

S T U D I A  
**M**YTHO  
LOGICA  
S L A V I C A

25



2  
0  
2  
2

STUDIA MYTHOLOGICA SLAVICA  
ISSN 1408-6271    wwwISSN 1581-128x

*Uredniški svet /* Natka Badurina (Università degli Studi di Udine), Nikos Čausidis (Univerzitet  
*Consiglio di redazione /* Sv. Kiril i Metodi, Skopje), Larisa Fialkova (University of Haifa), Mare Kõiva  
*Advisory Board* (Estonian Institute of Folklore, Tartu), Monika Krojež Telban (Inštitut za  
slovensko narodopisje ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana), Janina Kursite (Univerza v Rigi),  
Jumaniyozova Mamlakat Tojievna (Urgench state university), Nijolė Laurinkienė  
(Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, Vilnius), Mirjam Mencej (Univerza v  
Ljubljani), Vlado Nartnik (Inštitut za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša, ZRC SAZU,  
Ljubljana), Andrej Pleterski (Inštitut za arheologijo, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana),  
Ljubinko Radenković (SANU, Beograd), Svetlana Tolstaja (Institut slavjanovedenija  
Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk, Moskva)

*Uredništvo /* Saša Babič (odgovorna urednica/co-direttrice/Editor-in-Chief), ZRC SAZU, Inštitut  
*Redazione /* za slovensko narodopisje, Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija/Slovenia, E-mail:  
*Editorial Board* Sasa.Babic@zrc-sazu.si

Katja Hrobat Virloget (odgovorna urednica/co-direttrice/Editor-in-Chief), Univerza na  
Primorskem, Fakulteta za humanistične študije, Oddelek za antropologijo in kulturne  
študije, Titov trg 5, 6000 Koper, Slovenija/Slovenia, E-mail: katja.hrobat@fhs.upr.si  
Roberto Dapit, Università degli Studi di Udine, Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature,  
Comunicazione, Formazione e Società, Via Tarcisio Petracco 8, 33100 Udine,  
Italia/Italia, E-mail: roberto.dapit@uniud.it

*Izdajata /* Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti, Inštitut  
*Publicato da /* za slovensko narodopisje, Ljubljana, Slovenija  
*Published by* in / e / and

Università degli Studi di Udine, Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature, Comunicazione,  
Formazione e Società, Udine, Italia

*Založnik / Casa editrice /* Založba ZRC / ZRC Publishing, ZRC SAZU  
*Publishing house*

*Spletna stran /* <http://sms.zrc-sazu.si/>  
*Sito internet / Website* <http://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/sms/>

Prispevki so recenzirani / Gli articoli sono sottoposti a referaggio / The articles are externally peer-reviewed

Izhaja s podporo Agencije za raziskovalno dejavnost RS / Pubblicato con il sostegno finanziario deli' Agenzia per  
la ricerca scientifica della Repubblica di Slovenia / Published with the support of the Slovenian Research Agency

*Studia mythologica Slavica* is included in the following databases: MLA Bibliography; SCOPUS, Sachkatalog  
der Bibliothek - RGK des DAI; IBZ; FRANCIS; HJG (The History Journals Guide); OCLE; INTUTE: Arts  
and Humanities UK, EBSCO, ERIH plus, ANVUR.

*Slika na ovitku / Fotografia sul copertina / Cover photo:*  
Gvido Birola, Kuga (Peste / Plague), 1972.

*Naklada / Tiratura / Imprint* 300

*Tisk / Stampato da / Printed by* Collegium Graphicum, d. o. o.



# Belenus, Cybele and Attis: Echoes of their Cults over the Centuries

==== Marjeta Šašel Kos =====

V članku sta obravnavana dva zanimiva primera čaščenja rimskodobnih božanstev v severovzhodni Italiji, Noriku in Panoniji, ki je, kot se zdi, preživelo skozi srednjeveško obdobje vse do novega veka. Belen, ki so ga kot pomembno keltsko božanstvo častili v Noriku in Akvileji, je bil kot »sveti Belin« še vse do druge polovice 19. stoletja med ljudstvom čaščen na Tolminskem v zaledju Ogleja. V Prekmurju in slovenskem Porabju (ter širše na Madžarskem, Gradiščanskem in avstrijskem Štajerskem) so se po vsej verjetnosti ohranili sledovi kulta Kibebe in Atisa, ki se kažejo v nenavadnem pustnem običaju svatbe z borom (borovo gostüvanje).

.....  
 KLJUČNE BESEDE: Tolminsko, Prekmurje in Porabje, Belin, Kibela, »svatba z borom«

Two interesting examples of worshipping Roman-period deities in the north-eastern Italian and Pannonian regions seem to have survived in one way or another through early medieval to modern times. The first is the cult of Belenus, the well-known Celtic and most notably a Norican and Aquileian god. The second example is that of Cybele and Attis, ‘eastern deities’ whose cult became highly influential in the mentioned areas – and elsewhere – during the second and third centuries AD. Interestingly, a deity called “holy Belin” was documented in the second half of the 19th century in the area of Tolmin in Slovenia (the hinterland of Aquileia) as a traditional folk belief. In Pannonia, traces of the cult of Cybele and Attis appear to have survived from antiquity in Prekmurje and Porabje (Slovenia, Hungary), as reflected in the unusual and ongoing custom of the “wedding with a pine tree”.

.....  
 KEYWORDS: Tolminsko, Prekmurje and Porabje, Belin, Cybele, “wedding with a pine tree”

## BELENUS – BELINUS

Worshipping Belenus, the well-known Celtic and most notably a Norican and Aquileian god,<sup>1</sup> is well attested in Celtiberia, Galliae, and western Alpine regions.<sup>2</sup> However, his cult was especially significant in eastern Venetia and Carnia, primarily in Aquileia and its surroundings, as well as in Noricum where he was regarded as the main god of the Norican kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Maraspin 1968; Birkhan 1997: 582–585 and *passim*. Šašel Kos 2001; Wojciechowski 2002; Zaccaria 2008 (Beleno); Piccottini 2017; Handy 2018; De Bernardo Stempel, Hainzmann 2020, 1: 151–156; 2: 902–909 and *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Gourvest 1954; Hatt 1976: 358–359; Olmsted 1994: 386; Haeussler 2008: 29–30 and *passim*.

In two passages, Tertullian referred to him as the most important Norican deity, not unlike the goddess Atargatis in Syria, the god Dusares in Arabia, worshipped as the chief deity by the Nabataeans, Caelestis in Africa, and the otherwise unknown Reguli in Mauretania (*Apol.* 24.7: *Unicuique etiam provinciae et civitati suus deus est, ut Syriae Atargatis, ut Arabiae Dusares, ut Noricis Belenus, ut Africae Caelestis, ut Mauretaniae Reguli sui*; cf. *ad nat.* 2.8). In Noricum, from where the worship of Belenus probably spread to Iulium Carnicum (Zuglio) and Aquileia, the god has always been documented as Belinus;<sup>3</sup> dedications to him have mainly come to light in the core of the Norican kingdom in Virunum (Zollfeld near Maria Saal) and Magdalensberg (probably old Virunum: Dobesch 1997, but see Glaser 2003). The otherwise unknown goddess Belestis (possibly the goddess of nature and fertility),<sup>4</sup> who may be associated with Belinus and whose cult has been attested to in the same area (Šašel Kos 1999: 21–22, 25), seems to confirm the local importance of the god.

