

ANCIENT CULT IN BALKANS THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS AND ICONOGRAPHY

Edited by Sofija Petković and Nadežda Gavrilović Vitas



Serbian Archaeological Society

Illustration on the front cover:

Gigaiia (Gypaia) as Athens (interpretatio graeca) terracota,
Pella, Greece, the 3rd century BC
(postcard, Archaeological Museum in Pella).

Илустрација на предњој корици:

Гигаја (Гупаја) као Атина (interpretatio graeca) теракота,
Пела, Грчка, 3. век пре н.е.
(разгледница, Археолошки музеј у Пели).

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National Museum, Belgrade, the 1st – 2nd centuries AD
(Petković 2010)

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Народни музеј, Београд, 1– 2 век н.е.
(Петковић 2010)



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Beograd 2020.

АНТИЧКИ КУЛТ НА БАЛКАНУ КРОЗ НАЛАЗЕ И ИКОНОГРАФИЈУ

уредиле Софија Петковић и Надежда Гавриловић Витас

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PREFACE

The ancient cults and iconography represent an important segment of not only Roman religion, but also of Roman culture which was woven into the Roman everyday life, but also in the sepulchral life. The importance of archaeological findings from Roman Balkans' provinces is of great importance, not only because they mirror the mundane and Afterlife of the Romanised and indigenous population in the territory, but also because they significantly contribute to the analysis and interpretation of the most intimate beliefs and thoughts of the residents.

During the period of the antiquity, the territory of Balkans was divided into several provinces which differently went through the process of Romanisation, with their own characteristics considering the administration, stationing of army units, forming of military centres and settlements, but also differently accepting the Roman customs and religion, with more or less present degree of acceptance that is resistance to the new pantheon of gods and goddesses. Having in mind previously said, testimonies in the shape of votive and funerary monuments, different kinds of archaeological findings and sacral spaces where the deities were honoured and venerated, can significantly help in the more precise and veritable picture of the cults and beliefs present in the Balkans during the period of Roman reign.

Through the results of archaeological excavations, new finds which cast a different light on certain problems and attested presence of different cults and religions in the Balkans' Roman provinces, we gathered the papers from different experts in the subject of antique cults and iconography, partly presented in the Classical section of Serbian Archaeological Society, particularly during the session which was dealing with the problems in ancient religion.

The idea for publication "Ancient Cult in the Balkans through Archaeological Findings and Iconogra-

phy" originate from the session of the same name held in 2017 during the XL Assembly and Colloquia of Serbian Archaeological Society in Belgrade. It represents the collection of papers from colleagues focused on different problems of ancient cult and iconography analysed and interpreted through epigraphic and archaeological monuments and other kinds of different findings in the Balkans. Through the analysis and interpretation of different monuments from different Balkans' Roman provinces we can more clearly follow the equation and syncretisation of Greek and Roman cults with unknown cults of indigenous gods and goddesses, but also better observe the role of different social groups like the army, traders, artisans etc., presume the origin and provenience of the dedicators and localisation of possible sanctuaries.

In the volume "Ancient Cult in the Balkans through Archaeological Findings and Iconography", the research of distinguished archaeologists and historians of religion is presented, with the intention of showing how the beliefs of the indigenous population were unbreakably entwined with the official Roman system of religious beliefs in the mundane and Afterlife realm during the antiquity.

All of the researches presented in the papers of this publication significantly contribute to a better understanding of provincial Roman religion and cults, the role of the Balkans' Roman provinces in the Roman Empire and most importantly, reveal the most intimate beliefs and thoughts of the population which inhabited the Balkans in the antiquity. We hope that this publication will present an important contribution in the future researches of Roman religion and cults in the territory of Roman provinces in the Balkans.

Sofija Petković and Nadežda Gavrilović Vitas

NADEDŽA GAVRILOVIĆ VITAS

THE CULTS OF AESCULAPIUS
AND HYGIEIA IN THE
CENTRAL BALKAN ROMAN
PROVINCES



THE CULTS OF AESCULAPIUS AND HYGIEIA IN THE CENTRAL BALKAN ROMAN PROVINCES¹

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Abstract: The cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia belonged to those of the most favoured deities in the Roman Central Balkan provinces. The so-far known epigraphic and archaeological material attests their popularity in the northern, eastern and southern parts of the territory, which can be partly explained by the favouring of the cults in neighbouring Thrace, but also with the fact that soldiers, as one of the main devotees of Aesculapius and Hygieia, were responsible for the spread of their cults. The religious association of the god Aesculapius with Jupiter Dolichenus confirms their mutual iatric dimension in the 3rd century, while shrines of Aesculapius can be assumed in Prizren and Constantine's villa with peristyle, in Mediana. The veneration of iatric cults in the territory of the Central Balkans lasted until the end of Antiquity, attested by epigraphic and archaeological monuments from the first half of the 4th century.

Key words: Iatric cults, Aesculapius, Hygieia, Central Balkans

The Roman conquest of the territory of the Central Balkans, besides the formation of new provinces and the establishment of military and administrative control, brought new religious beliefs to the indigenous population who, depending on the part of the conquered territory, either more or less readily accepted or resisted the newly introduced deities. The indigenous gods and goddesses, some with unknown and some with known names, were, during the period of the Roman reign, identified with Roman deities and, in some cases, syncretised with them. However, in some parts of the Central Balkans Roman provinces, where some of the indigenous gods were more respected and favoured, those deities of the Roman pantheon with similar character never gained any significant popularity (for example, the cult of the indigenous god Silvan, which was widespread in western parts of the Central Balkans Roman provinces, unlike the cult of the god Liber). This was especially true, along with other examples, of the cults of the god Aesculapius and the goddess Hygieia. The cults of these two Greek deities, in Rome identified with the god Aesculapius and the goddess Salus, were relatively popular in the central, eastern and southern parts of Central Balkans Roman provinces, worshipped alone or with other deities with whom they were, in the

period of the 2nd or the 3rd century, equated due to their similar religious functions. The number of epigraphic and archaeological monuments attests that their cults were favoured from the 1st to the 4th century and the analysis of epigraphic texts implies social groups of their worshippers, among which the most numerous were soldiers, physicians, merchants, craftsmen, freedmen, foreigners and slaves. On some monuments, the iatric deities were worshipped together with the members of their family, as with Telesphoros, while some monuments were found in the vicinity of thermal spas, which is to be expected since water was a natural environment for the cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia. On some monuments, however, the dedicants are physicians, who might have had their *collegia* in the territory of the Central Balkans.

