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Augustus, Livia, and *concordia ordinum*. Ovid, *Fasti* 6, 637–648 Reconsidered

August, Liwia i concordia ordinum.
Owidiusz, Fasti 6, 637–648 ponownie rozważone

ABSTRACT

The founding of *aedes Concordiae* by Livia in 7 B.C. has so far been analyzed as an example of a concord between spouses and/or within the imperial family. Taking into account the descent of Augustus and Livia as well as the analogy to the renewal of the cult of *Pudicitia Patricia* and *Pudicitia Plebeia*, the author puts forward the thesis that Livia's association with *Concordia* also aimed at highlighting *concordia ordinum*, peace between orders, during Augustus' reign.

Key words: concordia, concordia ordinum, Pax, Augustus, Livia, porticus Liviae

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STRESZCZENIE

Ufundowanie *aedes Concordiae* przez Livia w 7 p.n.e. do tej pory było analizowane jako przykład zgody pomiędzy małżonkami i/lub w obrębie rodziny cesarskiej. Autor biorąc pod uwagę pochodzenie Augusta i Livia oraz analogię do odnowienia kultu *Pudicitia Patricia* i *Pudicitia Plebeia* stawia tezę, że asocjacja Livia z *Concordia* miała także na celu zaznaczenie panującej pod rządami Augusta *concordia ordinum*, pokoju pomiędzy stanami.

Słowa kluczowe: concordia, concordia ordinum, Pax, August, Liwia, porticus Liviae

There are few written sources on the *aedes Concordiae* funded by Livia in 7 B.C. The following passage from the 6th book of Ovid's *Fasti* is the most important and fundamental one:

'Te quoque magnifica, Concordia, dedicat aede /Livia, quam caro praestitit ipsa viro. / Disce tamen, veniens aetas: ubi Livia nunc est / porticus, immensae tecta fuere domus; / Urbis opus domus una fuit spatiumque tenebat/ Quo brevius muris oppida multa tenant. / Haec aequata solo est, nullo sub crimine regni, / Sed quia luxuria visa nocere sua. / Sustinuit tantas operum subvertere moles / Totque suas heres perdere Caesar opes. / Sic agitur censura et sic exempla parantur, / Cum vindex, alios quod monet, ipse facit'¹.

This interesting account has attracted moderate interest among scholars². It is usually analyzed in the context of another account, also from Ovid's poem, concerning Livia's role in developing the cult of *Concordia*³. In this article, I would like to propose a new outlook on this foundation by the wife of the first princeps, which will enable the emergence of a more nuanced picture of Augustus' ritual activity as well as the roles Livia and public religion played in it.

¹ Ov. *Fast.* 6. 637–648. Apart from Ovid the portico is mentioned by Cass. Dio 54.23.6 and 55.8.2; Plin. *HN* 14.11, Ov. *Ars am.* 1.71 (the shady portico was intended for trysts); Strabo 5, 236. L. Brännstedt, *Femina princeps. Livia's position in the Roman state*, Lund 2016, pp. 116–118.

² M.B. Flory, *Sic exempla parantur: Livia's Shrine to Concordia and the Porticus Liviae*, "Historia" 1984, 22, pp. 309–330 collects the reference literature to date; M. Bassani, F.R. Berno, *The Porticus Liviae in Ovid's Fasti* (6.637–648), in: *The Cultural History of Augustan Rome (Texts, Monuments, and Topography)*, eds. M.P. Loar, S.C. Murray, S. Rebggiani, Cambridge 2019, pp. 103–125; C. Gillespie, *Livia and Concordia in Tacitus' Annals*, "Latomus" 2019, 79, pp. 621–652; B. Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire*, New York 2003, pp. 131–139.

³ Ov. *Fast.* 1.637–650; C.J. Simpson, *Livia and the Constitution of the Aedes Concordiae. The Evidence of Ovid Fasti I. 637ff*, "Historia" 1991, 40, pp. 449–455.