At Aquileia and in its hinterlands, Belenus was frequently equated with Apollo; in a similar way to Apollo, he was also worshipped as a god of (sun)light and healing powers (Green 1997: 152–164; also see Green 1995: 474) even though, according to a new etymology of the name, Belenus should instead be related to springs of water (De Bernardo Stempel 2004: 212–213; De Bernardo Stempel, Hainzmann 2020, 1: 152–153). His close association with water is confirmed by two dedications to Fons B(eleni)<sup>5</sup> and by an altar in which Belenus is worshipped together with the Nymphs (*Inscr. Aq.* 155 = *EDR117090*); Wojciechowski 2001: 140–141, no. 12). Thermal springs are also attested to at Iulium Carnicum (Zaccaria 2008 [Beleno]). Belenus was regarded as the divine patron of Aquileia (Maraspin 1968; Wojciechowski 2002; Zaccaria 2008 [Beleno]) and, as such, he figures in Herodian's *History after Marcus Aurelius* (8.3.7–8) and in the *Historia Augusta (Vita Maximini duo 22.1)* in quite long narratives in which these authors described the march of Maximinus Thrax and his troops to Italy in AD 238. The emperor died during the siege of Aquileia (Šašel Kos 1986: 412–433) while his army was defeated soon afterwards. These events were ascribed to the divine protection of Belenus Apollo, who – as the city's most prominent god – was regarded as a powerful protector against any enemies, as the *defensor* of the city.<sup>6</sup>

At Iulium Carnicum, a town close to the border with Noricum, Belinus (his name does not appear as Belenus) was undoubtedly worshipped as one of the important gods, possibly under the influence of his cult at Aquileia or in Noricum, or both. The region was inhabited by the Carni, as indicated by the second part of the town's name (which earlier appears to have been a *castellum* or *forum*), while “Iulium” suggests the settlement had been given certain autonomy, very likely by Julius Caesar. At that time, it must have been granted the status of a Roman *vicus*, while eventually, under Augustus, it became a

<sup>3</sup> Scherrer 1984: 175–187; Šašel Kos 1999: 25–27; Zaccaria 2004; Piccottini 2017; Handy 2018.

<sup>4</sup> *ILLPRON* 446 (= *HD042481*); *ILLPRON* 654 (= *HD057853*); De Bernardo Stempel, Hainzmann 2020, 1: 147–150; 2: 800–804.

<sup>5</sup> *Inscr. Aq.* 153 (= *EDR116842*); 152 (= *EDR116841*); Wojciechowski 2001: p. 160, nos. 61, 62; the abbreviation has probably been correctly explained.

<sup>6</sup> Birkhan 1997: 282–285; Olmsted 1994: 386–387, and *passim*. Pascal 1964: 123 ff.; Maraspin 1968: 145–161; Chirassi Colombo 1976: 175–180.

*colonia* (Mainardis 2008: 36–55). The town must have had close links with the Norican kingdom, particularly commercial ones; it was excellently situated midway between the kingdom and north-eastern Italy with Aquileia being the most significant city in the region. The cult of Belinus must have flourished in the town for a long time since his sanctuary had to be repaired as early as in the second half of the first century BC.

Belinus' sanctuary in the town is epigraphically attested to on a large stone monument from the second half of the first century BC, perhaps a stele, erected by two chiefs of the village (*magistri vici*), both freedmen: Publius Erbonius Princeps and Sextus Votticius Argentillus. They commemorated the sanctuary's renovation and its decoration with five gilded disks and two statues, which they themselves financed.<sup>7</sup> An altar dedicated to Belinus has also been discovered at Celeia (Celje), one of the most important Norican towns, where his cult was perhaps introduced from the Virunum territory or, more plausibly, from Aquileia.<sup>8</sup> This may be inferred from the name of the dedicator, Lucius Sentius Forensis; Sentii are well attested to at Aquileia, but not in Noricum (*Inscr. Aq.*, indexes; *OPEL* IV, 68).

Belinus may have been the main god of the Norici and it cannot be excluded that the famous bronze statue of the "Youth of Magdalensberg" (a 16th-century copy of a statue from the first century BC) should actually be associated with Belenus, as suggested by Peter Scherrer (1984: 175–187). This can plausibly be argued on the basis of a small bronze statue of a youth from the early Augustan period found at Concordia, but now missing. The dedication to Belenus was inscribed on the left thigh of the statue in the name of Marcus Porcius Tertius.<sup>9</sup>

A sanctuary of Belinus has also been confirmed at Santicum in the territory of Virunum (present-day Villach, Slovenian Beljak); it is mentioned on one of the two altars dedicated to the god.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE GOD BELIN IN THE TOLMIN AREA (WESTERN SLOVENIA)

It is indeed fascinating that the worship of a deity called Belin, with the epithet "sveti" (meaning "holy" in Slovenian), was documented in the second half of the 19th century in the area of Tolmin (present-day Slovenia, *Fig. 1*) as a traditional folk belief. The local population believed that Belin was a divine healer in possession of a miraculous "key" with which he could cure blindness (Ovsec 1991: 472). This was described by the historian and

<sup>7</sup> Mainardis 2008: 85–88, no. 1 = *CIL* V 1829 + p. 1053 (= *EDR*007048): [---] / et q(ui) s(upra) s(cripti) s(unt), aedem Belini / [su]a pecunia refecere et / [clu]pea inaurata in fastigio V / et signa duo dedere, / [P.] Erbonio P. l. Principe / [Se]x. [V]otticio Sex. l. Argentillo / mag(istris) vic(i). See also Fontana 1997, 153–165.

<sup>8</sup> *Belino* / L. Sentius / Forensis: Lovenjak 2003: 335, fig. 4 (= *HD*045030); he originally published the first line as *Beleno*, thus also in *EDH*.

<sup>9</sup> *CIL* V 1866 = Lettich 1994: no. 1 (= *EDR*097739): M(arcus) Por(cius) Tertius / Bel(eno) Aug(usto) v(otum) s(olvit) Concord(iae). Zaccaria 1995, 184–185; Zaccaria 2008 (Beleno), 382; 384. Also see Mastrocinque 1995, 273–274. I would like to thank Prof. Claudio Zaccaria for having kindly drawn my attention to this statuette.

<sup>10</sup> Leber 1972: 19, no. 15 = *ILLPRON* 685 = Scherrer 1984: no. 26 (= *HD*057524): [---?Be]lin[o ---] / [---tem-  
plum ve]tusta[te con]labsum ---] / [---?].