There are, currently, twelve known epigraphic monuments dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia that were discovered in the northern and southern parts of the Central Balkan territory. Two monuments dedicated to the deities were found in the locality of Ratiaria (Archar) and while from the inscription of the first monument we know nothing more than that a certain Marcus made a vow to the divine pair, the text of the second monument confirms that there was a temple

¹ The article results from the project: *Romanization, urbanization and transformation of urban centres of civilian and military character in the Roman provinces in the territory of Serbia* (no. 177007), financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

of the gods in Ratiaria.² The text of the second monument, dedicated to *Aesculapius Ratiariensis*, informs us that the dedicant, whose name is Antonius, financed the construction of a shrine and dedicated a statue of Aesculapius.³ As can be observed, the god bears the epithet *Ratiariensis*, which implies the significant popularity of the god in the Colonia Ulpia Ratiaria and, in the opinion of K. Stoev, it also indicates the god's function as the city protector,⁴ but also allows the presumption that Aesculapius was identified with a similar Thracian god, whose name is unknown. The inscription also attests to the construction of the shrine undertaken at the command of Hygieia and mentions a sum of 3,000 sesterces, which was probably only part of the sum needed for the building of the shrine and for the gift of a statue. The monument dedicated to *Aesculapius Ratiariensis* is dated between AD 101 and 150.

A votive monument dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia that provides more information about its dedicant and his social status, was found in the locality of Skelani (Municipium Malvesatium) and was set up by Gaius Iulius Herculanus, who was a *beneficiarius consularis* of the Legion I Italica.⁵ The name *Herculanus* could imply a Greek origin of the dedicant, who was certainly an important member of the society in Municipium Malvesatium in the period of the beginning of the 3rd century, when the monument was erected, probably for the health of the dedicant or his family. During the period of the Roman reign, Municipium Malvesatium was one of the three most important Roman cities in the Podrinje area (as

well as the centres of Domavia and Splonum) and a significant mining centre. Judging by the epigraphic monuments, besides the indigenous Illyrian population, in the 2nd and 3rd century in Municipium Malvesatium a large number of inhabitants of Italic, Greek and Oriental origin can be observed, all with their own religious beliefs, which left traces on monuments dedicated to the deities Jupiter, Mars, Liber, Silvan, Diana and Mithras.⁶

A votive monument dedicated to the god Aesculapius and the goddess Salus was found in the locality of Ravna (Timacum Minus), representing a unique find from the Central Balkans Roman provinces, on which a vow is made to the goddess Salus. The monument was erected by Titus Flavius, of whose social position we, unfortunately, know nothing.⁷ The Roman goddess Salus mentioned along with Aesculapius on the votive monument from Ravna is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hygieia and she is associated with the god not only in epigraphic monuments, but also in archaeological material and on coins.⁸ The cult of the goddess Salus, one of the most ancient Roman goddesses, was confirmed from the end of the 4th century BC, when a temple dedicated to the goddess was built and, from that period, she represented good health but in a broader sense of the word, more closely linked to public health. Unlike Hygieia, who was the protectress of bodily health, Salus was also the protectress of the general prosperity of the Roman State and its rulers.⁹ Salus was worshipped under the epithets Augusta, Publica or Reipublicae,¹⁰ she was also, like the goddess Hygieia, represented with a serpent (or feeding a serpent) and sometimes together

2 The text of the first monument from Archar reads: *Asclepio / [et] Hygiae / Marcus / ex voto*, AE 1902, 42.

3 The text of the second monument from Archar reads: *Aesculapio / Ratiari(ensi) aedem / statuam [3]CV[3] / iussit Hygia Do[3] / ex HS [3] / Antonius P[3] / [3] HS III*, AE 2014, 1117.

4 Stoev 2014, 230-283.

5 The votive monument dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia from Skelani (Municipium Malvesatium) is made of limestone and was found in a fragmented state (the top of the monument is broken). The text of the votive monument reads: *Aesculapio / et (H)ygiae Augg(ustis) / s(acrum) / C(aius) Iul(ius) Herculanus b(ene)ff(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) / leg(ionis) I Ital(icae) Moes(iae) / inf(erioris) l(ibens) p(osuit)*, Imamović 1977, n. 203: ILJug 3, 1522.

6 The earliest monuments from Municipium Malvesatium coincide with Roman interest in silver mines on its territory – from the end of the 1st century Municipium Malvesatium was formed in the area where the Illyrian tribe of the Dindari lived, who were, after the Roman conquest, slowly Romanised. Thanks to its very favourable geographic position, Municipium Malvesatium was connected to centres on both sides of the river Drina. It was, for a long time, an administrative centre for smaller places in its vicinity, with stationed military units of Legion I Adiutrix, X Geminae, XI Claudiae piae fidelis, V Macedonicae and I Italicae. A significant number of *beneficarii consularis* were employed in administrative and customs jobs, watching over the various roads etc. Skelani became a municipium probably between AD 117 and 158, for customs see Gavrilović Vitas, Popović 2015, 197-220.

7 The votive monument dedicated to Aesculapius and Salus, from Ravna, was discovered after having been used as spolia in a private house wall. Now it is lost. The text of the inscription reads: *Aesculapio et / Saluti T(itus) Fl(avius) Adi[3]TVS[3]*, AE 1934, 186; IMS III/2, 1. P. Petrović suggests that dedicant's cognomen could have been Adi[tus], Ad[utus] or Ad[utor], IMS III/2, 63.

8 The union between goddess Salus and Aesculapius is also confirmed in a funerary context, in the institution of *schola* dedicated to the deities in an area between the Aventine and Monte Testaccio, Renberg 2006/2007, 91, 111, 135.

9 Romans regarded Salus as primarily a symbol of safety and salvation and, in a broader sense, also as a symbol of health, Compton 2002, 320-321.

10 Iniesta, 2014, 87.



Fig. 1 – Votive monument from Niš
(<http://lupa.at/29817/photos/1>)

with another god of health, Apollo. By the end of the 2nd century, the goddess Salus was identified with Hygieia.¹¹ The relationship between Aesculapius and Salus was similar to that between Aesculapius and Hygieia, which can be observed in the *scholae* dedicated to the deities Aesculapius and Salus, for the promotion of the well-being of the imperial household.¹² Therefore, it can be presumed that with the votive monument from Ravna, the goddess Salus is identified

with the goddess Hygieia, in their mutual symbolism of protectresses of good health and well-being. Thus far known votive monuments from other Roman provinces dedicated to Aesculapius and Salus, were usually set up for the health of the individual and his family, but also for the health of whole military units, as in the case of a monument from the village of Binchester in Britain.¹³ The votive monument from Ravna can be dated to the 3rd century.

The next votive monument in the context of the cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia is very interesting, since it bears an inscription dedicated to the emperor Septimius Severus with the names of Aesculapius and Hygieia beside the representations of the deities, from the first known physician from Naissus, a certain Claudius Magnus (Fig. 1).¹⁴ The representation of Aesculapius is shown on the right lateral side of the monument – the god is presented as a mature, bearded man dressed in a folded himation, with his right hand holding a serpent-entwined staff with a pine cone on its top (Fig. 2). On the monument's left lateral side, Hygieia is represented in a long dress which falls in rich pleats, with her left elbow leant on a column shaped altar. In her left elevated hand, the goddess holds a snake (Fig. 3). On the right of the goddess, a smaller image of Telesphoros is presented in deep relief, dressed in a long himation, holding an unknown square object with his left hand (perhaps a medical codex or a book of recipes for the preparation of medicines). Above the images of both deities, their names are inscribed with large letters. Stylistically, the representations of Aesculapius and Hygieia are quite summary and plain, presenting the moderately skilful work of a local artisan. A very close analogy can be observed in a votive monument from the locality of Glava Panega, with an inscription dedicated to Aesculapius Saldenos (Σαλδηνος) and images of Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphoros.¹⁵ The votive monument from Naissus is dedicated by Claudius

¹¹ Boyce 1959, 79.