Augustus inherited the area by *clivus Suburanus* (Oppian Hill), on which *porticus Liviae* was built, from Vedius Pollio was placed in 15 BC⁴. Augustus demolished the luxurious Pollio estate and placed buildings of equal splendour on the resulting site for public benefit. On the basis of the Severian Marble Plan, we can situate the building on the area presently occupied by the church of S. Lucia in Selci, that is, between via in Selci (corresponding to the antique *clivus Suburanus*) and via delle Sette Sale. The site has not yet been thoroughly examined archaeologically, but it is assumed that the foundation of Augustus occupied a rectangle measuring approximately 120 by 70 metres, surrounded by a double colonnade on each side⁵. The *aedes Concordiae* was located at the center of the portico. Tiberius and Livia dedicated the portico together while celebrating Tiberius' triumph over the Germanic peoples in January 7 BC. On the other hand, the shrine honoring *Concordia* was consecrated later, on July 11 of that year, this time by Livia herself, without the participation of any of the male members of the imperial family⁶.

I find Ovid's account interesting for two reasons. First, it's one of the few literary testimonies attesting to the active and agential role of women in Roman religion⁷. Second, it sheds an interesting light on the first *principes'* use of the concept of *concordia*, indicating the continuation of existing practices, enriched with new content and directions. In this case, the two issues are linked.

Concordia belonged to the group of deities characteristic of Roman religion whose nature somewhat escapes modern researchers. Hence,

⁴ Circumstances of Augustus' inheritance of the estate: Cass. Dio 54, 23, 1–6. For Vedius Pollio see P. Berdowski, *Ex Amicis divi Augusti: P. Vedius Pollio, "Palamedes"* 2017/2018, 12, pp. 93–140.

⁵ The most recent archaeological description of the surviving remains: M. Bassani, F.R. Berno, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–108. Reconstruction of the portico: A. Carandini, *The Atlas of Ancient Rome*, Princeton 2017, tab. 109. F. Coarelli, *Rome and Environs. An Archeological Guide*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 2014, p. 360 lists different dimensions: 120x95 metres.

⁶ Ov. Fast. 6.637–638: *dedicat aede Livia*. B. Ackroyd expresses doubt in the funding of the portico of the temple of *Concordia* and argues that Ovid was writing about a temple in the Forum Romanum (B. Ackroyd, *The Porticus Gai et Luci. The Porticus Philippi. The Porticus Liviae, "Athenaeum"* 2000, 88, p. 579). L.J. Richardson also rejects the existence of a place of cult in the centre of the portico, believing that the whole complex was devoted to *Concordia*, and makes an analogy to *aedificium Eumachiae* in Pompeii (L.J. Richardson, *Concordia and Concordia Augusta, Rome and Pompeii, "Parola del Passato"* 1978, 33, pp. 267–269).

⁷ A. Gillmeister, *Le donne e la religione civica romana. Note al margine del culto di Pudicitia Plebeia in epoca augustea*, in: *Saeculum Aureum. Tradizione e innovazione nella religione romana di epoca augustea*, vol. 2, *La vita religiosa a Roma all'epoca di Augusto*, ed. I. Baglioni, Roma 2016, pp. 227–239.

they appear in the reference literature under different names: ‘Personifikationen abstrakter Begriffe’⁸, ‘divinités conceptuelles’⁹, ‘divine qualities’¹⁰ or ‘divinità astratte’¹¹. Generally, these terms only partially cover the competences of deities by accentuating some of their qualities while ignoring or diminishing others. In a sense, this reflects the fluid role that the ‘divinized virtues’ played in the religious and social life of ancient Rome. The Romans attributed the introduction of the cult of *Concordia* to Marcus Furius Camillus and clearly associated it with *concordia ordinum*, especially since Cicero’s time¹². All of the republican foundations associated with celebrating the deified idea of Concord were a reaction to civil unrest and were associated with the admission of representatives of the plebeian class to the highest offices of the state¹³. In the republic’s period of decline, references to *Concordia* were intended to confirm the desire to end civil wars, the new state of concord after the death of Pompey, or, later, the harmony between triumvirs¹⁴.

Aedes Concordiae in Livia’s portico was another means of honoring the idea of concord. The prevailing opinion in the literature is that this concord was intended to symbolise harmonious relations between the spouses and, more generally, within the whole imperial family¹⁵. This thesis is based, among other things, on the date of the consecration of the shrine during the festival of *Matralia* (11 July) and the proximity of two other festivals attributed to female deities, Vesta and Venus¹⁶. Marleen

⁸ G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, München 1912, p. 271.

