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The Thracian Hero on the Danube New Interpretation of an Inscription from Diana

Abstract: The paper looks at some aspects of the Thracian Hero cult on the Danube frontier of Upper Moesia inspired by a reinterpretation of a Latin votive inscription from Diana, which, as the paper proposes, was dedicated to *Deo Totovitioni*. Based on epigraphic analogies, the paper puts forth the view that it was a dedication to the Thracian Hero, since it is in the context of this particular cult that the epithet *Totovitio* has been attested in various variants (*Toto-viti-* / *Toto-bisi-* / *Toto-ithi-*).

Keywords: Latin epigraphy, Upper Moesia, Djerdap/Iron Gates, Thracian epithets, Thracian cult, Thracian Hero, religion

The cult of the Thracian Horseman or Thracian Hero, which is a conventional term coined in the nineteenth century to reflect a distinctive iconography,¹ was widespread in the Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire, notably in Thrace and Lower Moesia. Most of such monuments discovered in the area of Upper Moesia come from the south and southeast of the province, where there were higher concentrations of Thracian population. Evidence for the presence of the cult in the north of the province bordering the Danube is not nearly as ample, and the finds are mostly confined to Roman military sites. This paper will focus on these monuments since they may shed light not only on some interesting aspects of the Thracian Hero cult, but also on the more general issue of the religion of Roman soldiers.

In this regard, it is important to note the findings of D. Boteva pertaining to the dedicants from the ranks of military personnel who bore Latin names (Boteva 2005; cf. Boteva 2007). Namely, taking into account the inscriptions from Lower Moesia and Thrace, Boteva has shown that a considerable number of such monuments were dedicated by Roman auxiliary or legionary soldiers and veterans. She has also found that the number of dedicants with Latin names or names shaped according to the Roman

¹ It is an indigenous Thracian deity whose character and function remain insufficiently clear despite the abundant finds and many studies (cf. Dimitrova 2002, 210; Boteva 2002; Boteva 2011). A typical iconography occurs on votive and sepulchral monuments alike, and religious syncretism is very prominent. For a brief overview of the issue and the most important earlier studies, see Boteva 2011, 85–87.

onomastic formula is not insignificant and that they were not necessarily Romanised Thracians by origin (Boteva 2007, 75–89).² When the Upper Moesian examples are looked at in this light, it becomes obvious that a considerable number of the inscriptions belonging to this cult³ show a similar combination of features indicating that they were dedicated by Roman soldiers. Most dedicants have Latin names and their *vota* are written in Latin. To this group belong, for example, the votive relief of the Thracian Hero from Buljesovac near Vranje, south Serbia (Cf. Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1963, 38, n. 52):

*Deo Tatoni Pa(trio) L. Pet(ilius?) Aurelia|nus mil(es) leg(ionis) VII
Cla(udiae) | v(otum) l(ibens) p(osuit);⁴*

the icon of the Thracian Hero from the environs of Paraćin dedicated by a soldier of the legion *IV Flavia* (IMS IV 92):

*M. Aur(elius) Lucius m(iles) leg(ionis) IIII | F(laviae)
Al(exandrianae) v(otum) p(osuit) l(ibens) m(erito);*

the dedication from Naissus (IMS IV 26):

Deo | Mund(ryto) | Cl(audius) Rufus | v(otum) s(olvit);⁵

as well as the altar from Viminacium (IMS II 16):

*Dio (!) | (H)eroni | Aur(elius) Gai|us vet(er)a|nus l(e)g(ionis) | IIII
Fl(aviae) An(toninianae) | vot(um) s(ol)vi(t).⁶*

Interesting is the dedication to the Thracian Hero on a monument from Singidunum erected by his *cultores*, obviously Thracians (IMS I 2; CCETV 2):

*Deo Heroni | collitores (!) ipsius | Theodotus Gude pater || Victorinus
| Mucianus | Valentinus | Rodo | Natus | Victorinus | Dometianus (!)
| Septuminus (!) || Zinama | Herodes | Hermogenes | Iulius | Her-*

² Cf. *CIL* VI 32578, 32580, 32581, 32582; I. Vendikov in *CCET* I 1.

