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## A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE JASON SARCOPHAGUS FROM VIMINACIUM

*Abstract.* – The integral programme communicated by the so-called Jason Sarcophagus from Viminacium includes the depictions of Jason's and Perseus' heroic deeds on its front, and of a satyr and maenad in ecstasy on the sides. The significance of this funerary programme is examined on two levels: that of the symbolism of individual scenes, and that of their interrelationship and the whole they constitute as different expressions of triumph over death. The sarcophagus is viewed with respect to a related repertory of themes in the arts as well as to the time and place of its creation.

*Key words.* – Sarcophagus, Viminacium, relief, symbolism, Jason, Perseus, satyr and maenad

A variety of mythological themes combined into a single whole make the so-called Jason Sarcophagus from Viminacium an outstanding work. Its symbolism has already been outlined and the fact emphasized that the known examples of funerary art from the neighbouring provinces of the Empire provide no direct analogies.<sup>1</sup> These interpretations constitute a significant contribution, but a better understanding of the importance and meaning of the entire programme conveyed by this sarcophagus requires a more comprehensive study nonetheless.

The programme of the Jason Sarcophagus will be examined on two levels: firstly, through understanding the symbolism of its individual scenes, and secondly, through looking into their interrelationship, which in fact is what lends this sarcophagus its distinctive value. The study will focus on viewing this funerary repertory with respect to classical literature and the religious, philosophical, social and cultural context in which the sarcophagus was created, and also with respect to other thematically related imagery from the arts of the period.

### JASON SARCOPHAGUS FROM VIMINACIUM

**Description:** Lidless sarcophagus of sandstone, 2.28 × 0.92 × 1.13 m. The front bears a rectangular inscription tabula bordered with Norico-Pannonian volute and flanked by niches topped with saddle-shaped volutes. The left-hand niche shows

Jason holding a lowered spear in the right hand, and the Golden Fleece in the left one raised high above a small leafy tree with a serpent twisted round it. The right-hand niche shows Perseus holding in his left hand a *harpe* in the form of a sword with its tip turned upwards, and lifting Medusa's head with the right. A gryphon is lying by his feet. Both lateral sides of the sarcophagus are divided into three niches, each central niche showing a rather damaged figure. The one on the left side contains a male figure, a cloaked satyr. The objects in his hands cannot be identified any more, but clearly there is a serpent twisted round his left arm. The central niche on the right side shows a female figure, a maenad, seen from the back. Although the relief is damaged, it is clear that her right hand once held the *himation* that was sliding down exposing the upper body. She holds an unidentifiable round object in her high-raised left hand. Each of the two figures on the sides is flanked by kantharoi with vines and grapes.

**Location of find:** Drmno, Viminacium, now at the Barutni magacin Pećina, Lower Town, Belgrade.

**Date:** Second half of the 2nd century or first half of the 3rd.<sup>2</sup>

**Literature:** Kanitz F. 1868, 407–9, with a drawing; Cumont F. 1894, 28, figs 5–7; Kanic F. 1985, 182–3, with a drawing; Vasić M. 1905, 156–7; Đorđević M. 1989–90, 136–7, drawings 8–10.

<sup>1</sup> The Jason Sarcophagus has not been the subject of comprehensive study. Different authors, dealing with other problems, have offered its description, a drawing or a photograph, pointing to the general meaning of individual scenes: Cumont 1894, 28, figs 5–7; Kаниц 1985, 182–3, with a drawing; Ђорђевић 1989–90, 136–7, drawings 8–10. M. Vasić (1905, 156–7), studying the iconography of a bronze vessel in the shape of a young satyr from Viminacium, touched upon the origin of the Jason Sarcophagus.

The study into the symbolism of this sarcophagus should be preceded by an overview of the basic features of its scenes. The front niches contain simplified versions of Jason's and Perseus' heroic exploits (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> The two scenes are conceived as counterparts, and their compositional arrangement also makes them a single whole. Both heroes are turned, and raise the objects of their respective triumphs, towards the inner side of the sarcophagus.