¹² Like the schola from Rome (remains of a structure found at the Via Galvani), dedicated to Aesculapius and Salus Augusta, for the well-being and health of the emperor. The schola is dated to the period of Hadrian, Renberg 2006/2007, 111, 145, cat. no. 14.

¹³ The votive monument from Binchester is dedicated by Marcus Aurelius for the well-being of the ala Vettonum, Israelowich 2015, 100.

¹⁴ The votive monument was discovered in 1984, during the archaeological excavations led in the area of Niš Fortress, in a room of a presumed sanctuary or valetudinarium. The room in which the monument was found was richly fresco-painted, and the monument was also covered with traces of red paint in the area of the inscription, Дрча 2001, 21. The inscription of the monument reads: *Pro salute[m] d[omi]ni <n=M>(ostri) / L(uci) Septimi Severi Pii / Pertinacis Aug(usti) et / Imp(eratoris) M(arci) Aur(eli) Antonin(i) / [[et P(ubli) Sept(imi) Getae Caes(aris)]] / «Pii Aug(usti) et Iul(iae)» / «Dom(nae) Aug(ustae) m(atris) c(astrorum)» // Claudius Magnus medi(cus) // Asclepio // Hygia(e)*, AE 2013, 1322.

¹⁵ Мънзова 1977, 96-97. One of the most important sanctuaries of Aesculapius was discovered in the locality of Glava Panega. The god was worshipped under the epithet *Saldenos* and presented together with Hygieia and Telesphoros or the Thracian Rider. During archaeological research in 2013, two buildings were uncovered at the locality – a temple of Aesculapius and a sanatorium, which presumably served as the accommodation for pilgrim patients. Besides votive monuments dedicated to Aesculapius and statuettes, the largest category of finds is represented by votive reliefs (126), on which the syncretism between the god Aesculapius and the Thracian Rider is depicted, Konstantinos 2013, 65-66.

Magnus, the first physician known by name from Naissus. Judging by his dedication to Septimius Severus and Iulia Domna, who, in the inscription, is evoked as “*mater castrorum*”, it is possible that Claudius Magnus was also of Near Eastern origin, like the emperor and his wife.¹⁶ The question of whether he was a civilian or military physician remains open, although S. Drča suggests that Claudius Magnus was a civilian physician¹⁷ – however, almost all physicians mentioned in inscriptions from the territory of the Central Balkans Roman provinces were in some way connected with the army.¹⁸ Since the votive monument of Claudius Magnus was found *in situ* and the archaeological excavations were never continued in the area of Niš fortress where the votive monument was found, it is possible that the monument was placed in a sanctuary of healing gods or perhaps a sanatorium or *valetudinarium*.¹⁹ The existence of a cult room of Aesculapius and Hygieia in the *valetudinarium* in Aquincum is probable, as in Vindobona and Novae.²⁰ The votive monument from Niš can be dated to 202 and the reason for Claudius Magnus making a vow could be the return of the imperial family from the East and their passing through the Central Balkan provinces.

In the locality of the thermal springs at Krupačka banjica (situated between Krupac and Veliko Selo, near Pirot), a marble votive plate with a representation of two Thracian Riders and a dedication to Apollo and Aesculapius, was discovered (Fig. 4).²¹ It is presumed that the relief presentation shows the syncretism of the cults of Dioscuri and the Thracian Rider and that the second part of the epithet Βεπακεληνοῖρ, κεληνορ can be translated as “flowing, springing”, which would imply that the epithet was connected to the antique name of the thermal springs in the locality where the monument was found.²² The dedication made to the two gods Aesculapius and Apollo, iatric deities *par excellence*, because of the presentation of the Thracian



Fig. 2 – Votive monument from Niš (the presentation of Aesculapius) (<http://lupa.at/29817/photos/5>)

Rider, could, in a marble votive plate from Krupačka banjica, imply that here the iatric dimension is attributed to the Thracian Rider as well. The equation of the Thracian Rider with both Apollo and Aesculapius is very frequent in Thrace – in the south-eastern area of today’s Bulgaria the Rider is more associated with Apollo, but in the western area of Philippopolis the de-

¹⁶ As a constant companion of her husband, Septimius Severus, on his expeditions, Iulia Domna also represented a significant moral-raising factor for the troops and, therefore, was proclaimed by the Senate, in 195, as “*Mater Castrorum*”, mother of the camps. Her title symbolised her protection over the troops and, more generally, a strong bond between the imperial dynasty and the Roman army, Levick 2007, 42.

¹⁷ Дрча 2001, 62.

¹⁸ Грбић 2013, 61-66. The physicians could be deployed in cohorts (*medicus cohortis*), legions (*medicus legionis*), alae (*medicus aleae*), castra (*medicus castrensis*) and military hospitals (*medicus valetudinarii*), Salazar 2000, 79-80.

¹⁹ The *valetudinarium* was the workplace of military physicians, where they treated the wounded and sick and had provisions of medical supplies. Contrary to some opinions in the scholarly literature that *valetudinaria* were some sort of storage rooms, it has been archaeologically confirmed that *valetudinaria* were military hospitals, Israelowich 2015, 100.

²⁰ It is presumed that the *valetudinarium* in Aquincum had a cult room for Aesculapius and Hygieia, from Trajan’s reign, van der Ploeg 2018, 185.

²¹ The votive plate (dim. 34x25x4 cm) was discovered in 1953, in the area where the remains of a Roman building were also found. On the relief, two horsemen turned towards each other are presented, with a tree in the middle and a snake entwined around it. The inscription reads: Απλόλωνι και Αρκληπιω | Βεπακεληνοῖρ Γαιορ Πτοκλοῦς | ευξαμενον 'ανιθηκι, Петровић 1964/65, 249-250.

²² Ibid, 249.