³ It should be noted that not all monuments are inscribed and that most have been identified on the basis of the iconography.

⁴ The reading proposed by *CCETV* 25, accepted also by *Epigraphic Database Heidelberg* (HDo32797), is better than *Attonipal*(---), proposed by *IMS* IV, 119 (Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1963, 38, n. 52: *Tatonipal*). It can be checked from the published photograph of the monument: the ligature *TA* at the beginning of line 1 is clearly visible.

⁵ For *Deus Myndritus* cf. *AE* 1924, 51 (Philippi): *Iovi Fulm[ini] | et Mercur[io] | et Myndryt[o] | Aliulus Zepa[is] filius Zipas Me[s]tus Zeces Aliul[ae?] | filia ex merit[is] | eius(?) f(aciendum) curaveru[n]t | l(ibentes) m(erito)*. Georgiev 1975; Detschew 1957, 324; Duridanov 1995, 120.

⁶ *IMS* II 221; 309.

*mogenes | Maximinu[s] | Marcus | v(otum) p(osuerunt) l(ibentes)
m(erito).*

Two observations should be made at this point. Firstly, the context in which the monument was erected. It is noteworthy that the site that yielded the inscription — the site of the Central Bank building in King Peter Street in Belgrade, the religious heart of the town in Roman times — also yielded several votive monuments dedicated to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Paternus* (IMS I 10–13, 80, 102).⁷ This “ancestral” Jupiter, the Best and Greatest, is particularly well attested in Upper Moesia,⁸ often in a military context. A similar pattern occurs elsewhere: at *Tricornium*⁹ (IMS I 80); *Timacum Minus* (IMS III/2, 5; 126; cf. IMS III/2, 13); and *Naissus* (IMS IV 19, 20, 21, 22, 23), where some of the discovered Thracian dedications perhaps might also be interpreted as dedications to ancestral deities. A second fact worthy of being mentioned is that the monument is not typologically characteristic: there is no iconography typical of the cult — a horseman depicted in relief (cf. Dimitrova 2002); instead it has the form of an *ara* or a pedestal for a statue without relief depictions, such as usually occur in the Danubian and western provinces in general. Apart from this example, the same goes for some other Upper Moesian monuments to the horseman-deity, such as those from *Viminacium* (IMS II 16), *Tricornium* (IMS 78), or *Naissus* (IMS IV 26). To the same type belongs the beautiful altar to the Thracian Hero from Rome which was set up by the praetorians originating from the area of *Nicopolis* in Lower Moesia (CIL VI 32582 = ILS 4068).¹⁰

Deus Totovitio: One more monument dedicated to the Thracian Deity in Upper Moesia?

It seems reasonable to assume that yet another Upper Moesian inscription recovered from the Danube area is dedicated to a Thracian deity. It is a well-known altar of limestone, 116 × 43 × 45 cm, recovered in 1981 on the site of Karataš in the Djerdap (Iron Gates) Gorge. The lower front side of the base is broken off. The surface of the inscription is rough and damaged (fig. 3).

⁷ IMS I 3, 11, 13, 21, 90, 102. Cf. IMS I, p. 34; Grbić 2007, 222 and n. 9.

⁸ For Jupiter’s epithet *Paternus*, see commentary to IMS I 9 and IMS IV 19; 21; cf. attestations from Pannonia: CIL III 10199; *ILJug* 278 (*scriba classis*); *RIU* 1078; *AE* 2000, 1217, 1218; from Dacia: *ILS* 3035; *IDR* III/3, 321; *IDR* III/5, 187; 700; *ILD* 556.

⁹ Cf. IMS I 78 and bronze votive plaque to the Thracian Horseman (Popović 1980–90, 202). *VIV*[---] is all that has remained of the inscription.

¹⁰ Excellent photography is available at EDR121298, <http://www.edr-edr.it/>. Cf. Dimitrova 2002, n. 3.

Kondić 1987, 43; Budischovsky 1994, 87–95; Mirković 2003, 18–19 (*AE* 2003, 1531; *EDH*: HD043898).