The simplified composition in the left-hand niche depicts Jason's obtainment of the Golden Fleece (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> This reduction is better understood if compared with more complex types of the myth.<sup>5</sup> Such comparison makes it clear that the Viminacium relief depicts the moment immediately following the very act of obtaining the fleece, itself reduced to its basic iconographic elements: Jason holding the fleece and the serpent twisted round the tree of life.

The scene of the Perseus myth in the right-hand front niche is reduced in a similar way (fig. 3). Common attributes such as the winged sandals or a *kibisis* are not shown. Central to the identification of the scene, however, are Medusa's head, the *harpe*, and the helmet of Hades, now barely discernible. A peculiarity of the Viminacium relief is a gryphon by Perseus' feet.<sup>6</sup>

This penchant for reduction is also observable on the sides of the sarcophagus. The satyr (fig. 4) and the maenad (fig. 5) in a Dionysiac *thiasos* are depicted conventionally.<sup>7</sup> Compositionally, the two sides of the sarcophagus may be seen as a whole, which conceptually they are indeed, constituting the joint satyr and maenad type from the rich iconography associated with the Dionysiac cult.<sup>8</sup>

The relief of the dancing satyr finds many analogies in the imagery of Dionysiac festivities. The iconography of satyrs had not been entirely fixed and consistent from Hellenistic times. On the Viminacium sarcophagus he appears fully in human form with his usual goatskin (*nebris*) indicating his rustic aspect.<sup>9</sup> Its folds show no motif of fruits which, as an attribute of the personification of autumn, would provide a more precise indication of his connection with the very action of gathering grapes and with Dionysus.<sup>10</sup> Given the state of preservation of this figure, it is difficult to say whether he had a horse's ears, whereas the rest of the relief behind his legs shows that he had a tail. Nor is it quite clear whether the Satyr held any, and what, objects, though a serpent twisted round his left arm is discernible.<sup>11</sup> Although uncommon in funerary art, such a representation of satyrs is completely consistent with the Dionysiac cult, of which something more will be said later on. The

serpent is a common element in Dionysiac scenes, but shown emerging from a casket in their bottom part.<sup>12</sup> There are examples – though few other than a Late Archaic terracotta showing the satyr holding a serpent<sup>13</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nor has the date of the sarcophagus been the subject of study in its own right. M. Djordjević (Ђорђевић 1989–90, 143) argues that it was made at the Viminacium workshop, active from the 2nd century. R. Turcan (1978, 1727), studying occurrences of the myth of Jason on sepulchral monuments, singles out its particular popularity between 150 and 180 AD. Noric-Pannonian volute decorating niches with reliefs and flanking the inscription tabula was fashionable on sarcophagi in the province of Pannonia, especially Lower Pannonia, between the mid 2nd century and the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries, as shown by V. Ruševljanin-Dautova (1983, 104–7). From these data and its style, the sarcophagus has been dated to the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the period of Viminacium's greatest prosperity, when monuments of similar iconography and style were created.

<sup>3</sup> The identification of the two heroes, Perseus with Medusa's head and Jason with the Golden Fleece, was first proposed by F. Kanitz 1868, 407–8.

<sup>4</sup> In an exhaustive study on Jason and Medea on sarcophagi under the Empire, V. Gaggadis-Robin (1994, 74–94) defines different types of the scene in terms of the number and choice of personages: Jason, certain Argonauts or Medea.

<sup>5</sup> Such are, among others, the examples from the Basilica Porta Maggiore or a relief in the Louvre. In both cases the serpent obviously embodies the monster and is shown twisted round the same tree from which the fleece is hanging. Jason is shown taking the fleece while on the other side of the tree stands Medea holding a vessel with the serpent bending above it, see Gaggadis-Robin 1994, figs 55 and 56.

