

Weaving a Roman Identity: A Close Reading of the Igel Monument

The foundation of Roman colonies drastically altered the economic landscape of the surrounding regions, and these economic shifts were intertwined with the development of complex provincial identities. One of the major industries that contributed to economic change was the Gallic wool textile industry, the products of which were known to Roman authors such as Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Juvenal, and Martial. The monument of the Secundinius family at Trier is one of the most informative case studies on the linked social and economic impact of this industry. By examining the iconography of the Igel monument I will argue that the Secundinius family was only a small portion of a broadly-spread wool textile industry. The monument displays an evolving sense of Romanization by integrating elite monumental decoration with depictions of daily business operations and trade encompassing both raw materials and completed products. The Igel monument represents evidence of a contested discourse on the identity of the elite in third century *Gallia Belgica*, as the Secundinii attempted to define their social status and Roman identity within the economic framework of a larger industry.

At twenty-three meters in height, the sandstone monument of the Secundinii is a testament to the development of the Treveri, an ethnically mixed tribe located in the vicinity of modern Trier in southern Germany (Wightman 1970). I will be using a specific definition of Romanization, as a cultural state of being unique to this time and place manifested by a set of cultural artifacts (Woolf 1998). The town's acquisition of the title *Colonia Augusta Teverorum* and later designation as the seat of the *Procurator of Belgica* heightened the Roman political status of the town and created a business environment favorable to the development of large-scale industry, allowing wealthier families to take advantage of lucrative opportunities.

In this context, the most critical purpose of the monument was to immortalize the social status of the Secundinii through depictions of business success within the framework of local industry as well as in the greater scheme of the *Imperium Romanum*, pointedly juxtaposing images of business tasks and manual labor with elite social display and Greco-Roman myth. The monument also shows that the Secundinii had the means to enjoy dinners prepared by multiple servants and had separate rooms for wine storage and food preparation.

For the Secundinii, elite status was directly connected to their success in a widespread industry. Drinkwater argues that as a single *familia*, they would have had great difficulty producing wool on a grand scale, and thus this must have been a thriving industry creating a network of trade amongst farmers, shearers, sorters, scourers, spinners, weavers, fullers, dyers, and finishers, each of whom operated in different locations due to the nature of their work. In contrast to Drexel's argument that the Secundinii were wholesale cloth merchants, I will argue that the iconography of the monument supports Drinkwater's general hypothesis that the family was involved in both manufacture and distribution, and that it was this very involvement in the industry that defines their identity and assertion of elite status despite the negative Roman perception of such a business (Drinkwater 1982; Drexel 1920). The Secundinii were only a small component of a larger textile industry in Trier and *Gallia Belgica*, as they were not able to achieve vertical integration of their industry, but actively engaged in trade to obtain wool and sell their products.

In order to assert their identity on the Igel monument it was necessary for the Secundinius family to convey their social status in relation to the wool textile industry and to convey their *Romanitas*. The paired mythological themes of life and death such as the pediment depicting Hylas or that displaying the ravishing of Rhea Silvia, are highly appropriate for a funerary

monument, and though such depictions may be standard for other contemporary Gallo-Roman grave monuments, they assert a version of Roman identity particular to the aspirations and social resources of this family. The business accomplishments of the Secundinii are immortalized in their monument while honoring the gods through the themes of death and rebirth as well as the achievement of immortality through one's deeds. The monument succeeds in its portrayal of the identity of the Secundinii as the Roman social elite while simultaneously claiming their status within the wool textile industry.

Works Cited

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