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ANCIENT SALONA SCULPTURE AND BARON CARNEA VON STEFFANEO

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ABSTRACT

This paper thesis brings the Austrian Baron Francesco Maria Freiherr Carnea von Steffaneo (1751 – 1825) into relation with four ancient monuments in Salona which used to be the capital of Roman province of Dalmatia. His service as the emperor's representative in Istria, Dalmatia and Albania lasted from the August of 1797 to the October of 1798. As a passionate art lover, on this occasion he collected a number of different ancient monuments from different parts of province. He then took them partially to Vienna as a present to the emperor and partially to his real-estate in Tapogliano.

Considering that the only trace of these monuments can be found in the scattered written sources (official reports, private letters) which are kept in different archives (Vienna, Split and Zadar), some of them have been completely unknown up to this point. By comparing these newly discovered and previously published information, four monuments which were found in Salona by the Baron are analysed – one architrave, sculpture of the goddess Isis, monumental imperial sculpture, and the sculpture of Hermes. Where possible, their present location was identified as well.

Keywords: Salona, Dalmatia, Baron Carnea von Steffaneo, Roman sculpture, Isis, monumental imperial sculpture

INTRODUCTION

After the signing of the Peace Treaty of Campo Formio (Campoformio) in 1797 and after the division of the Venetian Republic, Dalmatia was governed by Austria. In October of the same year, the emperor Francis I named the Count Raimund Thurn (1748 – 1817) as an imperial commissioner and entrusted him with the organization of the newly conquered province. An administrative body – Royal Civil Commission (*Regia Commissione Civile*) was formed with the same aim. Baron Francesco Maria Carnea von Steffaneo (1751 – 1825), politician and officer from Tyrol, an educator of the underage heir Ferdinand (Picture 1), took part in this Commission as a royal commissioner and advisor for Istria, Dalmatia and Albania (*Consigliere e Commissario Delegato*, in: *Haus-, Hof- und Staat Archiv*, hereinafter HHSTA, Nachlass Carnea Steffaneo, hereinafter NL Carnea, Bundle of Documents 1).

His service lasted from August 1797 to October 1798. After a short break, he was renamed as a commissioner of the royal governor for Dalmatia in 1802. During his first fifteen months of service, he had an opportunity and a task to present the real situation to the new government. Apart from the statistical information and reports which were obtained by the officials, archbishops and bishops, he personally gathered the information while travelling through Dalmatia from April to October 1798. [1]



Picture 1 Baron Francesco Maria Carnea-Steffaneo (source: State Archive in Zadar: Portraits of Historical and Public Figures, photo: A.Torlak)

Detailed analysis and reports referring to the state of the Dalmatian Province as well as the possibilities of the Province in relation to the economy and realization plan are preserved in Steffaneo's personal archive which is kept in the Austrian State Archive (HHSTA, NL Carnea 1, NL Carnea 2). Apart from the mentioned, the Baron prepared the document containing a description of his personal activities. Among his additional works, he states the journey to the interior of the Province and to the islands. The Baron made this journey in order to gain an insight into natural potentials of newly founded province and ancient monuments.

However, Baron's knowledge of art and passion of an art collector cannot be seen in the official report. After returning to Vienna in 1802, he founded a library containing precious and valuable works which he collected in Germany, France, Italy and Dalmatia. [1] He took several literary and artistic works of art from the newly conquered Austrian province. From Baron's private letters, it is obvious that he was interested in ancient objects. There is information that the bishop at Greek islands Zantea and Cefalonia from 1815 Luigi Skakoc (1758 – 1842) from Trogir sent him Greek money which was collected while he served on Ionian Islands. [2] Apart from the mentioned, in the letter of the 20th of October 1804, Steffaneo asked Andrija Dorotić (1761 – 1837) for the exact information about the location where the bronze Minerva statue which he took when he visited Zaostrog [3], was found.