<sup>6</sup> Gryphon as Perseus' attendant also occurs in a marble sculpture presently in a museum in Copenhagen. see Jones Rocco 1994, cat. no 61b. F. Cumont (1894, 28) believed, however, that it was a dolphin, while F. Kanitz (1985, 182) defined it as one of the monsters born to Typhon by Euechidna, daughter of Chrysaor, who in turn had sprung from Medusa's head. On this unusual iconographic element, see below.

<sup>7</sup> The identification of these scenes as showing a satyr and maenad was first made by F. Cumont (1894, 29); F. Kanitz (1868, 408–9) believed they showed Heracles fighting with a serpent, i.e. the Lernaean hydra, and Victoria.

<sup>8</sup> Within the multilayered and iconographically rich theme of Dionysiac *thiasoi* satyrs and maenads are also shown individually, as a maenad, a satyr and maenad, or maenads in *thiasoi*, cf. *LIMC* VIII, 1997, s.v. Mainades, nos 134–143.

<sup>9</sup> Dorsey 1992, 100.

<sup>10</sup> This satyr type rarely occurs independently. They are more frequently shown as attendants of the Horae where they personify the season. They occur in monumental painting, but are not common as free-standing statues. For these examples and the iconography of satyrs, male personifications of the seasons and silvani, see Holden 1997, 127–47.

<sup>11</sup> It was the serpent that led F. Kanitz (1985, 18) to interpret the relief as Heracles struggling with a serpent.

<sup>12</sup> The serpent is shown in connection with the satyr on a sarcophagus from Lyon. It emerges from a casket beneath the satyr's feet and rises towards him, see Reinach 1912, 227, no 2.

<sup>13</sup> Walters 1914, 174, cat. no 615.

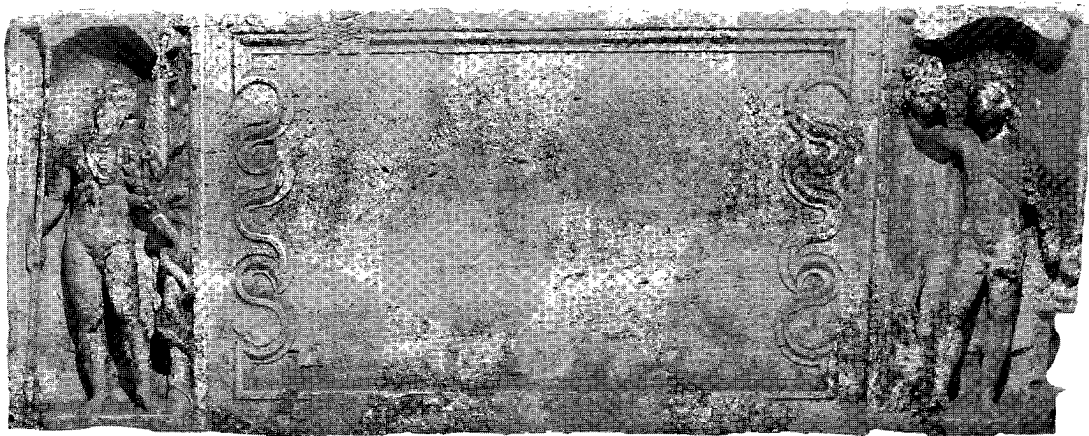


Fig. 1. Front of the Jason Sarcophagus from Viminacium, now in Barutni magacin »Pećina«, Lower Town, Belgrade (photo I. Stanić)

Сл. 1. Предња страна Јасоновој саркофага из Виминацијума, Барутни магацин »Пећине«, Доњи град, Београд (фото Станић И.)

– in which serpents twist round the arms of ecstatic maenads. Thus a relief, which is now in the Uffizzi,<sup>14</sup> shows an ecstatic maenad with serpents twisted round her legs. In a relief depicting the dancing maenads, in the Verona Museum,<sup>15</sup> the one leading the dance has a serpent twisted round each arm. In the Viminacium relief the serpent is twisted round the satyr's arm, but its meaning, consistently with the mystic and ecstatic cult of Dionysus, would be the same.