Fig. 3 – Votive monument from Niš (the presentation of Hygieia) (<http://lupa.at/29817/photos/4>)



Fig. 4 – Marble votive plate from Krupačka banjica (Васиљевић 2014, 108, сл. 30)



Fig. 5 – Votive monument from Prizren (<http://lupa.at/28428/photos/1>)

ity is more related to Aesculapius.²³ In the already mentioned sanctuary in Glava Panega, the god Aesculapius was presented either alone or in the company of Hygieia or Telesphorus, but in the style of the Thracian Rider, similar to the way the iatric god was presented at the sanctuary at Batkun.²⁴ Sanctuaries of both the Thracian Rider and Aesculapius are known in the wider territory of Philippopolis, while a joint sanctuary existed at Dolna Dikanja.²⁵

The votive monument from Prizren represents a dedication to several deities, since it is dedicated not only to Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphoros, but also to the genius Dolichenus and the genius cohortis (Fig. 5).²⁶ The name of the god Aesculapius is written above the relief representation of him with, presumably, Telesphoros and Hygieia – Aesculapius is presented with a snake entwined around the staff in his

²³ In the area of Philippopolis, the sanctuary at Batkun was the most important, with approximately 250 reliefs and statues discovered, of which many are dedicated to Aesculapius Kurios, Oppermann 2005, 351; Boteva 2011, 86.

²⁴ van der Ploeg 2018, 198.

²⁵ Dimitrova 2002, 213.

²⁶ The votive monument from Prizren, now in the Archaeological Museum in Skoplje, made from white marble, is partly damaged in its upper-right corner and, beside the inscription, it has representations of Aesculapius with a snake entwined staff and Telesphoros. For more details see Gavrilović 2010a, 457-468. The text of the inscription: [*Telesphoro Hygiae*] // *As | clep[i] | o | Sof--j | | Heracliti Su/rus et pro / Gen(io) I(ovis) O(ptimi) Dolic(h)eni / Paterno deo et Geni(o) / co(ho)rtis votum libies(!) f(ecit)*, *AE* 1981, 739.



Fig. 6 – Porphyry statue of Aesculapius from Mediana (photo documentation: Narodni Muzej Niš)



Fig. 7 – Porphyry statue of Hygieia from Mediana (photo documentation: Narodni Muzej Niš)

right hand, while in his left hand the god holds an unknown object. Beside him, a small figure of Telesphoros in a long dress with chiton and hood, is shown. Beside Telesphoros, a figure dressed in a long dress, probably Hygieia, is presented, but, unfortunately, the image of the figure is damaged in the area of the its head. However, it seems that in her right hand the female figure is holding a patera. It can be presumed that, given that the name Aesculapius written above god's head, the names of Hygieia and Telesphoros were also written above their images in the damaged part of the monument. The genius of the Syrian god Dolichenus is here evoked as *paternus*

deus, which could signify either the god as *deus patriae* or some independent deity.²⁷ M. Speidel presumes that the form of Genius Dolichenus from the Prizren monument could present a shorter version of Genius Maximus Dolichenus, which is also seen on the Noricum monument.²⁸ However, as A. Bošković-Robert observes, on the Noricum monument the epithet Maximus is present and on the Prizren monument it is missing. Therefore, a direct analogy between the two inscriptions cannot be made.²⁹ The name of the dedicant, Surus, could imply his Eastern or Celtic origin, but in the case of his eastern origin (since Jupiter Dolichenus is an Asia Minor god), Surus

²⁷ Speidel 1980, 183.

²⁸ AE 1975, 668.

²⁹ Bošković-Robert 2006, 106.

could have been an Oriental perhaps serving in the Cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum.³⁰ The term *genius cortis* could refer to the genius of the auxiliary cohort, but also to the god Jupiter Cohortalis.³¹ Although analysis of epigraphic and archaeological monuments dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus has shown that the god was venerated in the Central Balkans Roman provinces primarily as *deus militaris*, but also as a protector of mines and miners, quarries and stonemasons, here it can be presumed that he was worshipped as an iatric deity, not only because of the union with the healing gods Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphoros, but also because of known analogies from other Roman provinces where he was respected in the mentioned capacity, in dedications containing the formula *pro salute*³² or with the goddess of health, Salus, as in the case of the votive monument from the locality of Corstopitum, today's Corbridge, in Britain.³³ The union of the two gods Jupiter Dolichenus and Aesculapius is known from the *dolichenum* in Trastevere in Rome and it has been attested that they were venerated by soldiers and civilians as iatric deities.³⁴ In neighbouring Dacia, monuments from Apulum and monuments dedicated to Apollo discovered in Jupiter Dolichenus sanctuaries, *dolichena*, imply that in the late 2nd century, Jupiter Dolichenus was venerated as an iatric god as well in the province, and particularly favoured among soldiers.³⁵ The votive monument from Prizren is dated to the 2nd century.

Another votive monument dedicated to Aesculapius was also found in Prizren, built into the walls of the medieval church of St. Sunday as *spolia*.³⁶ The inscription is placed above and below the relief presentation of the god in the upper part of the monu-

ment: Aesculapius is shown frontally, standing and leaning on staff with an entwined snake, as a mature, bearded man with a phiale in his right hand. The dedication to Aesculapius is made by six dedicants whose names are given in short form. M. Dušanić restores the dedicants' names as: Μικ(κ)ων or (Μικαδος), Θυα(μικς) or Θυα(λλικς), Γαι(ανος), Ασκληπιος, Δημητριος, and Αρτεμιδωρος. Judging by the short forms of the dedicants' names, their low social status can be presumed – they were either slaves or freedmen, who were perhaps associated in the dedication to Aesculapius to thank him for their health after a long journey (or for some other reason) or constituted a part of a private association due to their mutual profession, which could have been connected to the mines. These kinds of private religious associations are known in the territory of the Central Balkans and were formed by immigrants of Oriental origin, associated in honouring their ancestral gods with the goal to preserve their national identity. Therefore, the association of Galatians is known from the vicinity of Scupi, the association of Cilices Contirones from Singidunum and the association of dedicants who set up votive monuments to the Asia Minor deity Zeus Melanus or private associations from Viminacium.³⁷ Also, the fact that the dedicants of the Prizren monument erected a dedication to the god Aesculapius in Greek, implies their Greek or Oriental origin, which would again support the hypothesis about their possible Asia Minor origin, if they were employed in the Dardanian mines. The monument is dated between the second half of the 2nd century to the beginning of the 3rd century.

30 B. Dragojević-Josifovska thinks that the name Surus can be met among Thracians, Celts and Illyrians, but also among the population of Semitic origin, *IMS* VI: 96. M. Speidel suggests that if the Genius of an auxiliary cohort was being referred to on the Prizren inscription, the dedicant could have been in active service, as a soldier of perhaps the Cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum, who did not feel the need to name his unit if the altar was placed in a temple belonging to members of the same Cohors, Speidel 1980: 183.

31 *Ibid.*, 183-184.

32 Turcan R. 1996, 168; Merlat P. 1951, 35, n. 37; 281, n. 286; 285, n. 290; 320, n. 324.

33 Nash-Williams V. E. 1952, 72-77; Merlat P. 1951, 266, n. 273.

34 Besides the inscription from the votive altar from Prizren, two more inscriptions are dedicated to Aesculapius and Jupiter Dolichenus, from the locality of Cibinium in Dacia and from the locality in Numidia, where the dedication is made to Aesculapius, Hygieia and Jupiter Dolichenus, Merlat 1951, 35, num. 37, 285, num. 290.