Steffaneo's official report regarding the state in the province (kept in HHSTA) can be perfectly complemented with the document which is kept in the State Archive in Zadar (hereinafter, DAZd), which is so-called *Tabella enciclopedica del Regno di Dalmazia*. [1] *Tabella enciclopedica* (hereinafter the Representation), shows the state of Dalmatia and its administrative areas as well as Roman heritage in Dalmatia. In this presentation, Steffaneo names regions along Eastern Adriatic Coast in alphabetical order. For each region, he describes its geographic location, condition of ancient remaining and monuments which he found or discovered in 1798. As far as Salona which was the capital of the Roman Province of Dalmatia is concerned, he describes its location – north-west of Split and shortly states that, from the ancient city ruins only a part of Roman wall along the coast can be seen. As an excellent connoisseur of heritage,

he recognized the potential of this city and had Salona marked as an ancient location on the post map of the Adriatic Coast (*Römische Ruinen von Salona*, in: *Neue Postkarte von K. k. Dalmatien, Albanien und der Republik Ragusa*, HHSTA, Nachlass Carnea Steffaneo, Bundle of Documents 1) (Picture 2). Furthermore, he shortly describes the preservation of the monuments and marks those which were transported to his land in Tapogliano. As we find out from his letters, the Baron wanted the sculptures from Salona to be transported to Topolgliano and they were intended for a newly founded Cabinet of Coins and Antiquities in Vienna (*Münz- und Antiken Kabinett*).



Picture 2 Post map of the Adriatic Coast, detail: marking of Salona with the description Roman ruin (HHSTA, photo: A. Torlak)

Therefore, in the Representation (*Tabella enciclopedica*, DAZd), the Baron states that he transferred ancient architrave, bronze sculpture of goddess Isis and one more, unidentified monumental sculpture made of Greek marble from Salona to Tapogliano. Along with the aforementioned, he mentions the sculpture of the Egyptian god Hermes (*Ermite egiziano*) for which we do not know whether it was transferred to Tapogliano with the rest. On the other hand, in his first letter of the 1st of September 1801 which he writes to the *Majesty* he makes a short report about his journey and states that, before going to Tapogliano, he shall send four sculptures which he discovered in 1796 among Salona ruins.

*[...]Before travelling to Tapogliano, I shall have the honour to send Your Majesty four sculptures which I discovered in 1796 among Salona ruins. These were transported by sea to Aquileia and from there to Tapogliano. Trustworthy governors do a great part of these jobs and this is why I consider them worthy of the position in the Cabinet of Antiquity which was founded by Your Majesty. [...]*¹

It is difficult to talk about the exact attributions of the above mentioned sculptures solely pursuant to this letter since Steffaneo does not provide any statements which could lead to any attribution. However, if the letter is complemented with the Representation (*Tabella enciclopedica*, DAZd), which mentions three sculptures and one architectural remaining and the fact that they were transferred in 1798, we can conclude that this is the case of the monuments from the letter. Although it is stated that the sculptures are intended for the royal cabinet, nowadays Vienna Museum

¹ HHSTA, Kaiser Franz Akte, alt 27 (28). Translated from Italian by Tihana Škorić, professor

(*Kunsthistorisches Museum*, hereinafter KHM) keeps only the above mentioned monumental marble sculpture. The present location of Hermes and Isis sculpture is still not known since there is no information which would confirm that Steffaneo delivered them to the capital.

Nevertheless, Isis sculpture could be more closely identified. I think it is the same sculpture from the archive recording which is kept as the heritage of Dalmatian polyhistorian in the Archaeological Museum in Split and whose location is not known.² Although the author of the letter is not known, pursuant to the text analysis and location where the document is kept, Mladen Nikolanci [4] concludes that the author is an intellectual from Split who made the description between 18th and 19th century which is the period of Steffaneo's service. In this archive document, the author describes the bronze sculpture which was found in Salona and his description is the only preserved information regarding this sculpture:

[...]Of the iconic pagan monuments which were once numerous in pagan Salona, these days I had an opportunity to see the statue of Juno.[...] The sculpture is made of brass and it presents mature feminine dignity. It is dressed in female surplice which falls to the feet. Over it, there is a gown decorated with fringes. The hair is neatly combed in three parts and it falls in front on both shoulders. Right arm is lowered to the knee and left is moving towards the gown at the chest as if she is going to breastfeed. Also, there is a radiant crown on the head and this is the hardest part to interpret. [...] especially since this sculpture of Juno was found among Salona ruins [...] We can make interpretations from the sculpture itself since there is a reason why the sculpture shows fingers pressing the nipple on the right breast as if the milk is going to come out. [...] A few words need to be said about the pedestal of this Juno statue. It is round and decorated with shields and flowers. [...] There is a shield at the pedestal [...] flowers are scattered at the pedestal [...]][4]