It is impossible to make out whether the satyr held an object in his right hand and, if so, what it was. From what has survived of the relief, however, it may be assumed that he held a serpent, as suggested by F. Cumont,<sup>16</sup> or rather, one of his usual attributes, or cult objects,<sup>17</sup> the shepherd's crook or a sickle, perhaps of the type for cutting grapes *falcula vineatica*, as in the mosaic of Sta Costanza in Rome showing the harvesting and treading of grapes.<sup>18</sup>

The maenad is shown as usually, dancing, *himation* sliding down her back. The right arm being rather damaged, her exact gesture cannot be established. From comparing it with other reliefs showing this maenad type,<sup>19</sup> she appears to have held the *himation* falling freely from her hand. It remains unclear, however, whether the Viminacium relief once showed her holding a torch, as argued by Cumont,<sup>20</sup> or perhaps a *thyrsos*, this maenad type's frequent attribute. In her raised left hand she holds a round object, not clearly discernible today. The rusticity of the relief, its three-dimensional quality and an accentuated depression indicate that it is not a tambourine

(*tympanon*), as argued by Cumont<sup>21</sup> and as inferable from the object's position in the scene and the way in which the maenad is holding it. The described properties of this relief would rather indicate a basket (*calathos*), her usual attribute, or perhaps the crown of immortality (*corona immortalis*), as suggested by Kanitz.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Reinach 1912b, 35, no 1.

<sup>15</sup> Reinach 1912b, no 2. At Ohrid, a dancing figure with the serpent twisted round her body has been found. The serpent, snaking up from the left knee and over the upper leg and waist, leans its head against the dancer's right nipple. The statuette is dated to the Roman imperial age, see Rnjak 1979, 126, no 146. Without going deeper into connections with Mithraic iconography, the existence should be noted of figures with serpents twisted round them. A Mithraic relief from Vienna shows a winged male figure with a serpent twisted round it, from legs to head, see Reinach 1912, 308, no 2. A serpent is also twisted round the Mithraic figure of a genius or Pan, see Reinach 1912b, 61, no 1.

<sup>16</sup> Cumont 1894, 29.

<sup>17</sup> His common attributes are the pipe (*syrix*), the shepherd's crook (*pedum*), the sickle (*falx*) or the *thyrsos*, see Oswald & Davies Pryce, 1920, nos 1–6.

<sup>18</sup> I. Popović, in her study on antique tools (1988, 76–7), points to various forms of the sickle in art. The *falx* occurs in different monuments, among other things as an attribute of Saturn, but also of the personification of summer or Dionysus, as well as in vintage scenes.

<sup>19</sup> Reinach 1912, 25, no 3; 123, no 4; Reinach 1912b, 359, no 2.

<sup>20</sup> Cumont 1894, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Cumont 1894, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Kanitz suggested it was a wreath, but identified the female figure as Victoria rather than a maenad and insisted upon it even after Cumont put forward a different opinion, namely that it was a maenad with the *tympanum*, cf. Kanitz 1868, 409; Каниц 1985, 183.



Fig. 2. Jason with the Golden Fleece, relief, left front niche of the Jason Sarcophagus (photo I. Stanić)

Сл. 2. Јасон са златним руном. Рељеф у левој ниши предње стране Јасоновој саркофага (фото Станић И.)



Fig. 3. Perseus with Medusa's head, relief, right front niche of the Jason Sarcophagus (photo I. Stanić)

Сл. 3. Персеј са главом Медузе. Рељеф у десној ниши предње стране Јасоновој саркофага (фото Станић И.)

Comparison with other types of maenads in *thiasoi*, however, is of no help to a more precise identification, because the position of these objects in her hand in the Viminacium sarcophagus is quite different.<sup>23</sup>

Analysis of the meaning of this funerary repertory will start from the front of the sarcophagus. Both scenes exemplify outstanding heroic exploits. Jason's deed, as well as that of Perseus, symbolizes triumph over evil, of life over death,<sup>24</sup> which may be the basic idea communicated by this side of the sarcophagus.