Deo Toto [.](?) | *VITTONI Aur(elius)* | *Agathomi|nus* (!) *mil(es)*
leg(ionis) | *III Fl(aviae) catarac(tarum)* | *stationis Di|a[na]e*
honest(e) | *votum libiens* (!) | *posuit*.

1–2 *Toto* [.] | *VITTONI*, Kondić; *Toto[s]* or: *Deo Totos|vitioni*, Budischovsky.
1. *Deo Toto* [.] *VITTONI Aur(elius)* [± 8], Mirković (*AE* 2003; HD043898).
The first two lines are mistakenly reproduced as a single line. Besides, the reading by Mirković (2003) suggests that an entire line is missing, which is by no means the case, as can be clearly seen from the photograph and the drawing. Namely, it seems that the dotted letters in the first edition (Kondić 1987), which only provides a diplomatic transcription of the text, were mistaken for a missing line; hence the ghost [± 8]. The letters at the beginning of l. 2 (*vitioni*) are quite legible and should not be marked as damaged (cf. the proposed reading below). 7 *Dia[na]e, omnes*. The letters *NA* are damaged, but legible nonetheless.

The third century date is indicated by the imperial gentilicium *Aurelius* and palaeographic features.

Little can be added to the interpretation of the toponymic and historic realia referred to by this monument.¹¹ Owing to the discovery of this inscription, the archaeological site at Karataš has been positively identified as Roman *Diana* which, as the inscription shows, ranked as *statio cataractarum*. The toponym is recorded in Procopius (*De aed.* IV 6) as: *πολίχνιον ... πάλαιον Ζάνης* (Kondić 1987, 45–46), while the *Notitia dignitatum* (Or. IX11) mentions *Dianeses*. As for epigraphic attestation, the place-name is attested by the brick stamps discovered on the site and in its immediate environs: *Diana* and *Da(cia) R(ipensis) Diana* (Vasić 1997, 149–177). It also occurs, in a radically abbreviated form, in an inscription discovered on the same site a few years earlier (Mirković 1977, 444); the inscription refers to a *m(agister) c(ivium) R(omanorum) D(ianae)*, which indicates the presence of a *conventus civium Romanorum*. In the Turkish census of 1741, the island Demir-kapija, opposite Karataš, is recorded under the name “island Zan”, *Cezire-i-Zan* (Loma 1991, 117).

What has remained controversial about our inscription is the reading of the first two lines and, consequently, the interpretation of the dedication. Namely, the *editio princeps* suggests that it was a monument dedicated to

¹¹ On the archaeological excavations at Diana, see J. Rankov, *Cahiers des Portes de Fer* I (Belgrade 1980), 51–69; II (1984), 7–13; and IV (1987), 5–24; V. Kondić, *Cahiers des Portes de Fer* IV (1987), 45–46; J. Kondić, *Starinar* 40–41/1989–1990 (1991), 261–272; J. Kondić, “The Earliest Fortifications of Diana”, in Petrović 1996; Rankov-Kondić 2009.

the Egyptian god Toth (patron of literacy and science),¹² which would be the first such case in the Empire's European provinces. According to this interpretation (Kondić 1987, 44), Toth bears the unattested epithet *VITIO-NI*.¹³ The first editor believed that the dedicant was a person of Egyptian origin who served in the *militia officialis* and was possibly in charge of fleet administration, a post for which literacy was a mandatory requirement.¹⁴ This hypothesis was based both on the homonymy of the two theonyms and on the reference to the cataracts in the inscription. Like the cataracts of the Nile, the Danube cataracts were precarious rapids in the Djerdap Gorge which posed navigation hazard.¹⁵ The same term occurs in the inscription on the monumental imperial plaque of AD 101 from the same site, which commemorates the construction, between the two Dacian wars, of the canal bypassing the dangerous section of the river.¹⁶ The cataracts are also mentioned by Strabo as the point where the river's upper and lower courses become named the Danube and the Ister respectively.¹⁷ These pieces of information and the documented presence of Egyptians serving in European fleets (Starr 1962; Tomorad 2005), including those on the Danube (Dušanić 1967, n. 99; Mócsy 1974, 65), inspired the editor to put forth an interpretation which is tempting but still conjectural.