⁹ D. Miano, *Divinités conceptuelles et pouvoir dans le polythéisme romain*, “Pallas” 2019, 111.

¹⁰ A.J. Clark, *Divine Qualities. Cult and Community in Republican Rome*, Oxford 2007.

¹¹ F. La Greca, *Il culto di Honos in Roma antica. Origine e sviluppo*, Canterano 2017.

¹² The literature on this subject is considerable, see C. Santi, A. Gillmeister, A. Salvati, *Homónoia – Concordia – Sāmmānasya*, in: *Espressioni del sacro tra storia delle religioni, linguistica e archeologia*, eds. M. di Martino, C. Santi, Lugano 2021, pp. 151–159. C. Gillespie, *op. cit.*, pp. 621–652; Ph. Akar, *Concordia. Un idéal de la classe dirigeante romaine à la fin de la République*, Paris 2013; P. Akar, *Camille et la Concorde*, “Hypoteses” 2002, 1, pp. 205–215, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-hypotheses-2002-1-page-205.htm> [access: 21.07.2025], with detailed bibliographical references. A comprehensive analysis of the meaning of the terms *concordia* and *concordia ordinum*: P. Akar, *Concordia*, pp. 240–329.

¹³ Plut. *Cam.* 2.2–6.

¹⁴ Cass. Dio 44.4.5 (the temple of *Concordia nova* vowed by the Senate after Pompey’s death); C. Gillespie, *op. cit.*, p. 623.

¹⁵ *Inter alia* M.B. Flory, *op. cit.*, *passim*; C.J. Simpson, *op. cit.*, *passim*; C. Gillespie, *op. cit.*, pp. 627–631.

¹⁶ Ov. *Fast.* 6.475; M.B. Flory, *op. cit.*, pp. 312–317; E. Fantham, *The Fasti as a Source for Women’s Participation in Roman Cult*, in: *Ovid’s Fasti. Historical Readings at its Bimillennium*, ed. G. Herbert-Brown, Oxford 2002, pp. 41–43; R.J. Littlewood, *An Ovidian Diptych: Fasti*

Boudreau Flory states that ‘Livia’s shrine on the Oppius is the first we know built to honor Concordia as a symbol of women’s life’¹⁷. It is worth adding that this role of *Concordia* was linked to another, but of a state nature. It seems that Augustus literally transferred the state of peace in the family to the official sphere. It has been noted that ‘the concord of the state and the concord of the imperial family became one and the same’¹⁸.

Without denying the substantial reasons supporting the validity of the opinions presented above, I would like to propose a different solution to the issue of the meaning of *Concordia* and the association of the deity of Concord with Livia.

It seems to me that in the case in question Augustus aimed not just to declare peace within the imperial family and between the spouses. The aim was to point out that the concord between them was also an embodiment of *concordia ordinum* due to the spouses’ origin. Augustus came from a plebeian family, but he was adopted by the patrician *gens Iulia*. Livia’s father, M. Livius Drusus Claudianus, born into *gens Claudia*, was adopted by the plebeian M. Livius Drusus¹⁹. The concordant marriage of Rome’s first couple thus expressed, in more than a metaphorical sense, the concord between classes. It seems that Augustus made use of this situation early on. Most likely in the year 28, during his censorship, he decided to renew the cult of *Pudicitia*, the goddess of chastity. She was worshipped under two names, *Patricia* and *Plebeia*, and the cult was corporate in nature, restricted to members of specific classes²⁰. The princeps decided to include both cults in his ongoing efforts to restore old customs in the Roman marriage, the final expression of which was the *lex Iulia de*

6.473–648 Servius Tullius, *Augustus and the cults of June 11th*, “Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici” 2002, 49, pp. 191–211; K. Welch, *Velleius and Livia: Making a Portrait*, in: *Velleius Paterculus: Making History*, ed. E. Cowan, Swansea 2011, p. 321; on cults worshipped on 11 July; L. Brännstedt, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–124; F.L. Caprariis, L. Petacco, *Drusi filia, uxor Caesaris. Livia e il tempo di Fortuna Muliebre*, “Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma” 2016, 117, pp. 9–16; C. Gillespie, *op. cit.*, p. 630.