A better understanding of the relief of Jason and the Golden Fleece calls for a reference to the fact that classical texts lay different emphases on his role and Medea's assistance in his obtainment of the fleece. Some state that Jason killed the monster, while other

<sup>23</sup> For examples of maenads holding a basket, see: Reinach 1912, 25, no 4; 127, no 1; Reinach 1912b, 424, no 2; and for those with a garland: Reinach 1912b, 35, no 1.

<sup>24</sup> Toynbee 1977, 407.



Fig. 4. Satyr, relief, left side of the Jason Sarcophagus (photo I. Stanić)

Сл. 4. Сатиr. Рeљeф на лeвој бoчнoј cтpани Јacoнoвoј cаркoфaгa (фoтo Стaнић И.)



Fig. 5. Maenad, relief, right side of the Jason Sarcophagus (photo I. Stanić)

Сл. 5. Мeнaгa. Рeљeф на дeснoј бoчнoј cтpани Јacoнoвoј cаркoфaгa (фoтo Стaнић И.)

emphasize that Medea had put the monster to sleep so as to give Jason the time to steal the fleece.<sup>25</sup> In the arts, the roles of Jason or Medea are emphasized differently depending on whether they are depicted together or independently. The Viminacium sarcophagus would thus be closer to those texts and iconographic types that underscore Jason's rather than Medea's role.

The underlying idea of this relief is expressed through two basic iconographic elements. One is the serpent twisted round the tree. Although in this context the monster may be understood as a symbol of evil, F. Cumont warns that the serpent is a complex symbol, the one twisted round something being a symbol of immortality. He also points to its similarity with the same motif as it occurs in icons of the Thracian horseman.<sup>26</sup> The other element is the Golden Fleece. J. Campbell sees it as a symbiosis between innocence embodied in the lamb and the ultimate treasure embodied in gold, which may be the reason for understanding the quest of the Golden Fleece as a pursuit of spiritual illumination, ultimate identity and regained immortality.<sup>27</sup> Thus interpreted, Jason's success may be seen as the attainment of immortality and rebirth. V. Gaggadis-Robin emphasizes that the winning of the fleece in itself is not as important as the very venture of journeying and overcoming dangers, carried out in the spirit of great initiation rites.<sup>28</sup> In addition to this

basic, funerary, context of the myth, K. Schefold, exploring its iconographic aspects, suggests that it may also symbolize *pietas*.<sup>29</sup>

The depiction of Perseus with Medusa, as has already been said, expresses triumph over death. The better to understand this relief on the Jason Sarcophagus, we should clarify the meaning of an unusual iconographic detail, the gryphon by Perseus' feet.

<sup>25</sup> *Roscher Lexikon* II (2482–2515, s.v. Medea) distinguishes two different traditions. Jason's role is emphasized in Hdt. fr. 53–53. Jacoby; *Naupactica* fr. Jacoby; Pherecydes, 3F51 Jacoby; Pind., *P.* IV. 443–445; Eur., *Medea*, 480–482, while Medea's role is also seen as important in Antimachos. fr. 65 Wyss; Apoll. Rh., *Arg.* IV, 87–88, 114–166. Medea's assistance is emphasized in Latin writers as well: Ov., *Her.* VI, 13; XII, 49, 101–108; Sen., *Medea*, 471, 703, 912; Val. F., *Arg.* V, 230–258; Gaggadis-Robin 1994, 80. The poet of the Orphic *Argonautica* (v. 890–1019), however, brings a different version where Medea's role is secondary and the mission headed by Orpheus. Philostrates also features Medea, Jason and Orpheus aboard after the fleece was obtained, *Phil., Mag.*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> The tree as a detail in some representations of the Thracian horseman is usually seen as a symbol of pristine nature, where the throne of the deity is located, see Cumont 1942. 88. 393–394, note 6, 437–438, note 6.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell Cooper 1986, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Gaggadis-Robin 1994, 82.

<sup>29</sup> Corroborating this opinion by the central scene in the frieze on a sarcophagus showing Medea with the *témie* of a priestess and a basket with offerings standing in front of the sacred tree, where the altar is indicated, see Schefold 1961, 192.