The first to challenge this interpretation was M.-C. Budischovsky (1994). From the perspective of an Egyptologist, she shows that the inscription quite certainly does not refer to the Egyptian god Toth, but rather to a regional deity, without addressing the question of which particular god this

¹² Θεῦθ (Plat. *Phileb.* 18 b; *Phaedr.* 274 c.; Cic. *nat. deor.* III 56), Θωύθ-; Θώθ, Τάτ.

¹³ Kondić 1987, 44: "un épithète de dieu Toth provenant d'un toponyme égyptien?" (?).

¹⁴ Ibid. It may be interesting to note that the misspelling of the dedicant's name and the ordinary *lib{t}iens* in line 8 would have been quite ironic for a dedication to a god of literacy (cf. Mihăescu 1978, 188).

¹⁵ For the term καταράκτης < κατα-ράσσω, see Chantraine 505, 967; Frisk 801, s.v.; *ThLL* III, 1912.

¹⁶ Petrović 1970, 31 = *ILJug* 468 (l. 4–6): *ob periculum cataractarum | derivato flumine tutam Da|nubi navigationem fecit*. Cf. Plin. *Ep.* VIII 4. 2. Mócsy 1974, 109–110. Traces of the canal, which Felix Kanitz (*Römische Studien in Serbien*, Vienna 1892) had seen in the late nineteenth century, remained visible until the opening of the Djerdap/Iron Gate Dam in 1972.

¹⁷ Strab. VII 3.13: ... τοῦ ποταμοῦ τὰ μὲν ἄνω καὶ πρὸς ταῖς πηγαῖς μέρη μέχρι τῶν καταρακτῶν Δανουίου προσηγόρευον, ἃ μάλιστα διὰ τῶν Δακῶν φέρεται, τὰ δὲ κάτω μέχρι τοῦ Πόντου τὰ παρὰ τοὺς Γέτας καλοῦσιν Ἴστρον ("...the 'Danuvius' I say, for so they used to call the upper part of the river from near its sources on to the cataracts, I mean the part which in the main flows through the country of the Daci, although they give the name 'Ister' to the lower part, from the cataracts on to the Pontus, the part which flows past the country of the Getae", transl. H. L. Jones); cf. Strab. XVII 1.2.

could have been (Budischovsky 1994, 87–99).¹⁸ The homonymy between the Egyptian god and a native deity would thus be a “pure coincidence”. Namely, unlike the cults of some other Egyptian gods, such as Serapis and Isis, the cult of Toth did not spread into the western provinces. If it occurred at all, it did so only as an *interpretatio Graeca* (Hermes) or *Romana* (Mercury).¹⁹ Moreover, Budischovsky (1994, 94 and n. 35) draws attention to the important fact that the patron god of the Nile cataracts was not Toth, but Khnoum.

However, the argument from silence is not enough, especially if the epithet is assumed to be a *hapax legomenon*, which, fortunately, is not the case here (any more). Epigraphic analogies which can help explain this dedication do exist and they not only show how the inscription should not be interpreted but also are helpful in identifying the deity. As already mentioned, it is reasonable to assume that the *deus* in our inscription can be identified with the Thracian Hero since it is in the context of his cult that the variants of the attribute **Totovitio* are epigraphically attested. But, before presenting arguments for this interpretation, we should look at some formal features of the inscription and propose a different reading of problematic lines 1–2.

In the previous editions, the first line of the inscription was read as *Deo Toto[.]*, and the scratch at the end of the line was interpreted as the trace of a letter. Furthermore, there was some indecisiveness as to whether the agglomeration of letters *VITIONI* at the beginning of the second line should be read as a separate word.²⁰ In our view, the purportedly lost letter in the first line should be discarded, and *TOTO* and *VITIONI* should be read as one word:²¹ *Totovitioni*, which would be the dative singular of the epithet **Totovitio*. Therefore, we propose the following reading:

*Deo Toto|vitioni Aur(elius) | Agathomi|nus (!) mil(es) leg(ionis) |⁵
 IIII Fl(aviae) catarac(tarum) | stationis Di|anae honest(e) | votum
 libiens (!) | posuit.*

This interpretation of the dedication from Diana appears to be corroborated by a relatively recent epigraphic find, which provides its closest

¹⁸ The 2003 edition of the inscription (Mirković 2003) does not refer to this article, and neither does *AE*.