¹⁷ M.B. Flory, *op. cit.*, p. 315. Cf. N. Boëls-Janssen, *La vie religieuse des matrones dans la Rome archaïque*, Rome 1993, pp. 140–143; L. Brännstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁸ B.A. Kellum, *The City Adorned: Programmatic Display at the Aedes Concordiae Augustae*, in: *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate*, eds. K.A. Raafaub, M. Toher, Berkeley 1990, p. 278; C. Gillespie, *op. cit.*, p. 627. Cf. P. Zanker, *The Power of the Image in the Age of Augustus*, Ann Arbor 1988, p. 139: ‘[Concordia] was worshipped as a goddess of family happiness, and the imperial family as a model for family harmony’.

¹⁹ For Livia’s father and family connections see detailed study by E. Huntsman, *Livia before Octavian*, “Ancient Society” 2009, 29, pp. 121–169. Cf. K. Welsch, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

²⁰ R.E.A. Palmer, *Roman Shrines of Female Chastity from the Caste Struggle to the Papacy of Innocent I*, “Rivista Storica dell’ Antichità” 1973, 4, p. 125.

adulteriis et de pudicitia and the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 B.C.)²¹. It seems it was in relation to this first law that he renewed the *Pudicitiae* temples, as mentioned by Propertius in one of his elegies²². Men were not engaged in the cult of *Pudicitiae*, so the right women had to be found to renew this cult. It seems natural that a plebeian wife and patrician daughter would be selected for this role²³. While Livia's involvement is certain, there are no direct indications of Julia's engagement²⁴. This may be a result of the imperial daughter's later fortunes, for there are no other candidates for this role²⁵.

It seems to me that the renewal of the cult of *Pudicitiae Patricia* and *Plebeia*, that is, the use of the double descent of the members of the immediate imperial family, is a good analogy for the ritual engagement in the cult of another pair of deities: *Pax* and *Concordia*. L. Richardson thinks that Livia dedicated the complex on *clivus Suburanus* to *Concordia*

²¹ Suet. *Aug.* 34, 1. D. Wardle, *Suetonius on the legislation of Augustus*, "Fundamina" 2015, 21, pp. 188–190.

²² Prop. 2, 6, 25: *templa Pudicitiae*. Cf. A. Gillmeister, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–236.

²³ Julia was funded a temple on Lesbos as *Venus Genetrix* when she was still a girl (*IGR* 4.9, *IG* 12.2.537). The coin with a portrait of Livia as Hera on the obverse and Julia as Aphrodite on the reverse comes from Pergamon (*RPC* 1.464, no. 2816). It is a unique coin with the likenesses of the wife and daughter of Augustus additionally presented in a religious context, T. Harvey, *Julia Augusta. Images of Rome's first empress on coins of the Roman empire*, London 2020, pp. 136–137. Notice that both women are wearing a *nodus* hairstyle, which enables them to also be identified as *pudicae* matrons, cf. *ibidem*, p. 71. On Livia's role in the 'female network' in Asia Minor see K. Welsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 323–324.

²⁴ Compare F.L. Caprariis, L. Petacco, *op. cit.*, p. 10. At least one testimony survives of Livia and Julia working together to organise a banquet for women to celebrate the triumph of Tiberius in 9 BC: Cass. Dio 55.2.4. Valerius Maximus' sentence (6.1) on *pudica*, of which Julia's palatine bedroom was an example, could have referred to Augustus' daughter, not his wife. C.J. Carter, *Valerius Maximus*, in: *Empire and Aftermath. Silver Latin II*, ed. T.A. Dorey, London–Boston 1975, pp. 31–33 argues that Julia was its only possible subject and believes that Valerius was "a tasteless and inept writer and provincial enough" to be unaware of the comparison's inappropriateness. Cf. J. Bellemore, *When did Valerius Maximus write?*, "Antichthon" 1989, 23, p. 76. Contra J. Briscoe, *Some Notes on Valerius Maximus*, "Sileno" 1993, 19, p. 400; H.-F. Mueller *Vita, Pudicitia, Libertas: Juno, Gender, and the Religious Politics in Valerius Maximus*, "Transactions of the American Philological Association" 1998, 128, p. 230 believes that the identification of Julia with Livia Iulia Augusta is the most logical, but the term *Augusta* does not appear in the text. I would not rule out the possibility that Valerius Maximus made use of this ambiguity deliberately bearing in mind the renewal of the cult of Chastity by the mother and wife of Tiberius, to whom he dedicated his work.