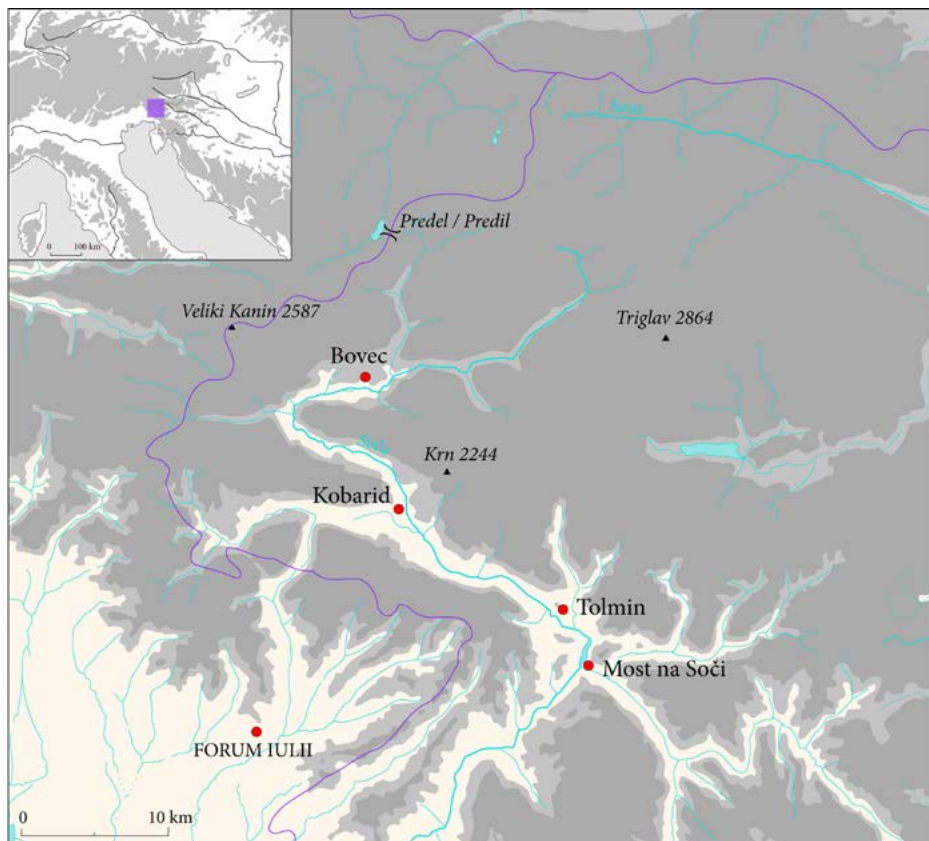


Fig. 1: The region of Tolmin, Slovenia (Computer graphics: Mateja Belak).

ethnologist Simon Rutar in his book about the Tolmin area's history (*Zgodovina Tolmin-skega*, 1882), which is the only testimony to the presence of Belin among the inhabitants of the Tolminsko region. Rutar interpreted this phenomenon as the Slovenian adaptation of the belief in Belinus/Belenus, who was widely venerated during the Roman Republican and imperial periods in eastern Venetia and Noricum as the principal god of the Carni and patron of Aquileia. Rutar regarded him as a deity of sunlight and correctly noted that the god had had several shrines and temples at Aquileia; still, he erroneously ascribed him with an Illyro-Thracian, i.e., an oriental origin, not a Celtic one (Rutar 1882: 21; Rutar 1883). Rutar's misinterpretation of the Celtic Belenus/Belinus and worshipping of him in the Roman period is understandable since towards the end of the 19th century, when he was writing, no adequate scholarly literature concerning Roman and Celtic cults would have been available to him, and not much had been done on these subjects in his time.

How to explain the phenomenon of Belin in the Tolmin region, as described by Rutar? The worship of Belinus at Aquileia and in its hinterlands may or may not shed light on the belief in Belin in the Tolmin area and, indeed, the conclusion that the cult of Belinus/Belenus continued throughout antiquity and has never entirely ceased is far from certain.

Yet, it is certainly true that the adoration of pagan divinities took deep roots in the regions of Tolmin and Kobarid, preventing the advance of Christianity, as well illustrated by an incident in 1331 in Kobarid in the late Middle Ages. The local population must have been considerably pagan since the inhabitants worshipped a sacred tree and a sacred spring. The church in Cividale (*Čedad* in Slovenian) took drastic measures against the “ethnic religion”, engaging the inquisitor Franciscus de Clugia (Francesco di Chioggia), a Franciscan, to be in charge of the regions of Venetia and Friuli, and to act against the heretics. During a punitive expedition to Kobarid, the sacred tree was felled, while the sacred spring was destroyed with large stones being thrown into it (Juvančič 1984, with further citations). Similar pagan traditions may have been alive among the indigenous population of the Tolmin and Kobarid regions during prehistory and the Roman period. The existence of an important pagan sanctuary in the immediate vicinity of Kobarid, at Gradič, is interesting for shedding light on the pre-Roman and Roman cults in this relatively remote area.<sup>11</sup>

Sacred places like caves, unusually shaped stones, sacred trees and springs must have been quite common in this region, living on through centuries and surviving as late as the second half of the 20th century, as recently revealed by the testimony of Pavel Medvešček – Klančar (2015; 3rd edition 2018). Old faith in divine qualities of the surrounding nature has persisted in this area for many centuries and, upon the arrival of the Slavs at the start of the Middle Ages, must have merged with the Slavic forms of paganism. One cannot thus entirely deny that belief in Belinus could have established deep roots in an area outside the main communication routes such as the regions of Tolmin and Kobarid. One may suppose that the veneration of this popular deity, which was no doubt modified over several centuries, persisted among the Romanised indigenous inhabitants until the arrival of the Slavs. They may have come late to this area, where they largely encountered the descendants of the pre-Roman Carni. The god’s name was not modified or linguistically adapted to the Slavic language, probably indicating the local indigenous population was powerful enough to impose its own beliefs on the entire community there.<sup>12</sup>

## CYBELE – GREAT MOTHER

The second interesting example concerns Cybele and Attis, her youthful consort who castrated himself, ‘eastern deities’ whose cult became very influential in the north-eastern Italian, Adriatic and Pannonian regions – and elsewhere – in the second and third centuries AD (Šašel Kos 2010).

The worship of Cybele originated in Phrygia where she had been venerated as the “Mother of the mountains” since early in the first millennium BC (Roller 1999: 124–125, 171).

<sup>11</sup> Osmuk 1987; Osmuk 1998. Several statues of Apollo were discovered, as well as of Hercules, other statues that have been found were of Venus, Mars and Diana; votive tablets, as well as Celtic and Roman coins have come to light as well, also see Osmuk 1997; cf. Horvat 2018: 344.

<sup>12</sup> Celtic culture and cults had exercised some influence on the Slavic world elsewhere, cf. Rosen-Przeworska 1964.

In the Greek-speaking world that saw worshipping of her being introduced in the early 6th century BC (Roller 1999: 119–141), she was known as *Mêter oreia* (the Greek translation of “Mother of the mountains”); in the Roman Empire, she was worshipped as Magna Mater, the Great Mother. Most interestingly, in a dedication to Magna Mater from Emona (Ljubljana) in the Italian Regio X, the divine name *Oraea* appears, which should almost certainly be explained as Cybele’s epithet *oreia*, even though it appears as if this was the name of another goddess on the same altar.<sup>13</sup> At Salonae (Solin), where 11 dedications to her have thus far been found, a *dea barbarica* is mentioned in one of them, an epithet that could hardly have referred to any other goddess but Cybele since festivities related to worshipping her were regarded as barbaric. In the Dalmatian metropolis, she seems to have been worshipped as early as in the second half of the first century BC (*CIL* III, 14663,2 = *AE* 1994, 1348 = *HD*031710; Šašel Kos 1999, 82, no. 1).