¹⁹ Budischovsky (1994, 91–92) examined and rejected the possibility that the dedication could have been related to the miraculous rain that took place at the time of Marcus Aurelius, and, according to Cassius Dio, was invoked by the Egyptian priest Arnuphis; on this, cf. P. Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic Wars* (Leiden 2009).

²⁰ For more, see *variae lectiones* on p. 3 herein.

²¹ Similarly in Budischovsky 1994, where the alternative proposed reading is: *Deo Totos|vitioni* (for more, see p. 22).

analogy: the bilingual inscription dedicated to the Thracian Hero (fig. 4) discovered in the Roman province of Thrace, at Svilengrad, south-central Bulgaria, now kept in the City Museum of Veliko Tŭrnovo (inv. no. 1859). Editions: Gerasimova 1998, 15–17 (photographs and drawings) = Gerasimova 2001, 133–135; *SEG* 49, 992; *AE* 2001, 1752; cf. Chaniotis 2003.

Heroni Totoithian[ο] | Ἡρωὶ Τωτοιθιηνω[ι].

1 *Totoithia*, Gerasimova; *Totoithian[ο]*, Pleket (*SEG*); *AE* the letters *A* and *N* at the end of line 1 are in ligature. For: -ηνος /-άνος, Lat. -ānus, cf. Duridanov 1989, 88.

The Thracian Hero is referred to as: ἥρως, κύριος or θεός in Greek inscriptions, and in Latin inscriptions as: *deus* and *heros*, -ōis, *m.* or, much more frequently, as the nasal stem (-on-): *heroni* (dat.) (Detschew 1957, 200).²² At times they are combined: *Deo Heroni*, *Deo sancto Heroni* and the like. The deity is usually described by a Thracian epithet, such as *Aulousadas*, *Saltobuseons*, *Assallacanos*, *Limenos*, *Aularbenos*, *Derzis* etc. (I. Vendikov in: *CCETI*, p. 1; Gočeva 1992; cf. Duridanov 1995, 830–831; Dimitrova 2002, 210; Boteva 2005). It is not unusual to find the same epithet combined with different denominations (Gočeva 1992); in this case, it occurs either as *deus* — in the inscription from Diana, or as *heros* / ἥρως — in the Lower Moesian example.

Furthermore, the element *toto-* also occurs in the Thracian epithet Τωτουσοῦρα (*soura* = *Heros*, Skr. śūra- adj. “powerful”, “valourous”, bold, *m.* “a strong man, hero”), (Georgiev 1975, 50; Detschew 1957, 471; Duridanov 1995, 827). The epithet is attested in an inscription from Lower Moesia recovered from a shrine attributed to the Thracian Hero cult in the village of Rojak, Varna area, Bulgaria, in 1984 (Gočeva 1989, 115–116; *SEG* 39, 676):

Βειθως Αουλουξενεος Θεῶ | Τωτουσουρα εὐχαριστήριον | ἀνέθηκεν.

Akin to these may also be the epithet Τωτοῆς attached to the Hero in an inscription from ancient Amphipolis (*BCH* 22, 1898, 350; cf. Georgiev 1983a, 12–13):

ιερητεῦντος | Ζωΐλου τοῦ | Κασσάνδρου | Τοτοῆτι θεοδαίμονι |
Ὑπνωὶ Πόπλιος Κλώδιος | Σέλευκος τὴν εὐχήν.

The same goes for the Thracian theonym Τοτῆς, -ῖδος,²³ which may be a corruption of the name Τοτης (Detschew 1957, 515, s.v.; Gočeva 1989, 115, links this theonym with the epithet Τωτουσοῦρα).

²² See below, fn. 32.