35 Szabó 2018, 75.

36 A marble votive altar (dim. 0.76x0.39 m) contains the inscription in Greek:

Κορίω Ασκληπιω Σωτήρι | εθη | καν | Μικ (), Γαι (), Ασκλη () | Θυα (), Δημη (), Αρτε () | ὑπερ της εαυτων | σωτηρίας δωρον
Душанић 1983, 27-32.

37 The Galatian presence is attested in the locality of Nerezi, near Scupi and the Galatians mentioned in the inscription were probably a part of the castellum's garrison, *IMS* VI, 154, num. 187. The association of Cilices Contirones, who were a part of Legia IV Flavia, is attested in Singidunum, *IMS* I, num. 3. Four votive monuments dedicated to Jupiter Melanus were discovered in Ulpiana, confirming the Asia Minor origin of the dedicants, Душанић 1971, 251; Parović-Pešikan 1990, 607-616; Bošković-Robert 2006, 98-100, num. 114-116; Gavrilović 2010, 311-312, num. 118-121; Grbić 2015, 125-136. In Viminacium, private religious associations are attested originating from κομη Χαριμοντα near Doliche in Asia Minor, κομη Σγγων and Abdarmisu in Commagenian Germaniceia, Вулић 1903, 85, num. 2, *IMS* II, num. 169, 211, 213 (and perhaps num. 212 in which Κομη Ιαβαντην is mentioned, probably belonging to the same Asia Minor region).

The next votive monument was found in the locality of Peć and is dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia, but unfortunately it is in a very fragmented state and aside from the fact that the monument is also dedicated to Telesphoros, no other data about the dedicant, his social status or the reason for making a vow are known. Therefore, the monument can be dated to the period of the 2nd - 3rd century.³⁸

The last votive monument dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia was discovered in Osmakovo and it is also in a fragmentary state – only its lower part is preserved, along with an inscription dedicated to the deities by a certain G. (T.?) Lukius Terentianos (?).³⁹ Judging by the preserved iconography on the fragmented marble plate, a horseman's leg under which is a dog, it represented a Thracian Rider. The scene determines the monument to the third group of Thracian Rider monuments (typology G. Kazarov) and it can be dated to the late 2nd or the early 3rd century.⁴⁰

Archaeological finds in the Central Balkan Roman provinces connected to the cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia encompass sculptures, statues and gems with representations of deities. Porphyry and marble sculptures and statuettes of Aesculapius and Hygieia were found in abundance in one locality – the imperial residence of Constantine the Great, in Mediana, near Naissus. During archaeological excavations in 1972, in one of the western rooms (w-4) of Constantine's villa with peristyle, a group find of 16 fragmented statues in total was discovered, encompassing, besides representations of other deities: two porphyry statuettes of Aesculapius and Hygieia with votive inscriptions, two marble statuettes of Aesculapius with Telesphoros and a marble statuette of Hygieia.⁴¹ In the period from 1996 to 2002, in archaeological excavations conducted in the southern part of the villa, a frag-

mented marble head of Aesculapius was found, while in the archaeological campaigns from 2011, other porphyry and marble fragments of already known statuettes of Aesculapius and Hygieia were discovered. Two porphyry statuettes of Aesculapius and Hygieia represent the deities on rectangular bases where votive inscriptions dedicated by a certain Romeitalcus are inscribed.⁴² Both statuettes are without heads and represent skilfully modelled works of art – Aesculapius is standing in a *contraposto* pose and is dressed in a richly pleated himation (not covering most of his torso or his left arm, revealing a strong muscular male body) (Fig. 6). The god is holding a globe in his left hand, while the snake-entwined staff is missing from his right hand. The porphyry standing statuette of Hygieia is dressed in a long chiton, with a himation and her left arm is bent at the elbow holding a patera in her hand (Fig. 7). There is a snake entwined around Hygieia's right arm, which is moving toward the patera and the votive inscription on the base of the statue. Both statuettes can be dated in the last decades of the 3rd or in the first decade of the 4th century. Porphyry sculptures are known from the imperial localities in the Central Balkans territory, and are related to the period of the Tetrarchy and served the purpose of celebrating imperial power.⁴³ Votive inscriptions to the divine iatric couple are very rare in the Balkan provinces, but were very popular in the Greek East. Such expensive objects, like porphyry statues, could be afforded only by someone of high social status and solid finances, like the dedicant Romeitalcus, a *vir perfectissimus* and holding the title of a knight, was. It is most probable that the porphyry statues of Aesculapius and Hygieia were carved in Egypt and placed in some sanctuary, perhaps in Thrace, from where they were brought to Mediana to be placed in the sanctuary of the divine pair in the audience hall of Constantine's villa with peristyle, established probably during Julian's reign.⁴⁴ Julian's admiration of the deities Helios, the Mother of the Gods

³⁸ The text of the inscription reads: *Aescula/pio / Hygiae / T{h}eles/p(h)oro, IJug 3, 1447.*

³⁹ The small marble plate (dim. 0.13 x 0.19 x 0.05 m) was found in Osmakovo. The text of the inscription reads: *[Ασκληπιώ και Ήγυιά (Γ. Τ) Λουκίος Τερεντιανός(?) [Ε]ύχη* Вулић 1941-1948, 289, num. 14.

⁴⁰ *IMS IV, 107, n. 80; ССЕТ, 14, n. 21.*

⁴¹ Јовановић 1975, 57-65.

⁴² The porphyry votive statues of Aesculapius and Hygieia contain the dedications on the bases of the statues, made to Aesculapius Soter, that is Hygieia, by Romeitalcus and his wife Philippa. The names of the dedicants, Romeitalkes and Philipa imply their probable Thracian, that is Greek, origin. The inscription on the votive statue of the god Aesculapius reads: *Σωτηρι Ασκληπιω Ροι / μηταλκης και η συμ / βιος Φιλιππα ευ / σμενοι ανεθηκ[αν]*. The inscription on the votive statue of the goddess Hygieia reads: *Υγεια Ρομηταλκης / ο διαση[μοτατος] και η συμβιος / Φιλιππαιευσαμενο / ι ανεθηκ[αν]*. The name of the dedicant on the base of Hygieia statue has been deliberately erased (*damnatio memoriae*), Јовановић 1975, 57-58; Петровић 1976; Petrović 1990; Tomović 1993, 98, num. 111, 112, Fig. 36. 1-2, 27. 1-2, Дрча 2004, 155-156, cat. 73-74; Vasić, Milošević, Gavrilović Vitas, Crnoglavac 2016, 84-85, num. 1-2; Поповић 2017: 96-100, cat. num. 30-31; Vasić 2018, 95, num. 1-2.

⁴³ As I. Popović points out, porphyry sculptures from the Central Balkans territory were mostly found during archaeological excavations and are known from the localities of Felix Romuliana, Naissus, Šarkamen and Transdierna. Most of them were found in a fragmented state, intentionally damaged and broken, Поповић 2017, 42-43, 104.