Upon a decision of the Roman Senate, a dark meteorite symbolising the goddess was solemnly transferred from Pessinus (Ballihisar in Turkey) to Rome in 204 BC during the war against Hannibal, when his army had invaded central Italy. Still, different accounts by ancient writers mean it is not entirely clear what were the exact reasons and initiative for this political and religious mission led by eminent Roman senators (Gruen 1990; Roller 1999, 263–265; Šašel Kos 1994). Rome strove to gain prominence in the East of Greece, not least justifying its ambitions by referring to its legendary Troianic origin (Gruen 1990). A sanctuary was built for Cybele on the Palatine and her cult became and remained one of the official cults in Rome, generally enjoying favour from the Roman aristocracy despite several of the rites performed in her honour indeed being barbaric.<sup>14</sup>

As the goddess of mountains and wild nature, she was usually accompanied by two lions. She was mostly equated with Rhea by the Greeks, her servants having been called “Couretes”, such as Rhea’s companions, who with their shouting rescued the new-born infant Zeus from his father Kronos. According to several writers, including Posidonius and Strabo, Rhea was called the Great Mother of the Gods, or Agdistis, or the Great Phrygian Goddess, but also Idaea (referring to Mt Ida), Dindymene, Sipyrene, Pissinuntis, Cybele or Cybebe reflecting various places of her worship (10. 3. 12 C 469; cf. 12. 5. 3 C 567; Van Haeperen 2019: 57–77).

The cult of Magna Mater is well documented in the northern Adriatic area (Vermašeren 1989), notably in Histria and particularly in a metropolis like Aquileia, but also at Emona.<sup>15</sup> At Celeia or in its territory, the Great Mother was worshipped by a member of the municipal aristocracy, one Gnaeus Pompeius Iustinus, as M(ater) D(eum) M(agna) Blau(n)dia. Iustinus was a town councillor (*decurio*) and one of the town’s two mayors (*duumvir*).<sup>16</sup> The dedication is very interesting because of the epithet of the goddess derived from the Phrygian town of Blaundus (Toutain 1911: 75, no. 11; Swoboda 1969: 200,

<sup>13</sup> *RINMS* 21 = *AIJ* 162 (= *EDR*128998 = *lupa* 8871): *Orae(a)e / ex imp(erio) / M(atris?) D(eum?) M(agnae?) / L(ucius) A(---) P(---)*.

<sup>14</sup> Sanders 1981. Also see Thomas 1984; Dubosson-Sbrigliano 2018; Van Haeperen 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Jurkić 1975 (Histria); *Inscr. Aq.* 284–291; Zaccaria 2008 (Cibele); *RINMS* 20 (= *EDR*128997); 22 (= *EDR*129001); *RINMS* 21 = *AIJ* 162 (= *EDR*128998 = *lupa* 8871).

<sup>16</sup> *CIL* III 5194 + p. 1830 (= *HD*067019); Wedenig 1997: 120 C 11; Visočnik 2017: no. 49, with earlier citations.



no. 8). At Poetovio, within an area of minor sanctuaries at Spodnja Hajdina (Ciglenečki 1998: 255), an altar dedicated to Iuno and Magna Mater has been found together with a statue of Cybele (*ILJug* 1138 = *HD016103*; Modrijan – Weber 1981: 95–97).

Cybele possessed all the characteristics of a “divine mother”; Diodorus Siculus, for example, mentioned she could heal children with her purification rites, *καθαρμοί* (*Bibl. hist.* 3.58). The goddess was worshipped in several towns in Noricum and Pannonia. The great influence of the cult of the Great Mother in these regions, as well as in the Roman Empire generally, is indirectly confirmed by the ‘mourning Attis’ often depicted on Roman-period grave monuments. It may be assumed that his representation on the tombstones symbolises an untimely death (Sanders 1981: 282).

The goddess called Great Mother was worshipped under different names right across the Roman Empire, among various Romanised peoples of the Empire, hence also among the Celts who were pre-Roman inhabitants of the Poetovio region. The cult of Magna Mater often took the place of local goddesses, as seems to have been the case of *Adsalluta* worshipped in the sanctuary of *Savus* and *Adsalluta* at Podkraj near Hrastnik where, in addition to several altars dedicated to *Savus* and *Adsalluta* or to *Adsalluta* alone, a small altar to Magna Mater has also been discovered. Among the Celts, cults of various Mother Goddesses, in plural or singular, enjoyed great popularity, as occurred with the *Alounae* (*Alovnae*) at Bedaium (Seebruck im Chiemgau; Hainzmann 2016), the *Nutrices* at Poetovio, the most favoured goddesses in the city (Šašel Kos 2016), or *Dea Nutrix* who was worshipped in the sanctuary at Frauenberg near Flavia Solva (Schrettle 2016). These were some kind of birth goddesses, nourishers and guardians of children; some aspects of their worship were presumably congenial to Magna Mater. The considerable impact of the cult of Magna Mater throughout antiquity can also be explained by the soteriological aspects of the goddess. It should thus not be surprising that the worshipping of Magna Mater might have been a challenge to the spread of Christianity (Fear 1996; Borgeaud 1996: 169 ff.; Alvar 2008: 383 ff.).

#### “WEDDING WITH A PINE TREE (BOROVO GOSTŪVANJE)” IN PREKMURJE, AND THE CARNIVAL FESTIVAL

It is interesting that traces of the cult of Cybele and Attis seem to have survived from antiquity in Slovenia and outside of its borders, chiefly in Prekmurje (the extreme north-eastern region of Slovenia) as well as in Ptuj (Roman Poetovio) and the surrounding countryside. Poetovio was an important and cosmopolitan Roman town where, as mentioned, the cult of Magna Mater is well attested. The city was transferred from the province of Noricum to Pannonia at the beginning of Roman rule, and came again to Noricum in the late Roman period (Slapšak 2001; Horvat et al. 2003; Šašel Kos 2014).

The most unusual and still existing custom of the “wedding with a pine tree”, which takes place during Carnival time in various, mainly Protestant, villages in Prekmurje (*Fig. 2*), quite likely sheds light on the long tradition of the cult of the once very popular deities Cybele and Attis. The custom is also known in Porabje in north-eastern Hungary



Fig. 2: “Wedding with a pine tree” (Porabje, 2005: photo Slavko Ciglenečki).

that is home to a Slovenian minority, in the nearby regions in Croatia, as well as in Austrian Burgenland and Styria. The ceremony of the “wedding with a pine tree” is performed between Christmas and Shrovetide in villages where there was no wedding in pre-Carnival time (Ciglenečki 1999; Ravnik 2009). There were not as many young people in Protestant villages as in the Catholic communities, meaning that weddings were rarer. Moreover, Catholic priests did not approve of the custom since they regarded it as making fun of church rituals.

The “wedding with a pine tree” is an event involving an entire village and, as suggested by Slavko Ciglenečki, resembles in an interesting way the festival that was celebrated each year on 22 March in various towns of the Roman Empire (Ciglenečki 1999). On this date, “timber workers” (*dendrophori*: “tree-bearers”) ceremoniously performed the act of carrying a pine tree in a procession, having first embellished it with flowers and wrapped it in bandages. The pine tree symbolically represented the dead Attis, the youthful consort of the mother-goddess Cybele.