²³ Herod. II and the variant Τιτῆς *apud Choer.* 354, 21: ... Τιτῆς... ὀνόματα δαιμόνων τιμωμένων παρα τοῖς Θραξίν (ed. A. Lentz, 1967, p. 107). Tomaschek 1893, 48; Detschew 1957, 515: “... halte ich die Form Τοτῆς für korrupt, da der gleichlautende GN

A striking feature of the cult is its prominent religious syncretism (cf. e.g. Dimitrova 2002). It is quite usual to find the same epithet attached to the Hero and to a Greco-Roman deity, Zeus, Hera, Asclepius and Hygeia, Apollo, Diana/Artemis, Silvanus, Dionysus etc. (Duridanov 1989; Dimitrova 2002; Boteva 2011). The same goes for our inscription. Namely, a variant of the same epithet is attested in the Lower Moesian inscription from Hotnitsa near Veliko Tŭrnovo (*Nicopolis ad Istrum*). The monument is dedicated to Diana with the epithet *Totobisia* (Georgiev 1975, 54–55). There is no doubt whatsoever that *Τωτοίθηνος* and our *Totovitio* should be linked with her.

Beševliev 1952, 50–51, n. 81, Tab. XXXII; *AE* 1957, 291; *ILBulg* 388; Pl. 71, 388. (cf. Georgiev 1983, 1177).

Dianae | *Totobi*|*sie* (!) *pos*(*uit*) | *C. Valer*|*sius* *Dot*[*us*(?)].

The analogies are self-evident. *Deus Totovitio* / Ἡρώς *Τωτοίθηνος* and *Diana Totobisia* obviously belong to the same cult sphere.²⁴ The different variants of *Toto-ithi-* / *Toto-viti-* / *Toto-bisi-* are easy to account for by the usual alternation *θι* / *τι* / *σι* in Greek and *th* / *ti* / *s* in Latin tradition of the Thracian name. It is a consonant — a voiceless interdental spirant, similar to English *th* in *path*, for which there are no corresponding characters in Greek and Latin. The same phenomenon is observable in other, better-documented examples. Hence, for instance, different variants of the name of a Thracian-Dacian deity: *Zβελθιουρδος*, *Zβερθουρδος*, *Zβελσουρδος*, *Zbelth(i)urdos*, *Zbeltiurdos* / *Zbelsurdos*, *Svelsurdos*, *Zberturdus* (Duridanov 1995, 830); or of the Thracian epithet *Γεικεθηνος* / *Γικεντηνος* / *Γεικεσηνος*,²⁵ etc. The alternation *-b-* / *-v-* / *θ-*, probably a bilabial *ɸ*, similar to Engl. *w*, is also well attested.²⁶

What would the epithet *Totovitio* denote? When it comes to the analogous examples cited above, there is a divergence of opinion. According to Gerasimova, who relies on Detschew's interpretation of the element *-ithia*,

Τοτης maskulin ist, wie ja dies der Fall auch mit dem PN Τοτης ist"; Georgiev 1983, 1208; Georgiev 1983a, 10; Georgiev 1983b, 11; Duridanov 1995, 831.

²⁴ Gerasimova has not brought these attestations into connection with the Djerdap inscription.

²⁵ This epithet is attached to the Thracian Hero and Apollo: Georgiev 1975, 29; Duridanov 1989, 100; Gočeva 1992, 170. Cf. e.g. *IGBulg* III/2, 1810; *IGBulg* III/2, 1811 and (Γινκατηνος). *IGBulg* III/2 1807, 1808; cf. *IGBulg* III/1, 1497: [Ἡρώ]ι Γεσηνω; Γινκισηνος and Γεικα.

²⁶ Cf. e.g. Βειθυ- / *Vithopus*, *Vitupaus* (Georgiev 1974, 8); *Saldovysēnos*, *Σαλτουσηνος*, *Σαλτοβυσηνος*, *Σαλτοβυσηνος* (Detschew 1957, 412–413; Duridanov 1989, 104–105). Adams 2003, 356–376; 473–490; 491–492; cf. 98–108; 283–284.