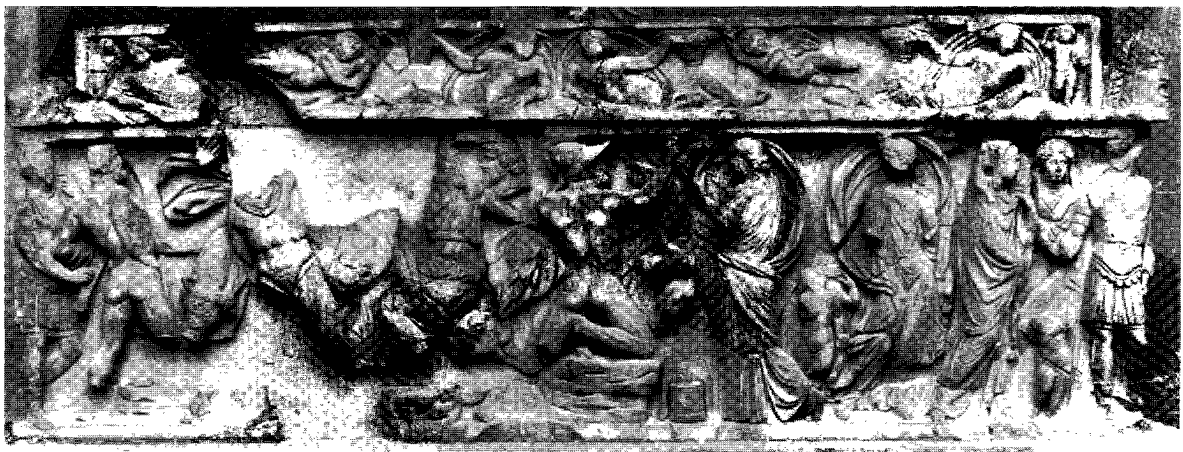


Fig. 6. Front of the sarcophagus from the Catacomb of Praetextatus, Rome (Turcan 1999, fig. 15)

Сл. 6. Предња страна саркофага из катакомбе Претекстиа, Рим (Turcan R. 1999, сл. 15)

Gryphons are generally associated with Apollo, but they are also known as attendants of Dionysus or Artemis.<sup>30</sup> In addition to being guardians and a symbol of divine strength and vigilance,<sup>31</sup> their function as psychopomps<sup>32</sup> is also significant. R. Turcan believes that gryphons, just like Medusa<sup>33</sup> on Dionysiac sarcophagi, symbolize the passage from the world of the living to Oceanus.<sup>34</sup> If thus understood, the gryphon by Perseus' feet in the Viminacium relief would highlight the positive aspect of Perseus' triumph over mortality. Both the gryphon and Medusa on the front of the sarcophagus are closely associated in their symbolism with the ideas expressed by the Dionysiac theme on the sides of the sarcophagus.

The sides of the sarcophagus show the satyr and the maenad respectively. Although there is no epiphany, Dionysus' presence pervades the scenes. It is felt in wine-induced frenzy associated with him by poets and philosophers, and obvious in the depicted followers,<sup>35</sup> as well as in the *kantharoi* with vines and grapes flanking the central satyr and maenad reliefs. Although they do not define a theme, iconographic elements or cult objects used in Dionysiac festivities<sup>36</sup> may serve as a more precise indication of its character, but due to the Viminacium example's poor state of preservation the character of the scene is difficult to identify fully. Essential to its elucidation therefore are two iconographic elements: the serpent twisted round the satyr's arm and the object the maenad holds in her left hand.

The serpent, albeit one of the satyr's well-known attributes,<sup>37</sup> is not commonly depicted in this way in art. J. Campbell believes that the serpent functioning

as a belt or bracelet expresses the perpetual succession of the seasons, which is fully in accordance with the nature of the Dionysiac cult.<sup>38</sup> It should also be noted

<sup>30</sup> Срејовић & Цермановић-Кузмановић 1979, 99.