Unknown expert recognizes the sculpture as the sculpture of Juno while, in accordance with the textual description³ M. Nikolanci considers this to be the sculpture of Isis. [4] The later opinion corresponds to Steffaneo's information which states that this is the sculpture of Isis. Pursuant to detailed analysis of the above stated description made by an anonymous expert, Petar Selem identifies the bronze statue more closely as *Izis lactans*. In accordance with the description of the pedestal (*shields can be seen on the round pedestal with the flowers*) and in accordance with the fact that its dimensions were most probably larger, it is possible that it was worshiped at some sanctuary. Therefore, P. Selem brings it into the connection with the imperial cult. Considering the type of Isis sculpture and its attributions, it was dated in 2nd century. [5]

In the second letter of the 26th of September 1801 which was also written to the emperor, Steffaneo writes that he found a monumental sculpture made of Parian marble four years ago. Thanks to the documentation which is here analysed, it is possible to reconstruct the destiny of the sculpture for the first time. It seems that the Baron sent it from Split to Tapogliano and then across Aquileia to Trieste and finally to Vienna. Finally, the sculpture was in the possession of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* where it is kept to this date.

² AMS-MS XXVI/3, document: Bronze June Statue Found in Salona.

³ Since it was lost, it is not possible to inspect the author's descriptions.

[...] It is my honour to present Your Majesty with a statue made of Parian marble which I found nearby Split, among Salona ruins while I was returning from my journey through Dalmatian Province four years ago. I transported it from Split to Tapogliano and packed it in order to transfer it to Aquileia and then over the sea to Trieste where I am going tomorrow to start the journey of my Commission. If Your Majesty likes this letter, it can be taken as a sign that after its arrival to Vienna, the statue was inspected by the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts and it is worthy of your approval. It seems to me that it is a work of art with Greek origin. The statue is desecrated. However, it might be useful for the study of students of fine art.

*Your Majesty is the first person who has the honour to establish a cabinet for ancient works of art in Vienna and four years ago, You had the honour to unite Dalmatia and Austrian Monarchy. This is the first ancient monument which came into your possession from these countries. Therefore, Your Majesty has two reasons to receive it. Within my responsibility of organizing Dalmatia which I was entrusted with by the Commission as the advisor and commissioner, I believe that, by combining my journeys, I could make a review of the remaining of Greek and Roman monuments in this area [...]*⁴

This is the case of a naked male figure or to be more exact, emperor in the form of a hero or a god. It was made in marble. However, head, right arm and left foot, left forearm and left calf are missing. The statue is very elegant with thin body and long legs. It shows a young man of strong musculature (Picture 3). There is a gown (*paludamentum*) over the left shoulder which goes down to the left upper arm. There is a belt stretching from the left to the right shoulder and it most probably held the pouch with the bronze sword (because at the place where there was supposed to be a handle, there is a mark on the sculpture instead). The sculpture is leaning on the right leg next to the trunk where there is the rest of the military clothes – leather shield with pterige showing rosettes and gorgones one after another and ending with leather fringes.



Picture 3 Torso of the Roman Emperor from Salona, *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna (photo archive KHM, Ancient collection)

⁴ HHSTA, Nachlass Carnea Steffaneo, Bundle of Documents 1. Translated from Italian by Tihana Škorić, professor

CONCLUSION

The above stated information regarding the location and the destiny of the sculpture from Salona is especially valuable for the study of cultural heritage of ancient Salona which was the capital of the Roman Province of Dalmatia (*Colonia Martia Salona Felix*). Over several centuries, monuments from Salona were the subject of the trade among local and foreign collectors. Usual practice of bringing sculptures from Salona to the Austrian capital and other Cross-Adriatic cities was to be continued through the 19th century. Therefore, all data regarding disappeared monuments might be significant for better knowledge of ancient heritage.

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- [5] Petar Selem, *Izidin trag*, Split, 1997, pp. 71.