-*bisia*,²⁷ the epithet would mean “love-giving god/goddess” (*AE* 2001, 1752). According to Georgiev (1975, 54; 1983b, 10), the name might have derived from *dotō-* (*do-*, Gr. δίδωμι), “celle qui distribue”, and *-βιθος / -βειθος* (*-βιτος, -bita, -vitbo, -vitu*), Gr. φῖτυ, “plant shoot”,²⁸ and so *Diana Totobisia* would be “celle qui distribue ... *physis* (production, accouchement, nature)”, and therefore a deity associated with nature and vegetation. It seems more likely, however, that the epithet is a toponymic modifier. Thus, ἥρωϛ Τωτοιθινοϛ would most likely be the hero from **Totoithia* (Chaniotis 2003). Most epithets attached to the Thracian Hero derive from place-names, as suggested by the ending *-ηνοϛ* which is characteristic of ethnic names.²⁹ The Latin form of the epithet in the inscription from Svilengrad ends in *-ānus*, while in the inscription from Diana it is rendered as *-on-* stem of the third declension,³⁰ which resembles the dedication *IMS* IV 119 = *CCET* V 25: *deo Tatonī* (dat. < *Tato*; cf. Thr. *Tata / Tatas / Tato* etc.) (Detschew 1957, 494; cf. Beševliev 1962).

The dedicant’s cognomen *Agathominus* may be the misspelled name *Agathonymus*, as believed by the previous editors.³¹ It suggests that the dedicant probably came from a Hellenophone area and thus possibly was a Thracian. The presence of the Thracian element in the military units stationed in Upper Moesia, and especially in the Danube fleet, is a quite well-known fact and needs no further elaboration (e.g. Mócsy 1974, 65). Moreover, the

²⁷ Detschew 1969, 156: *-ithiana / -ιθινη* “love”. On the element *-(e)ithia-*, frequent in epichoric names, such as *Eitiosaros, Ithioslha, Ebist-ithia(s)* etc., and in divine epithets, recently: Dana 2001–2003, 81: (ad *IGBulg* V 5328) and n. 15: (*CCET* II 244 = *IGBulg* V 5380): Εἰθιϛ Εἰθιαλου; (*IGBulg* II 858 = *CCET* II 251): Εἰτιϛ(ε)ν[εοϛ] (*ISM* V 79 = *CCET* IV 108): *Ithazis*; (*IGBulg* II 771 = *CCET* II 415): Θεῶν Εἰτιοσαρω; (*CCET* 674 = *ILBulg* 350): *Heroni Ithiostlae*.

²⁸ Cf. Thr. *Bithu-*, god of vegetation, growth etc. (Duridanov 1995, 827).

²⁹ I. Vendikov in *CCET* I; Detschew 1936, and, perhaps the best on the subject, Duridanov 1989, 85–112, where he has collected eighty-six Thracian epithets ending in *-ηνοϛ* (from Thrace, Moesia and Dacia), of which sixty-seven derive from toponyms. In a critical review of the Svilengrad inscription Chaniotis has also subscribed to this view, referring to the same article by Duridanov (n. 63. *SEG* 39, 642; Chaniotis 2003, 272). Cf. also Duridanov 1995, 831.

³⁰ Cf. Mihăescu 1978, 224. See also the declension *heros, heronis, heroni* characteristic of the monuments to the Thracian Horseman. Cf. Beševliev 1962, 94: “Es läßt jedoch nicht mit Bestimmtheit sagen, ob es sich um eine einfache Latinisierung oder um eine Art Verfeinerung oder Modernisierung der thrakischen Namen vom Standpunkt der Thraker aus handelt.”

³¹ Ἀγαθώνυμοϛ. Cf. *GPNR* I, 13, and *Agathonimus*, *CIL* VI 4576, 11241. Here I follow Kondić 1987 and Budischovsky 1994, 94. *AE* proposes *Agathominus*, which seems to me less likely.

presence in the Djerdap Gorge of persons bearing names indicative of their Thracian origin is epigraphically relatively well attested.³² For instance, there occur at *Aquae* (modern Prahovo, Serbia) several persons bearing Thracian names: *Bitus Biti*; *Con(us) Con(i)*; *Tato* (*CIL* III 8095); *Aurelius Tara*, *vexillarius* in *cohors III Campestris* stationed in the Djerdap Gorge (*AE* 1971, 424 = *ILJug* 461);³³ at Pojejena, Romania: *Dizo* (*IDR* III/1, 12); some of the persons bearing Greek names at Drobeta, Romania, could have also belonged to the same group. It should be noted that Drobeta, a major Roman town on the Danube opposite Diana, has yielded five monuments dedicated to the Thracian Hero (Petolescu 1974, 250–251; cf. *CCET* IV 146–149; *IDR* II, 25; cf. *IDR* II 20; 132) — which is an important fact, given the relatively small total number of such monuments in Dacia.³⁴

