⁷ The most remarkable sculptures from *Apsorus* are the heads of statues representing members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Likely belonging to an Early Imperial statuary group, these marble heads include Octavian Augustus in the Alcudia type, Drusus Minor and a severely deteriorated unidentified head. On the statuary group *inter alia*, see: Cambi, "Tri carska portreta iz Osora;" Cambi, "Skupine carskih kipova u rimskoj provinciji Dalmaciji," 46–47, no. 2; Cambi, *Imago animi*, 93; Buzov, "The Imperial Cult in Dalmatia," 71.

⁵⁸ *ILJug*, 2956; Šašel Kos, "A Note on the Naval Centurion Liccaeus," 117.

⁵⁹ Cambi, "Stela pomorskog centuriona Likeja u Osoru," 154.

⁶⁰ Cf. n. 57.

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Zvita *vitis* ali par prepletenih vrvi?

Ikonografija oblasti na morju na Likejevi steli iz Apsorja

Povzetek

Antični *Apsorus* je bil pomembno trgovsko in pomorsko središče, o čemer posredno priča tudi stela mornariškega centuriona Likeja, Vejevega sina, ki je bila najdena v tem kraju. Likej je najverjetneje pripadal ravenski floti, od katere je bil morda en del stacioniran prav v Apsorju. Kakor je omenjeno na epitafu, je bil za postavitev nagrobnega spomenika izbran javni prostor, kar priča o pomembnosti pokojnika, ki je očitno preminil v času vojaške službe.

Pokojnik je oblečen v tuniko in *sagum*, v roki pa drži zvit predmet z dvema zankama, ki je bil največkrat razložen kot vozel, s katerimi so privezovali ladje, in bi lahko simboliziral poveljniško vlogo podobno, kot jo *vitis* predstavlja pri centurionih. Žal so pisni viri o opremi mornariških centurionov zelo skopi in v njih ni niti enkrat omenjeno, da bi v nekakšen vozel zvezana vrv nadomeščala *vitis*. Poglavitni vir so tako likovne upodobitve. Kakor kaže stela Gaja Emilija Severa, datirana med pozno 2. in zgodnje 3. stoletje, je bila vsaj od tega obdobja dalje poveljniška palica (*vitis*) tudi prepoznavni znak mornariških centurionov.

Vendarle je na moč nenavadno, da na Likejevi steli ne bi bilo niti enega atributa, ki bi nakazoval njegov čin v vojaški hierarhiji; nenazadnje *vitis* manjka na le dveh nagrobnikih centurionov, ki sta oba datirana v seversko dobo. Pozornost velja usmeriti na ravenski steli mornariških centurionov iz julijsko-klavdijske dobe, na katerih je pod epitafom *vitis*, ki je zvita tako, da spominja na vozel. Ob tej primerjavi se zdi povsem verjetno, da tudi Likej v desnici drži *vitis*. Drugačno obliko, kot jo ima *vitis* na obeh ravenskih stelah, je mogoče pojasniti s tem, da je prav vojaška oprema centurionov na nagrobnih spomenikih večkrat kazala nekaj nerealističnih ikonografskih elementov, poveljniška palica, ki spominja na mornarski vozel, pa bi tako obenem še poudarila pomorske večnine pokojnika.

Po Pflugovi tipologiji se Likejeva stela uvršča v tip IIb, natančno ta podtip z vrisanim lokom pa jo približa severnoitalski produkciji. Bržkone je bila izdelana prav v Apsorju, saj je – kakor kažejo kakovostne najdbe, od katerih velja izpostaviti ostanke cesarske skupine julijsko-klavdijske dinastije – v tem obdobju tam delovalo nekaj večih kamnosekov, lokalni proizvodnji v prid pa govori tudi uporaba apnanca.

Datacija stele je bila predlagana tako glede na epigrafsko analizo (sredina 1. stoletja po Kr.) kakor glede na Likejevo pričesko (1. polovica 1. stoletja po Kr.), prav v 1. polovico 1. stoletja pa sega tudi večina najkakovostnejših klesarskih izdelkov iz Apsorja in očitno je naselbina v tem obdobju dosegla enega svojih vrhuncev.