On Carnival Sunday, the cutting down of a pine tree occurs in the course of elaborate ceremonies in one of the villages in Prekmurje and the regions mentioned above, where nobody got married in the previous year. It is a combination of Carnival and wedding customs (Kuret 1989, I: 24–28). A skilfully decorated pine tree is carried in a procession by male and female adolescents, while one of the performing young people should marry the pine tree. The comparison between the worship of Cybele as celebrated in Rome (Summers 1996) and elsewhere in the Roman Empire, notably also in Pannonia (Tóth 1992), and the “pine tree wedding” in various villages in Prekmurje and Porabje is indeed

striking. Mojca Ravnik described the traditional event as held in 2002 in the village of Predanovci in the Prekmurje municipality of Puconci;<sup>17</sup> there the pine tree personified the ‘bride’, who was sitting on it when it was being brought from the forest to the village. Jelka Pšajd analysed the custom in detail, basing her research on all available (written and oral) sources.<sup>18</sup> The custom is increasingly becoming a tourist event, losing its original meaning of making fun of unmarried young people. However, it seems more likely that the pine tree should represent the bridegroom, not least because the word “pine tree” in Slovenian is masculine in gender (Hari, *op. cit.* in no. 17).

The most outstanding Carnival event in Slovenia is the “Kurentovanje” festival. The masked men involved, generally young adults, are called Kurents (*Kurenti/Koranti*); they are the main performers of the traditional and widely famed Carnival merrymaking at Ptuj and in the Ptuj region, as well as in several other towns and villages in Slovenia and beyond its borders, especially in Dravsko polje, Haloze, and Slovenske gorice (Kuret 1989, I: 11–73). In 2017, Carnival was included on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The masked companions of the Kurents include the “piceki” (“cockerels”), children wearing pointed caps who may be seen as reminiscent of the young Attis.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting that the emasculated attendants of Cybele were called *galli*.<sup>20</sup> *Gallus* is also the Latin word for “cock”; however, in this context this should merely be regarded as a strange coincidence or a misunderstanding. The roots of the “Kurentovanje” festival should be sought in the old beliefs in the spirits of the deceased, as well as in the spirits of nature who were to chase the winter away and restore the fertility of the soil (Kuret 1989, I: 11–73).

The coincidental similarity of the names of Kurents (*Kurenti*) and the Curetes (nature spirits protecting the harvest of the fields) should be noted along with certain similar features associated with their activities. Lucretius’ description of festivities related to the cult of Cybele and Attis may be insightful regarding the role played by the Kurents. The Roman poet and philosopher described the Curetes as armed groups attending to the Great Mother. His passage reads: “Here an armed band, which the Greeks name Curetes, disport themselves randomly among the Phrygian troops, and leap up among their group, joyful in blood, shaking the frightful crests by the nodding of their heads” (2.629–632; translation from Roller 1999: 298).

There are, of course, no “Phrygian” or any other troops during Carnival. Instead, many other maskers are walking around the towns and villages dressed in the most specific attire. However, “joyful in blood” can be compared in one way or another to the behaviour of some of the Kurents before the Second World War, especially if two groups of Kurents met. They were armed with hedgehog clubs, several also with knives

<sup>17</sup> Ravnik 2009. An excellent description of the custom, first noted in Prekmurje already before the First World War and possibly as early as in the 19th century, is found in the “*Wikipedija, prosta enciklopedija*”, written by Brigita Hari (consulted in November 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Pšajd 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Ciglencečki 1999: 27; about the spiritual roots of the Kurents, also see Čelan 2020.

<sup>20</sup> *Galli* were not Cybele’s priests, but her attendants: Van Haepere 2019: 53–54.

and some even with revolvers and it happened that a few were killed during the ensuing skirmishes (Kuret 1989, I: 29–30). The Kurents also make considerable noise and behave quite wildly in recent Carnivals.

The two presented cases of echoes of the pre-Roman and Roman worship of Belinus and Cybele with Attis, and of the festivities related to their cults, are very revealing with respect to the great impact of ancient religious practices. One cannot deny that their traces, albeit having transformed over the passing centuries, have persisted to the modern age.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Slavko Ciglencečki and Monika Krojej Telban for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

##### ABBREVIATIONS

*AE* = L'Année épigraphique.

*AIJ* = V. Hoffiller, B. Saria, Antike Inschriften aus Jugoslavien. Heft I: Noricum und Pannonia Superior. Zagreb 1938 (re-print Amsterdam 1970).

*CIL* = Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum.

*EDH* = Epigraphic Database Heidelberg.

*EDR* = Epigraphic Database Roma.

*ILJug* = A. et J. Šašel, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt. Situla 5. Ljubljana 1963; iidem, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX repertae et editae sunt. Situla 19. Ljubljana 1978; iidem, Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt. Situla 25. Ljubljana 1986.

*ILLPRON* = Inscriptionum lapidariarum Latinarum provinciae Norici Indices (compos. M. Hainzmann, P. Schubert). Fasc. I. 1986; II-III. 1987.

*Inscr. Aq.* = J. B. Brusin, Inscriptiones Aquileiae. I–III, Udine 1991–1993.

*lupa* = F. und O. Harl, <http://lupa.at> (Bilddatenbank zu antiken Steindenkmälern).

*OPEL* = B. Lőrincz, Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum: Vol. I: *Aba – Bysanus*, Budapest 2005<sup>2</sup>; Vol. II: *Cabalicius – Ixus*, Wien 1999; Vol. III: *Labareus – Pythea*, Wien 2000; Vol. IV: *Quadratia – Zures*. Wien 2002.

*RINMS* = Marjeta Šašel Kos, *The Roman Inscriptions in the National Museum of Slovenia / Lapidarij Narodnega muzeja Slovenije*. Situla 35. Ljubljana 1997.