The Latinised form of the theonym and the use of Latin may be taken as a sign of Romanisation (Boteva 2007, 87; cf. Adams 2003, 760–761) and the same may go for the fact that the monument is not typical of the Thracian Hero cult.³⁵ Typologically, in terms of context, it corresponds to the aforementioned inscriptions from Singidunum (fig. 1), Viminacium (fig. 2) and Naissus.

Taking all the above into account, a simpler interpretation of the Diana inscription emerges as more likely. The dedicant was a Roman soldier who served in *legio IV Flavia*. His name indicates a Romanised native, probably of Thracian origin, serving on the Danube frontier, where he, as was often the case, set up a *votum* to the ancestral hero-god *deus Totovitio*, possibly linked with *Diana Totobisia*. Quite conveniently, he did it on a site named after, and very likely under the protection of, the goddess.

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³² Relatively, given the total number of discovered inscriptions and the small number of civilians.

³³ A namesake, *M. Aur. Tara*, from *legio VII Claudia*, has been attested in an inscription from Viminacium (*IMS* II 53) and on bricks: *praepositus ripae legionis VII Claudiae* (*CIL* III 17003, 4). Cf. Dana 2001–2003, 81 and n. 19–20.

³⁴ Cf. also an interesting relief from Drobeta with a Latin votive inscription dedicated to *Iovi Optimo Maximo Zb(eltbiurdo)* (*CIL* III 14 216 = *IDR* II 20) — a fine example of religious syncretism. For *Zbelsourdos*, cf. Tomaschek 1893, 60–62; Detschew 1957, 177. For the spelling of the name, see the body text with n. 46.

³⁵ For the basic typology of the Thracian Horseman monuments, see e.g. Kazarov 1938; Vaglieri, *Diz. ep.* II/2, col. 1721, s.v. *Deus*. Dimitrova 2002; *CCET* I–V. For Upper Moesia: *CCET* V; cf. e.g. *IMS* IV 119; *IMS* I 2; *IMS* II 221; 309; *IMS* IV 26.

Abbreviations

<i>AE</i>	<i>Année épigraphique</i> , Paris
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , H. Temporini and W. Haase, eds. Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter
<i>CCET</i>	<i>Corpus Cultus Equitis Thracii</i> I–V, Leiden 1979–1982
Chantraine	P. Chantraine, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots</i> , Paris 1968–1980
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , Berlin
<i>Diz. ep.</i>	De Ruggiero, <i>Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane</i> , Roma
Frisk	H. Frisk, <i>Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> , Heidelberg 1960
<i>GPNR</i>	H. Solin, <i>Die griechischen Personennamen in Rom: Ein Namenbuch (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Auctarium, 2)</i> , vols. 1–3, Berlin
<i>EDH</i>	<i>Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg</i> , http://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de
<i>EDR</i>	<i>Epigraphic Database Rome</i> , www.edr-edr.it
<i>IDR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae</i> , eds. D. M. Pippidi and I. I. Russu, vol. 5: ed. I. Piso, Paris.
<i>IGBulg</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgaria repertae</i> , ed. G. Mihailov
<i>ILBulg</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae</i> , ed. B. Gerov
<i>ILJug</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia inter annos MCMII et repertae et editae sunt</i> , Ljubljana 1963, A. et J. Šašel
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , H. Dessau
<i>IMS</i>	<i>Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure</i> , Belgrade
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> , Leiden

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Fig. 1 Inscription to the Thracian Hero from Singidunum (after *IMS* I 2)



Fig. 2 Inscription from Djerdap Gorge (drawing after V. Kondić 1987)



Fig. 3 Dedication to Diana Totobisia (after Beševliev 1952, Pl. XXXII, fig. 2)



Fig. 4 Inscription from Svilengrad (drawing after Gerasimova 1999, p. 16, fig. 2)