²⁵ Reconstruction and analysis of these events together with references to sources and source literature: R.E.A. Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–140.

Augusta. He argues that the consecration of, in his view, the *Concordia Augusta* portico was a reference to the *Pax Augusta* altar founded two years earlier²⁶. This opinion fits into the wider interpretations of Livia's foundation and its significance²⁷. A direct allusion to the gods *Concordia*, *Salus* and to *ara Pacis*, a synecdoche for the deified idea of Peace, appears in another passage in *Fasti*²⁸. This gives us a clue to the interconnectedness between these deities, especially *Concordia* and Peace. Filippo Coarelli's intuition is valuable in this context – he saw a significant physical resemblance between *aedes* in Livia's portico and *Ara Pacis Augustae*²⁹.

One can risk the claim that Augustus made a division of ritual associations, leaving *Pax* to himself and *Concordia* to Livia. References to the deity of concord do not appear very often on Augustan coins; instead, ideas related to the deity of peace are used. Even during the struggle for power, Augustus used *Pax* in the Caesarean sense, i.e. as an effort to end civil wars³⁰. Meanwhile, in Livia's case coins with the potential, which is not to say certain, likeness of her and *Pax* originate at the earliest from the time of her widowhood, if not only from that period³¹. That is, from the time in which after her adoption into *gens Iulia* she functioned in public as *Iulia Augusta*. It also seems clear that the difference in time between the festive inauguration of the portico by Livia and her son Tiberius, who was a patrician, and the dedication of the temple by Augustus' already plebeian wife alone, without the participation of any patrician relative, was due to the different origins of the immediate relatives.

I assume that Livia's foundation of the *aedes Concordiae* should also be seen as an expression of *concordia ordinum*, which found its most perfect embodiment in the marriage of Augustus and Livia. This was probably also underlined by the fact that, in contrast to the wealthy estate of Vedius Polio, the *porticus Liviae* was open to all, regardless of their status or wealth.

Lesław Morawiecki noted that with the victory of Augustus, the *Pax* took on an absolute character, and its weight shifted to victory over the

²⁶ L.J. Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 270; the temple on *Forum Romanum* funded by Tiberius was dedicated to *Concordia Augusta*. It seems that Richardson made an overinterpretation in an attempt to reconcile the supposed absence of a shrine of Concord in the portico with the unambiguous information provided by Ovid, see footnote 6.

²⁷ K. Welsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 321–322.

²⁸ *Ov. Fast.* 3.879–882. Cf. Cass. Dio 54.35.1–2.

²⁹ F. Coarelli, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

³⁰ L. Morawiecki, *Monete, poesia e politica: alcune riflessioni su numismatica, ideologia e letteratura tardo-repubblicana e augustea*, Viterbo 2004, p. 50.

³¹ E.g. *RIC* 1².26.87. T. Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 80, 112, 132. The likenesses are identified as *Pax/Ceres* – Livia type.

external enemy and the protection of the borders of the empire, which was to usher in a new era in Roman history³². *Concordia*, on the other hand, was understood in relative terms³³. This made it possible to use terms and ideas broad enough to carry across a variety of content which together formed a common whole. Using the figure of his wife, who came from a plebeian family, Augustus combined the traditional republican associations of *concordia*. This gave him the opportunity to semantically juggle the concept of concord, which created an ambiguous but religiously and socially coherent play of meanings. Thus, *concordia* between states, sexes and within the family could provide the Roman people with a true *pax*. The erection of the *aedes Concordiae* fits into these polysemantic activities of Augustus by highlighting the important function performed by Livia, the founder and dedicatee of the temple.

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³² L. Morawiecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51.

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