<sup>31</sup> Срејовић & Цермановић-Кузмановић 1979, 99.

<sup>32</sup> The stucco decoration on the vault of the mausoleum known as *Valerii* on Via Latina shows the gryphon as a psychopomp. A net of medallions surrounds the pairs of maenads and satyrs, and nereids and tritons or sea monsters, while the gryphon in the centre carries the shrouded deceased to heaven. Although dated to 160 BC, this stucco conveys the same values as imperial sarcophagi, cf. Turcan 1999, 13, 113–114. Also, on a sarcophagus bearing the *imago clipeata* it is the gryphon that takes up the soul of the deceased, cf. Cumont 1942, Pl. VII/2.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to her apotropaic function, ascribed to Medusa by Pseudo-Lucian who says that she protects from danger, intimidates the enemy and brings victory, she also marks the border between the world of the dead and that of the living, and in that case she may also symbolize the passage to the world of amors, satyrs or maenads, cf. Fuchs 2001, 79, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Turcan 1999, 10.

<sup>35</sup> R. Turcan (1966, 35) indicates that such orgiastic dances on Dionysiac sarcophagi are difficult to identify with precision because Dionysus himself is absent.

<sup>36</sup> Many and varied are the Dionysiac cult objects. Those most frequently occurring in the arts include: the *thymiaterion*, the krater, the hydria, the serpent emerging from a casket, the kantharos or rython, cf. Turcan R. 1966, 538. Maenads' usual attributes are the tympanum, the serpent, the thyrsos, the doe, the torch etc. see Срејовић & Цермановић-Кузмановић. 1979, 257. Satyrs' attributes are the serpent, grapes, fruit baskets, wine jugs and the double pipe, cf. Campbell Cooper 1986, 148.

<sup>37</sup> Campbell Cooper 1986, 148.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell Cooper 1986, 194. In the so-called Belvedere relief, Dionysos Mystes is depicted with a serpent in one hand and a rooster perched on the other, cf. Turcan 1966, 548.



that the serpent twisted round the arm is a symbol of the Thracian god Sabazius, often equated with Dionysus.<sup>39</sup> Sources inform us that bands of Sabazius' followers performed ecstatic dances with serpents in their hands.<sup>40</sup> In funerary art the serpent more often occurs round the maenad's arm, but round the satyr's in the Viminacium relief it retains the same symbolic meaning.

The other cult object is in the maenad's high-raised hand. If interpreted as a basket, *calathos*, although with no fruits in it, it is a symbol of Dionysus, the giver of fruits and agriculture.<sup>41</sup> R. Turcan specifies that the *calathos*, just like the *tympanon*, identifies Dionysus Sabazius, the chthonic and paternal incarnation of Bacchus.<sup>42</sup> The basket may also be understood through its other function, for sifting out the wheat, parallel to the one used in the Sabaziac mysteries.<sup>43</sup> If the object in the maenad's left hand is interpreted as the *corona immortalis*, which is more likely, the scene assumes a different, markedly triumphal character.<sup>44</sup> This form of crowning is especially associated with the iconography of Dionysiac festivities, but the act is not performed by maenads but by Victoria herself. In addition to being shown crowning generals or carrying the *imago laureate*, Victoria is also frequent in scenes showing Dionysus' entourage where, just as satyrs or centaurs, she supports a *clipeus* or even bestows a wreath on Dionysus himself.<sup>45</sup> Such iconographic features indicate a connection between heroic triumph and apotheosis with *virtus* and the deceased's participation in the joy of a *thiasos*.<sup>46</sup> If we accept that the side of the Viminacium sarcophagus shows a *corona immortalis*, then this iconographic element, just like the heroic themes on its front, would favour the deceased's successful military career, as suggested by F. Kanitz.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the iconographic elements that may indicate an association with the Sabaziac cult, such as the serpent round the satyr's arm, the reliefs on the Jason Sarcophagus are hardly interpretable in those terms. As far as we know, this deity was not particularly popular in Upper Moesia. The cult has been attested by an inscription from Ravna,<sup>48</sup> and the god's name has also been found inscribed on a circular marble fragment from Viminacium.<sup>49</sup> The closest examples of the existence of this cult are a bronze hand from Sase, Dalmatia,<sup>50</sup> and two inscriptions from Dragoman and Pirot, Thrace.<sup>51</sup> Given the frequent equation of Sabazius and Dionysus,<sup>52</sup> and the fact that the cult was not widespread in Upper Moesia, the serpent twisted round the satyr's arm is to be understood in the context of the