- Alvar, Jaime, 2008: *Romanising Oriental Gods. Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras* (transl. and ed. R. Gordon). Leiden, Boston: Brill (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 165).
- Birkhan, Helmut, 1997: *Kelten. Versuch einer Gesamtdarstellung ihrer Kultur*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Borgeaud, Philippe, 1996: *La Mère des dieux. De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Chirassi Colombo, Ileana, 1976: I culti locali nelle regioni alpine. In: *Aquileia e l'arco alpino orientale*. Udine: Arti grafiche friulane (Antichità Altoadiatiche 9), 173–206.
- Ciglencečki, Slavko, 1998: Nenavaden spomenik Kibelinega in Apolonovega kulta iz Marofa (Mrzlo Polje) v bližini Jurkloštra (Ein aussergewöhnliches Denkmal des Kybele und Apollo Kultes aus Marof [Mrzlo Polje] in der Nähe von Jurklošter). *Arheološki vestnik* 49, Ljubljana, 251–259.
- Ciglencečki, Slavko, 1999: Late Traces of the Cults of Cybele and Attis. The Origins of the Kurenti and of the Pinewood Marriage (“Borovo Gostüvanje”) (Pozni sledovi Kibelinega in Atisovega kulta. O izvoru kurentov in borovega gostivanja). *Studia mythologica Slavica* 2, Ljubljana, Pisa, 21–31.
- Čelan, Štefan, 2020: *Kurent – Korant. Ali veš, kdo si?*. Ptuj: Beletrina.
- De Bernardo Stempel, Patrizia, 2004: Die sprachliche Analyse keltischer Theonyme. In: Gorrochategui, J. – De Bernardo Stempel, P. (eds.): *Die Kelten und ihre Religion im Spiegel der epigraphischen Quellen / Los Celtas y su religión a través de la epigrafía*. Vitoria Gasteiz (Anejos de Veleia 11), 197–225 (= Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie 53, Bonn 2003, 41–69).
- De Bernardo Stempel, Patrizia; Hainzmann, Manfred, 2020: *Fontes epigraphici religionum Celticarum antiquarum I. Provincia Noricum*. 1. *Die Gottheiten in ihrer sprachlichen und kultischen Erscheinungsformen*. 2. *Die epigraphischen Testimonien*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Mitteilungen der Prähistorischen Kommission 89, 1–2).
- Dobesch, Gerhard, 1997: Zu Virunum als Namen der Stadt auf dem Magdalensberg und zu einer Sage der kontinentalen Kelten. *Carinthia* I 187, Klagenfurt, 107–128.
- Dubosson-Sbriglione, Lara, 2018: *Le culte de la Mère des dieux dans l'Empire romain*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (Potsdamer Altertumwissenschaftliche Beiträge 62).
- Fear, Andrew T., 1996: Cybele and Christ. In: Lane, E. N. (ed.): *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults. Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*. Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 131), 36–50.
- Fontana, Federica, 1997: *I culti di Aquileia repubblicana. Aspetti della politica religiosa in Gallia Cisalpina tra il III e il II sec. a. C.* Roma: Quasar (Studi e Ricerche sulla Gallia Cisalpina 9).
- Glaser, Franz, 2003: Der Name der Stadt auf dem Magdalensberg. *Rudolfinum* 2003, Klagenfurt, 85–88.
- Handy, Markus, 2018: *Unicuique etiam provinciae et civitati suus deus est*. Bemerkungen zum Belenus-Kult in Noricum. *Römisches Österreich* 41, Wien, 51–66.
- Gourvest, Jacques, 1954: Le culte de Belenos en Provence occidentale et en Gaule. *Ogam* 6/6, Rennes, 257–262.

- Green, Miranda J., 1995: The Gods and the Supernatural. In: Green, M. J. (ed.): *The Celtic World*. London, New York: Routledge, 465–488.
- Green, Miranda J., 1997: *The Gods of the Celts*. Bridgend: Sutton.
- Gruen, Erich S., 1990: The Advent of the Magna Mater. In: *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, 5–33 (Cincinnati Classical Studies 7).
- Haeussler, Ralph, 2008: How to identify Celtic religion(s) in Roman Britain and Gaul. In: d'Encarnaçao, J. (ed.): *Divindades indígenas em análise. Divinities pré-romaines – bilan et perspectives d'une recherche*. Actas do VII workshop FERCAN Cascais 2006. Coimbra, Porto, 13–63.
- Hainzmann, Manfred, ALOVNAE (sive) NUTRICES: identische norische Muttergottheiten? in: M. Lehner, B. Schrettle (eds.), *Zentralort und Tempelberg. Siedlungs- und Kultentwicklung am Frauenberg bei Leibnitz im Vergleich*. Akten des Kolloquiums im Schloss Seggau am 4. und 5. Mai 2015. Wien, 39–48 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Archäologie der Universität Graz 15 = Studien zur Archäologie der Steiermark 1).
- Hatt, J.-J., 1976: Les divinités indigènes dans les districts alpins à l'époque romaine (Alpes Grées et Pennines, Alpes Cottiennes, Alpes Maritimes). In: *Atti. Centro studi e documentazione sull'Italia romana* 7, Roma, 1975–1976, 353–362.
- Horvat, Jana, 2018: Statuettes from Ravelnik near Bovec in the Soča Valley (Slovenia). In: Bouet, A. – Petit-Aupert, C. (eds.): *Bibere, ridere, gaudere, studere, hoc est vivere. Hommages à Francis Tassaux*. Bordeaux: Ausonius éd., 337–351 (Mémoires 53).
- Horvat, Jana et al. 2003: Horvat, Jana; Lovenjak, Milan; Dolenc Vičič, Andreja; Lubšina-Tušek, Meri; Tomanič-Jevremov, Marjana; Šubic, Zorka: Poetovio. Development and Topography. In: Šašel Kos, M. – Scherrer, P. (eds.): *The Autonomous Towns in Noricum and Pannonia / Die autonomen Städte in Noricum und Pannonien – Pannonia I*. Ljubljana: Narodni muzej Slovenije, 153–189 (Situla 41).
- Jurkić, Vesna, 1975: The Cult of Magna Mater in the Region of Istria. *Živa antika* 25, Skopje, 285–298.
- Juvančič, Ivo, 1984: Križarska vojska proti Kobaridcem 1331 (La crociata contro gli abitanti di Caporetto / Kobarid del 1331). *Zgodovinski časopis* 38/1–2, Ljubljana, 49–55.
- Kuret, Niko, 1989: *Praznično leto Slovencev. Starosvetne šege in navade od pomladi do zime. I–II*. Ljubljana: Družina.
- Leber, Paul S., 1972: *Die in Kärnten seit 1902 gefundenen römischen Steininschriften*. Klagenfurt: J. Heyn (Aus Kärntens römischer Vergangenheit 3).
- Lettich, Giovanni, 1994: *Iscrizioni romane di Iulia Concordia (sec. I. a.C. – III. d.C.)*. Trieste: Centro Studi storico-religiosi Friuli-Venezia Giulia (vol. no. 26).
- Lovenjak, Milan, 2003: Rimski napisi iz Celja, najdeni med 1991 in 2003 (Die römischen Inschriften von Celje, gefunden in den Jahren 1991 bis 2003). *Arheološki vestnik* 54, Ljubljana, 331–368.
- Mainardis, Fulvia, 2008: *Iulium Carnicum. Storia ed epigrafia*. Antichità Altoadriatiche: Monografie 4. Trieste: Editreg.
- Maraspin, Flavia, 1968: Il culto di Beleno-Apollo ad Aquileia. *Atti. Centro studi e documentazione sull'Italia romana* 1, Roma, 1967–1968, 145–161.
- Mastrocinque, Attilio, 1995: Aspetti della religione pagana a Concordia e nell'alto Adriatico. In: Croce Da Villa, P., Mastrocinque, A. (eds.): *Concordia e la X Regio. Giornate di studio in onore di Dario Bertolini nel centenario della morte*. Atti del convegno Portogruaro 22–23 ott. 1994. Padova: Zielo, 269–287.