⁴⁴ *IMS IV, 97-98; Поповић 2017, 96; Vasić 2018.*



Fig. 8 – Marble statue of Aesculapius with Telesphoros from Mediana (photo documentation: Narodni Muzej Niš)

and Aesculapius are well known from ancient writers, but also from his two hymns dedicated to Helios and the Mother of the Gods, therefore it is quite logical that the emperor, who was the last of the Roman emperors who tried to revive pagan traditions and beliefs, chose

Aesculapius as a powerful opponent to the budding Christianity.⁴⁵ Two marble statuettes of Aesculapius with Telesphoros represent the same iconographic type of the god with his son – Aesculapius is standing with a small figure of Telesphoros with a hood and a mantle with a cloak, next to the god's left leg (Fig. 8).⁴⁶ The head of the first statuette that was additionally found, shows that Aesculapius was represented with long hair falling on his shoulders and a short braid, divided in the middle, with well modelled facial features. There is a Greek inscription on the plinth which reads “To Aesculapius the Savior, Sim [...] a priest.”⁴⁷ As we can see, the epithet of Aesculapius is *Savior*, which underlines his role as a god (similar to Hercules and Dionysus) who will protect and save the dedicant, but also, in a wider context, as the god who cures diseases and saves the whole world.⁴⁸ Unlike the second marble statue of Aesculapius, the first statue with a Greek inscription on the pedestal represents a mediocre provincial work, executed with very little skillfulness, probably to the middle of the 4th century.⁴⁹ The second marble statue of the god with Telesphoros represents a somewhat more skilfully modelled work, yet quite stylised (the detail of Telesphoros' figure), which was modelled between the second half of the 3rd and the first half of the 4th century (Fig. 9).⁵⁰ The marble statuette of Hygieia is also, unfortunately, missing its head, but represents the deity in a standing position, dressed in a long, pleated chiton, with arms bent at the elbows, with her right hand holding the gown, while in her left hand was probably a patera (Fig. 10). The statuette can be dated in the first half of the 3rd century. As was already mentioned, during the excavations in Mediana in 2002, near the monumental gate of the villa with peristyle, a fragment of a marble head was found, slightly larger than life-size, probably belonging to the statue of Aesculapius.⁵¹ Although the fragment of the male head in question is too small to make a more thorough analysis, M. Vasić presumes that it was analogous to other known statues of the god and, judging by the richly modelled curls of the hair, dated from the second half of the 2nd century to the first two decades of the 3rd century.⁵²

⁴⁵ Browning 1978, 38, 142, 167; Teitler 2017, 27-28, 126.

⁴⁶ The first marble statuette is 52 cm in height and although it is missing the figure of Telesphoros, it can be assumed, based on analogous sculptures, that it belongs to this iconographic type of representations of Aesculapius and Telesphoros. The second marble statuette of Aesculapius and Telesphoros is 24 cm in height and represents a solidly modelled work of art belonging to the same iconographic type of representations as the previous one, Vasić, Milošević, Gavrilović Vitas, Crnoglavac 2016, 86-87, n.3-4.

⁴⁷ The inscription is in Greek and reads: *Τον σωτηρα Αεσκληπιον Συμ [±6 ιε] ρεως*, *IMS* IV, 97-98, num. 61; Дрча 2004, 157, num. 75.

⁴⁸ Vasić 2004, 105.

⁴⁹ Vasić, Milošević, Gavrilović Vitas, Crnoglavac 2016, 86, num. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 87, num. 4; Vasić 2018, 96.

⁵¹ Vasić 2017, 205-210.

⁵² *Ibid*, 209.



Fig. 9 – Marble statue of Aesculapius with Telesphoros from Mediana (photo documentation: Narodni Muzej Niš)

Besides the sculptures of Aesculapius and Hygieia from Mediana, in the locality of Klisura, near Niš, a marble statue of Hygieia was found, unfortunately without her head.⁵³ The statue represents a female standing figure dressed in a long chiton, covered with a himation, with her right arm bent at the elbow, while the left arm is beside the body. Over the goddess' breast, there is a summary representation of a snake,

⁵³ Срејовић, Цермановић-Кузмановић 1987, 156-157, n. 69.



Fig. 10 – Marble statue of Hygieia from Mediana (photo documentation: Narodni Muzej Niš)

whose head Hygieia holds in her left hand. This iconographic type of the goddess' representation is more analogous to the iconographic representations of the type "Large Herculaneum" woman, than to standard representations of Hygieia. Judging by the stylistic characteristics (richly, yet linearly folded dress, summary modelling of the details), we would suggest a dating of the marble statue of the late 3rd – the beginning of the 4th century.

A fragmented votive relief with a representation of Hygieia was found in the locality of Kuršumlija spa (Fig. 11).⁵⁴ Unfortunately, only the right side of the monument is intact, with the representation of a goddess standing in a long pleated dress, holding a snake in her hands above a patera. It can be presumed that on the missing part of the monument, Aesculapius was presented with a small figure of Telesphoros between the god and goddess. Votive reliefs with representations of Aesculapius and Hygieia were not so popular in the Central Balkans' Roman provinces, as they were in Thrace and Moesia Inferior.⁵⁵ However, the fact that the votive relief of iatric deities was found in Kuršumlija spa, near to which two monuments dedicated to the deities with iatric function were also discovered, implies that, during the Roman period, different healing deities were venerated in the territory of thermal springs in the Kuršumlija area.⁵⁶ The votive relief with a representation of Hygieia from Kuršumlija spa is dated to the 3rd century.

A chance find of a marble fragmented female figure was discovered in the site of Čair in Kostolac, Viminacium, presenting Hygieia.⁵⁷ Only the torso of the goddess is preserved, showing the deity dressed in a chiton, with a himation over her left shoulder. A snake is twisted around the goddess's right arm, while in her left hand, analogous to other known representations of Hygieia, the deity probably held a patera. Although in a fragmented state, the statue is modelled on the Classicistic copies and represents a solid local work from the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd century.

Two marble bases from Viminacium, with remnants of human feet and the bodies of snakes could imply that the missing statues that were on the mentioned bases represented Aesculapius and Hygieia.⁵⁸

A marble sculpture of Aesculapius was found in Galerius' palace in Felix Romuliana, during archaeological excavations in 1974 (Fig. 12).⁵⁹ It represents a



Fig. 11 – Marble statue of goddess Hygieia from Kuršumlijska Spa (Јовановић 2013, 37, сл. 1)

standing male figure without a head, right arm or feet, in a richly folded long himation that reveals a large portion of the figure's upper torso. The sculpture of Aesculapius was modelled on the cult statue of the god from Leochares from the 5th or 4th century BC. It has several analogies in Roman replicas from Paris, Naples and Stibera and is dated to 310.⁶⁰

Images of Aesculapius and Hygieia are presented in glyptic material as well, on three gems found in Viminacium and a few others of unknown proveni-

⁵⁴ The votive monument is of 45cm in height and 23cm in width. Only the right side of the monument is preserved and on it a standing female figure dressed in a long folded chiton, with a himation is presented. The relief is damaged in the area of the figure's head. The goddess has her arms bent at the elbows, with one hand holding a snake above a patera, Јовановић 2013, 36-40.