- Medvešček - Klančar, Pavel, 2015: *Iz nevidne strani neba. Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC (Studia mythologica Slavica, Suppl. 12; 3. ed. 2018).
- Modrijan, Walter; Weber, Ekkehard, 1981: Die Römersteinsammlung des Joanneums im Eggenberger Schloßpark, 2. Teil, Verwaltungsbezirke Virunum, Ovilava, Celeia und Poetovio. *Schild von Steier* 14, Graz, 1979–1981, 7–111.
- Olmsted, Garrett S., 1994: *The Gods of the Celts and the Indo-Europeans*. Budapest: Archaeolingua alapítvány (Archaeolingua 6).
- Osmuk, Nada, 1987: Die Bronzeplastik aus Kobarid. Kulturgeschichtliche Bedeutung kobarider Gruppe kleiner Bronzeplastik und ein Datierungsversuch. *Archaeologia Jugoslavica* 24, Beograd, 57–79.
- Osmuk, Nada, 1997: Kobarid od prazgodovine do antike [Kobarid from Prehistory to the Roman Period]. In: *Kobarid*. Kobarid: Kobariški muzej, 9–16.
- Osmuk, Nada, 1998: Le sanctuaire protohistorique de Kobarid (Slovénie). *Instrumentum* 7, Montagnac, 13.
- Ovsec, Damjan J., 1991: *Slovanska mitologija in verovanje* [Slavic Mythology and Beliefs]. Ljubljana: Domus, 1991.
- Pascal, Cecil B., 1964: *The Cults of Cisalpine Gaul*. Bruxelles: Peeters Publishers (Collection Latomus 75).
- Piccottini, Gernot, 2017: Belinus, eine antike Quellen- und Heilgottheit in Warmbad-Villach?. *Carinthia* I 207, Klagenfurt, 35–43.
- Pšajd, Jelka, 2004: *Poroka z borom. Borova gostüvanja v Prekmurju in v Šalamencih*. Murska Sobota: Tiskarna M.A.M. Puconci.
- Ravnik, Mojca, 2009: *Borovo gostüvanje v Predanovcih*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC.
- Roller, Lynn E., 1999: *In Search of God the Mother. The cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Rosen-Przeworska, Janina, 1964: *Tradycje celtyckie w obrzędowości Protosłowian*. Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Polskiej akademii nauk.
- Rutar, Simon, 1882: Zgodovina Tolminskega [The History of the Tolmin Region]. Gorica: J. Devetak.
- Rutar, Simon, 1883: Belinjska opatija. *Soča* 13, no. 14 (6 April). Gorica.
- Sanders, Gabriel, 1981: Kybele und Attis. In: *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich*. Leiden: Brill, 264–297 (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 93).
- Scherrer, Peter G., 1984: *Der Kult der namentlich bezeugten Gottheiten im römerzeitlichen Noricum*. Diss. Wien (unpublished).
- Schrettle, Bernhard, 2016: Votive an eine Ammengöttin aus dem Tempelbezirk auf dem Frauenberg bei Leibnitz. In: G. Koiner, U. Lohner-Urban (eds.), *„Ich bin dann mal weg“: Festschrift für einen Reisenden Thuri Lorenz zum 85. Geburtstag*. Wien, 195–202 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Archäologie der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz 13).
- Slapšak, Božidar, 2001: Poetovio as a supra-regional center. In: Vomer Gojkovič, M., Kolar, N. (eds.), *Ptuj v rimskem cesarstvu. Mitraizem in njegova doba / Ptuj im Römischen Reich. Mithraskult und seine Zeit / Ptuj in the Roman Empire. Mithraism and its Era*. Ptuj: Pokrajinski muzej; Zgodovinsko društvo, 11–25 (Archaeologia Poetovionensis 2).

- Summers, K. 1996: Lucretius' Roman Cybele. In: Lane, E. N. (ed.): *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults. Essays in Memory of M.J. Vermaseren*. Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 337–365 (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 131).
- Swoboda, Roksanda M., 1969: Denkmäler des Mater-Magna-Kultes in Slovenien und Istrien. *Bonner Jahrbücher* 169, Bonn, 195–207.
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 1986: *Zgodovinska podoba prostora med Akvilejo, Jadranom in Sirmijem pri Kasiju Dionu in Herodijanu / A Historical Outline of the Region between Aquileia, the Adriatic, and Sirmium in Cassius Dio and Herodian*. Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti.
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 1994: Cybele in Salonae: a Note. In: Le Bohec, Y. (ed.): *L'Afrique, la Gaule, la Religion à l'époque romaine. Mélanges à la mémoire de Marcel Le Glay*. Bruxelles: Latomus, 780–791 (Collection Latomus 226).
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 1999: *Pre-Roman Divinities of the Eastern Alps and Adriatic*. Ljubljana: Narodni muzej Slovenije (Situla 38).
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 2001: Belin. *Studia mythologica Slavica* 4, Ljubljana, Pisa, 9–16.
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 2010: Adsalluta and Magna Mater – is there a link?. In: Alberto Arenas-Esteban, J. (ed.): *Celtic Religion across Space and Time*. IX Workshop F.E.R.C.A.N, Molina de Aragón. Toledo: Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, 242–256.
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 2014: Poetovio before the Marcomannic Wars: from Legionary Camp to *Colonia Ulpia*. In: Piso, I., Varga, R. (eds.): *Trajan und seine Städte*. Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 139–165.
- Šašel Kos, Marjeta, 2016: Nutrices: the most popular goddesses at Poetovio. In: Lehner, M., Schrettle, B. (eds.): *Zentralort und Tempelberg. Siedlungs- und Kultentwicklung am Frauenberg bei Leibnitz im Vergleich*. Akten des Kolloquiums im Schloss Seggau am 4. und 5. Mai 2015. Wien, 167–174 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Archäologie der Universität Graz 15 = Studien zur Archäologie der Steiermark 1).
- Thomas, Garth, 1984: Magna Mater and Attis. In: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 17,3. Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1500–1535.
- Tóth, István, 1992: The Cult of Cybele and Attis in Pannonia. *Specimina nova* 6, Pécs, 1990 (1992), 119–157.
- Toutain, Jules, 1911: *Les cultes païens. II: Les cultes orientaux*. Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux (repr. Roma 1967).
- Van Haepere, Françoise, 2019: *Étrangère et ancestrale, la Mère des dieux dans le monde romain*. Paris: Cerf (Les conférences de l'École pratique des hautes études, 12).
- Vermaseren, Maarten J., 1989: *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque (CCCA) VI*. Leiden: Brill (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 50).
- Wedenig, Reinhold, 1997: *Epigraphische Quellen zur städtischen Administration in Noricum*. Klagenfurt: Geschichtsverein für Kärnten (Aus Forschung und Kunst 31).
- Visočnik, Julijana, 2017: *The Roman Inscriptions from Celeia and its Ager*. Celje: Celjska Mohorjeva družba.
- Wojciechowski, Przemyslaw, 2001: *Untersuchungen zu den Lokalkulten im römischen Aquileia. Herkunft, Funktion und Anhängerschaft*. Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika.
- Wojciechowski, Przemyslaw, 2002: Il culto di Beleno ad Aquileia romana: origini, interpretatio romana e la cosiddetta 'rinascita celtica'. In: *Gli echi della terra. Presenze celtiche in Friuli: dati materiali e momenti dell'immaginario*. Convegno di studi. Pisa, Roma, 29–35.



- Zaccaria, Claudio, 1995: Alle origini della storia di Concordia romana. In: Croce Da Villa, P., Mastrocinque, A. (eds.): *Concordia e la X Regio. Giornate di studio in onore di Dario Bertolini*. Atti del convegno Portogruaro. Padova: Zielo Editore, Libreria Padovana Editrice, 175–186.
- Zaccaria, Claudio, 2004: Scelta dei *signa* onomastici e tradizioni religiose locali ad Aquileia. In: Ruscu, L. et al. (eds.): *Orbis antiquus. Studia in hon. Ioannis Pisonis*. Cluj-Napoca: Nereamia Napocae Press, 171–178.
- Zaccaria, Claudio, 2008 (Cibele): Iscrizioni inedite del culto di Cibele rinvenute nelle fondazioni del battistero di Aquileia. In: *Epigrafia 2006*. Atti della XIV<sup>e</sup> rencontre sur l'épigraphie in onore di Silvio Panciera. Roma: Quasar, 741–772 (Tituli 9).
- Zaccaria, Claudio, 2008 (Beleno): Cultores Beleni. In: Sartori, A. (ed.): *Dedicanti e cultores nelle religioni celtiche*. Milano: Cisalpino, 375–412 (Quaderni di Acme 104).

## BELEN, KIBELA IN ATIS: ODMEV NJHOVIH KULTOV SKOZI STOLETJA

MARJETA ŠAŠEL KOS



### *Belen – Belin*

Belen, v Noriku znan kot Belin, je bil keltski bog, ki je bil čaščen od Iberije do Galije in območja Alp, njegov kult pa je bil posebej priljubljen zlasti v Noriku in Akvileji (Oglej). Veljal je za najpomembnejše božanstvo Noriškega kraljestva, kar je omenil grški pisec in zagovornik krščanstva s konca 2. in iz 3. stoletja, Tertulijan (*Apol.* 24.7). Iz Norika se je njegov kult zelo verjetno razširil v mesto *Iulium Carnicum* (Zuglio), kjer je stalo njegovo na napisu omenjeno svetišče, in v Akvilejo, kjer je veljal za zaščitnika mesta. V času, ko jo je oblegal rimskih vladar Maksimin Tračan, ki je bil na poti v Rim, da bi kaznoval uzurpatorje, naj bi mesto rešil Belen. V Noriku so častili tudi boginjo *Belestis*, kar po vsej verjetnosti dodatno potrjuje pomembno vlogo Belina. Ni izključeno, da znameniti bronasti kip »mladeniča s Štalenske gore« predstavlja Belina. V Akvileji in njeni soseščini, kjer je stalo več Belenu posvečenih svetišč, so ga pogosto enačili z Apolonom, bil je torej božanstvo (sončne) svetlobe in zdravljenja, po vsej verjetnosti pa tudi zaščitnik vodnih izvirov, saj so ga častili skupaj z Nimfami. Njegov oltar je bil najden tudi v noriški Celeji (Celje).

### *Bog Belin na Tolminkem*

Zelo zanimivo je, da je bilo čaščenje svetega Belina dokumentirano še v drugi polovici 19. stoletja med staroverskim prebivalstvom na območju Tolmina (*sl.* 1). Ljudje so verjeli, da je Belin božji zdravilec, ki ima čudežen ključ, s katerim lahko pozdravi slepoto. To je v svoji *Zgodovini Tolminskega*, ki je izšla leta 1882, zapisal zgodovinar in etnolog Simon Rutar. Lahko domnevamo, da bi kult Belina

iz Akvileje utegnil preživeti iz antike skozi dolga stoletja do konca 19. stoletja, da torej nikdar ni popolnoma zamrl. Čeprav je staroverstvo na območju Tolmina in Kobarida izpričano v dokumentu iz 14. stoletju, v odročnem področju zahodne Slovenije pa celo vse do 20. stoletja, predvsem v Posočju, je treba vendarle priznati, da ta razlaga ni povsem zanesljiva.

#### *Kibela, velika mati*

Njen kult izvira iz Frigije, v času rimskega imperija je bila ena najvplivnejših boginj, ki je bila v Emoni čaščena kot Velika mati *Oraea* (z gore). Na oltarju iz Salon (*Salonae*, zdaj Solin) pa se, glede na svoje poreklo in nenavaden obred, saj se je njen mladi soprog Atis kastriral, imenuje celo »barbarska«. V Celeji so jo častili kot Veliko blaundijsko mati, boginjo iz frigijskega mesta *Blaundus*. V času vojne proti Hanibalu je rimski senat leta 204 pr. kr. št. sklenil, da temen meteorit, ki naj bi predstavljal boginjo, prenesejo iz Pesinunta (Ballhisar v Turčiji) v Rim. Bila je boginja gora in divje narave, ki sta jo pogosto spremljala dva leva. Imela je vse značilnosti božanske matere, lahko je ozdravljala otroke, o njenem velikem pomenu pa priča tudi »žalujoči Atis«, ki je bil pogosto upodobljen na nagrobnikih. Ko je umrl, naj bi se spremenil v bor.

#### *Poroka z borom (Borovo gostüvanje) v Prekmurju in pustovanje*

Vse kaže, da so sledi čaščenja Kibeles in Atisa preživele iz antike do danes; to je mogoče opazovati predvsem v Prekmurju, Porabju in sosednjih območjih, tudi na Madžarskem, Hrvaškem in v Avstriji. Elementi tega kulta pridejo najbolj nazorno do izraza v običaju »poroke z borom«, ki se je v času pustovanja ohranil predvsem v protestantskih vaseh v Prekmurju (*sl.* 2), kajti katoliški duhovniki ga niso odobraval. Ta slovesni obred je potekal med Božičem in pustnim časom v vaseh, kjer se tisto leto ni nihče poročil. Poroka z borom je bila dogodek, pri katerem je sodelovala vsa vas, in kot je opozoril Slavko Ciglenečki, je v nekatereh podrobnostih zelo zanimivo sovpadala z antičnim praznovanjem, ki se je 22. marca odvijalo po raznih mestih rimskega imperija. Na ta dan so »drvarji« (*dendrophori*: nosilci drevesa) v procesiji slovesno nosili iz gozda bor, ki so ga okrasili s cvetjem in slavnostno povili. Bor je simbolično predstavljal mrtvega Atisa. Običaj »poroke z borom«, ki je do nedavnega še imel simbolični naboj, saj je opozarjal na to, da tistega leta ni bilo poroke, pa, kot ugotavlja Jelka Pšajd, vse bolj postaja turistični dogodek.

Tudi kurentovanje, ki je zlasti odmevno na Ptuj in v širši okolici (Dravsko polje, Haloze, Slovenske gorice) in je vpisano v seznam svetovne nesnovne kulturne dediščine, ima svoje zametke v antiki. Spremljevalci kurentov so »piceki«, in zanimivo je, da so se spremljevalci Kibeles, evnuhi, imenovali *galli*, *gallus* pa je latinsko ime za petelina. Kurenti oz. koranti spominjajo na Kurete (*Curetes*), udeležence pri Kibelinem kultu, duhove narave in zavetnike poljskega pridelka. Izvor kurentov je treba iskati v starem verovanju v duhove umrlih in duhove narave, ki so pregnali zimo in zemljo ponovno napravili rodovitno.

Iz obeh komentiranih primerov je mogoče sklepati, da so sledi kultov Belina, Kibe in Atisa po vsej verjetnosti preživele od predrimskega in rimskega časa vse do polpreteklih oz. celo današnjih dni, kar dokazuje, da je vpliv antičnih verovanj resnično velik in ni nikoli povsem zamrl.

---

Dr. Marjeta Šašel Kos, Šujica 107, SI-1356 Dobrova pri Ljubljani,  
mkos@zrc-sazu.si