⁵⁵ *IGBr*1961, 912, 1141-1146, 1153-1159; *IGBr* 1966, 2059, 2061; Todorov 1928, 74-79, n. 71-94.

⁵⁶ The first monument is dedicated to Dea Dardania, the main goddess of the Dardanian people, who, among other dimensions, was considered the deity of health and healing. The other monument is dedicated to nymphs and the dedicant is Catus Celer, who erected the monument during the reign of Gordian III, Тодоров 2013, 38-39.

⁵⁷ Tomović 1993, 96-97, num. 107, Fig. 18.6.

⁵⁸ Spasić-Đurić 2002, 175; Спасић-Ђурић 2015, 219, n. 239.

⁵⁹ The marble sculpture of Aesculapius, height 0.7 m, was found in the north-western part of the palace in Felix Romuliana. Now it is held in the National Museum in Zajear, inv. num. Г/453, Живић 2015, 414-415, num. 6, Т. XXXIII.

⁶⁰ Срејовић, Цермановић-Кузмановић 1987, 122-123, n. 52.

ence.⁶¹ On one gem, Aesculapius is presented alone, standing leaning on a snake-entwined staff, while on two other gems (one from Viminacium and the other of unknown provenience), the god is shown holding a staff, with Hygieia standing beside him holding a snake. Another gem discovered in Viminacium represents the most elaborate glyptic example – the deities are shown in an *aedicula* or a temple, with Aesculapius holding a snake-entwined staff and Hygieia with a snake, whose head reaches a patera bearing food. On another gem, also discovered in Viminacium, Aesculapius is presented with his wife Epiona, standing and performing *dextrarum iunctio*. The gems with images of Aesculapius and Hygieia from Viminacium and unknown localities from the Central Balkan Roman provinces were mostly incorporated in rings and used as seals, but could also have been worn as amulets due to the eschatological and soteriological functions of the deities, which protected the owner of the gem from sickness and enemies and watched over them and their families.

Although a considerable number of epigraphic monuments dedicated to Aesculapius have been attested in the territory of the Central Balkans, only three sanctuaries of the god can be presumed: in Ratiaria, Prizren and Constantine's villa with peristyle in Mediana. The shrine of Aesculapius in Ratiaria is attested in a votive monument of a certain Antonius, while a sanctuary of Aesculapius in Prizren can be assumed based on two votive monuments erected to the god, discovered near one and other. The large number of Aesculapius and Hygieia statues (and parts of statues) that have been discovered in the area of Constantine's villa with peristyle at Mediana imply the existence of the deity's sanctuary. The Greek inscriptions on the Aesculapius and Hygieia porphyry statues, but also on the Aesculapius and Telesphoros marble statues, imply their cult function. M. Vasić presumes that during the brief reign of Julian, a shrine to the iatric deities was established in the central audience hall in Constantine's villa with peristyle and lasted until the end of the emperor's reign, until 363.⁶²

It is well known that the cult of the Greek god Aesculapius was incorporated from Greece into the

Roman religion in 293 BC, when there was an epidemic of plague in Rome and, as Ovid states, Aesculapius travelled from his temple in Epidaurus in the shape of a snake, to come and help the Romans.⁶³ From that moment on, Romans venerated the god who healed their bodies and souls through incubation, while patients who came to seek the god's help in *Asclepieia* would sleep, after which Aesculapius' priests would interpret the patient's dream and recommend a method of healing.⁶⁴ The cult of the goddess Hygieia, Aesculapius' daughter, is closely associated with the god's cult from the 4th century BC⁶⁵ and it was



Fig. 12 – Marble statue of god Aesculapius from Felix Romuliana, Gamzigrad (Живић 2015, 414, кат. 6, т. XXXIII)

⁶¹ Кузмановић-Нововић 2007, 167-174.

⁶² Vasić 2018.

⁶³ Ovid writes that plague ravaged Rome and that Romans, after seeking the help of Delphi's oracles, found that they should have asked the help of Apollo's son, Aesculapius who lived in Epidaurus. The god took the form of a serpent and went over the Ionian Sea to Rome, where he was welcomed by many men and women, who hailed the god joyfully, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV. 622-745.

⁶⁴ Compton 1998, 303.

⁶⁵ Pausanias attests that the cult of Hygieia originated in the 7th century BC, based on the goddess' statue in the sanctuary of Asklepios Teitionios in Sikyon, Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 11. 6.

equally present in the Roman period through inscriptions and representations of the divine couple.⁶⁶ Like her father, Hygieia was the protectress and patroness of bodily health. In most cases, Hygieia was venerated with Aesculapius, represented in a canonised manner as a young woman dressed in a chiton and a himation with a serpent drinking from a patera. Because of Aesculapius' kind and benevolent nature towards mankind, he became one of the most favoured deities in Roman society, together with Hygieia and, sometimes, Telesphoros, which is attested by numerous dedications and archaeological monuments dedicated to the god alone or to the divine couple throughout the Roman Empire.⁶⁷

As we can see from the review of all thus-far known epigraphic and archaeological monuments dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia from the Central Balkan Roman provinces, the majority of finds represent the deities in their canonised images and are dated to the period of Septimius Severus' reign. It is well known that Septimius Severus often visited baths in the centres of the Central Balkan Roman provinces, looking for a cure for his illness.⁶⁸ The cults of the healing deities such as Aesculapius and Hygieia were favoured in the areas of thermal waters and thermae, like, for example, in the Naissus spa or the Kuršumljica spa, where the sanctuaries of these deities have not been yet confirmed as they have been in other Roman provinces.⁶⁹ However, a shrine of Aesculapius is presumed to have existed in Constantine's villa with peristyle at Mediana, which is not surprising bearing in mind the popularity of the Aesculapius and Hygieia cult in the area of the province of Dardania, attested with the monuments from Prizren, Kuršumljica and Peć. The army was one of the most loyal worshippers of Aesculapius, because of his power to keep them

safe and healthy during their travels, ordeals and engagements with enemies in unknown territories. Due to the mobility of the Roman army, particularly officers who venerated the cult of Aesculapius and supported it, the cult was transferred to different parts of the empire, frequently being equated with local deities in order for its better acceptance and greater favour in a new territory. Besides soldiers, as the votive monument dedicated to the divine iatric couple by a physician Claudius Magnus from Niš shows, physicians were another mobile group of Aesculapius devotees, who expressed their religious beliefs while treating the wounded and sick, whether they were in military or civilian service. They erected votive monuments to the divine iatric couple in their own name, but also in the name of their military units, as was the case of a votive monument of Sextus Titius Alexander, a physician of Cohors V Praetoria, dated to 82, and dedicated "to Aesculapius and the good health of his fellow soldiers".⁷⁰ The strong relationship between the Aesculapius and physicians is attested in numerous localities, particularly in Aquincum, with a variety of reasons for making a vow to the god.⁷¹ There are many dedications to Aesculapius and Hygieia by physicians, like, for example, a dedication of a physician of Legio II Adiutrix from 147, a dedication from the physician Marcus Marcelus or a physician of Cohors IV Aquitanorum, who made a vow to Apollo, Aesculapius, Salus and Fortuna for the good health of the commanding officer of the unit.⁷² Sometimes, the dedications were made to Aesculapius, Hygieia and the physician who cured the dedicant together with the gods, as in the monument of Marcus Ulpus Honoratus, from Rome,⁷³ or the vow was made to the valetudinarium, as in the monument from Stojnik.⁷⁴ In Viminacium, in several graves of physicians, their medical equipment comprising a spatula for mixing

⁶⁶ Wroth 1884, 83.

⁶⁷ Neither Aesculapius nor his priests asked for any fees from patients and offered aid and healing without charge. The help was offered no matter to which social class a patient belonged, whether he or she was poor or not, Edelstein 1998, 113, 190.

⁶⁸ Јовановић 2013, 37.

⁶⁹ In the Hellenistic and Roman age, the cult of the god Aesculapius became strongly related to thermal springs, which were used for medical purposes. Besides Hercules, Bacchus, Venus and Apollo, statues of Aesculapius and Hygieia were most frequently represented in imperial thermae or baths generally. In some of the baths, like in Gaul, Germany and North Africa, the attestation of votive dedications suggests cult activity, therefore, the existence of sanctuaries dedicated to Aesculapius situated in baths can be presumed, Griffith 2015, 186-187.

⁷⁰ A similar monument is that of Ulpus Iulianus, a physician in Cohors III Aquitanorum, who made a dedication in 198 for the health of his cohort, Israelowich 2015, 100.

⁷¹ van der Ploeg 2018, 184.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ The votive monument from Rome of Marcus Ulpus Honoratus, decurion of the equites singulares, is dedicated to Aesculapius, Hygieia and Lucius Julius Helix, the physician who cured him together with the divine pair. The monument is dated around 153, *AE* 1954, 83.

⁷⁴ The votive monument discovered in Stojnik contains a dedication to valetudinarium: *Valetu/dinarium / coh(ortis) II Aur(eliae) / nov(ae) | (miliariae) equit(atae) / c(ivium) R(omanorum) T(itus) Bebeni/us Iustus prae(fectus) / Imp(eratore) C[[ommodo]] / II et Vero II co(n)s(ulibus)*. The monument is dedicated by Titus Bebenius, the commander of Cohors II Aurelia nova miliaria equitata and dated into 179, *AE* 1901, 24; *IMS* I, num. 116.

drugs, scalpels, needles, boxes for storing tools, and palettes for making medicines, was found.⁷⁵ One of the medical caskets had a snake motif, which is clearly a symbol of the god Aesculapius. It can be presumed that, as in other larger urban centres, the first physicians came to Viminacium together with the army upon the establishment of the military camp and had a *valetudinarium* next to the camp.

The particular popularity of the cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia in the eastern parts of the Central Balkan Roman provinces can be attributed, to a certain extent, to the strong Thracian influence, who particularly favoured the iatric couple – the cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia have been attested in 44 sites in Thrace from the Roman period.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, as can be seen from the epigraphic monuments, the majority of dedicants in the Central Balkans territory were soldiers or persons related in some way with the army (physicians, perhaps miners or stone-cutters,

merchants, slaves, freedmen, etc.), which is similar to other Roman provinces where, due to the mobility of mentioned social groups who venerated the divine couple and spread their cults in the new territories, the cults of Aesculapius and Hygieia became well known and worshipped by dedicants of various professions and social classes.

Since the deities Aesculapius and Hygieia were so favoured in the territory of the Central Balkan Roman provinces, particularly in the territory of Mediana where, in the area of the *thermae*, in the 2019 excavation campaign, a marble female hand holding a patera with a snake, presumably belonging to the goddess Hygieia, was discovered, we hope that future excavations in the area of the *thermae*, and in other localities, will bring to light new testimonies of the divine iatric couple in the Central Balkans territory.

Translated by author

⁷⁵ Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 162-167.

⁷⁶ Aesculapius was venerated in Thrace under many epithets that probably represented the names of local gods, such as Zimidrenus, Koulkoussenos, Zudeonos, Limenos, etc., van der Ploeg 2018, 198.

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■ Abbreviations

AE – *L'anée épigraphique, Paris*

CCET – *Corpus Cultus Equitiis Thracii, V*, A. Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Leiden: Brill 1982

CIL – *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1863-)

IGBr – *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria Repertae*, Sofia 1959-1970

ILJug – A. et J. Šašel, *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iuggoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX et inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX et inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt, Ljubljana 1963, 1978, 1986*

IMS – *Inscriptions de la Mésie supérieure*

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Култови ијатричких божанстава, Асклепија и Хигије, су били популарни на територији римских провинција централног Балкана, о чему сведочи више епиграфских и археолошких споменика констатованих превасходно у северним, источним и јужним деловима територије. Епиграфски споменици су посвећени не само Асклепију и Хигији, већ и Асклепију и богињи Салус, Асклепију и Аполону и Асклепију, генију Јупитера Долихена и генију кохорти. Ове дедикације потврђују да је богиња Салус била поштована са истом функцијом као и богиња Хигија, као заштитница доброг здравља и добробити генерално како индивидуа, породица, тако и римског цара и државе. Заједница Асклепија и Аполона је посведочена на више локалитета у суседној провинцији Тракији, некада и у заједници са Трачким коњаником. Вотивни споменик из Призрена посвећен богу Асклепију (вероватно и Хигији и Телесфору, само су њихова имена вероватно стајала на делу споменика који недостаје), генију Јупитера Долихена и генију кохорте је врло интересантан, јер имплицира да је Јупитер Долихен овде поштован као ијатричко божанство.

Заједница Асклепија и Јупитера Долихена је потврђена у долихенеуму на Авентину у Риму, али и у римским провинцијама од касног другог века, када Јупитер Долихен почиње да бива поштован и као ијатричко божанство, нарочито међу војницима. Верници ијатричких божанстава, Асклепија и Хигије, су углавном војници, лекари, трговци, ослобођеници и робови, а претпоставља се постојање бар три храма бога Асклепија у Арчару, Призрену и Медијани код Ниша. Претпостављено светилиште Асклепија и Хигије на Медијани код Ниша је посебно интересно, јер се претпоставља да је установљено током кратке владавине Јулијана Апостате и потврђено је вотивним натписима, порфирним и мермерним статуама божанстава, али такође и фрагментованим статуама које представљају Асклепија и Хигију. Нарочита популарност култова ијатричких божанстава у источним деловима простора централног Балкана, се може приписати снажном трачком утицају, где су култови Асклепија и Хигије уживали велико поштовање све до краја античког доба.





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