general iconography of the Dionysiac cult rather than as a symbol of the Sabaziac cult.<sup>53</sup> To see it as a reflection of the Sabaziac cult may perhaps be too bold a solution, which nevertheless should not be completely ruled out given that the owner of the sarcophagus may have been of Thracian or oriental origin.<sup>54</sup>

From the analysis of individual scenes we should proceed to the next level of the meaning of the programme, which derives from the interrelationship of the themes depicted and their functioning as a whole.

The front scenes showing Jason and Perseus exemplify heroic deeds accomplished with the help of

<sup>39</sup> Срејовић & Цермановић-Кузмановић 1979, 375.

<sup>40</sup> Demost., *De Coron.* XVIII, 259 ff; Aristoph., *Aves.* 875; *Vespae.* 9; *Lys.*, 387 ff. Zeus in the form of a serpent united with Persephone who born him Sabazius. Diod. Sic., IV, 4,1; Ael., *Nat. An.* XII, 39.

<sup>41</sup> Diod. Sic. III, 63, 3; IV, 4, 1–2. Cf. Turcan 1966, 522, note 8.

<sup>42</sup> Turcan 1966, 496.

<sup>43</sup> Also confirmed by Demosthenes, *Cor.*, 260. Cf. Turcan 1966, 387, note 6.

<sup>44</sup> The multiple use of wreaths ranged from crowning guests at a feast and the symbolism of the athletic or »triumphal« wreath to the crowning of mystae in the rite of initiation. In funerary art, the *corona* had an apotropaic function, indicating that the deceased would surely overcome death, see Turcan 1966, 503, note 8, 630.

<sup>45</sup> Turcan 1999, 108–109.

<sup>46</sup> R. Turcan (1999, 109) points to a series of sarcophagi with these themes, expressed in a variety of iconographic patterns, from the Antonine period to the end of the 3rd century.

<sup>47</sup> Каниц 1985, 183.

<sup>48</sup> Petrović 1995, 71, no 13, with earlier bibliography.

<sup>49</sup> Mirković 1986, 79, no 39, with earlier bibliography.

<sup>50</sup> Imamović 1977, 440, cat. no 214, with earlier bibliography.

<sup>51</sup> Domaszewsky 1886, 238–239, nos 2 and 3; the Sabaziac *thiasos* at Pirot was probably a well-organized religious community with their temple, priests, administration and all the ritual arrangements proper to the cult. The names of its members are Greek, Roman and Thracian, cf. Kojić 1988, 183.

<sup>52</sup> The earliest indications of their equation are found in the Hellenistic period when, among others, the 3rd-century-BC traveller Mnaseos of Patrae points to their father and son relationship. Later on, Cicero in his *De natura deorum* (3,23) refers to their being identical. After him, there are many works dealing with this question. On the identification of Sabazius with Dionysus in classical sources, see Riel 1995, 43–44.

<sup>53</sup> In a study on the attitude towards sin held in Anatolian cults in Roman times, M. Riel (1995, 43–44) suggests that Sabazius was often identified with Dionysus because of similarities in their rituals, but also that the followers of the two cults in Thrace and Asia Minor, the areas of the Dionysiac cult, differed in their beliefs and practices and, also, that the two cults did not become fused despite the similarity. The inscriptional evidence from Thrace always shows Sabazius and Dionysus as two separate deities.

<sup>54</sup> Thracian as well as oriental names have been attested in the Viminacium inscriptions both for militaries and for civilians, see Mirković 1986, 58–59.

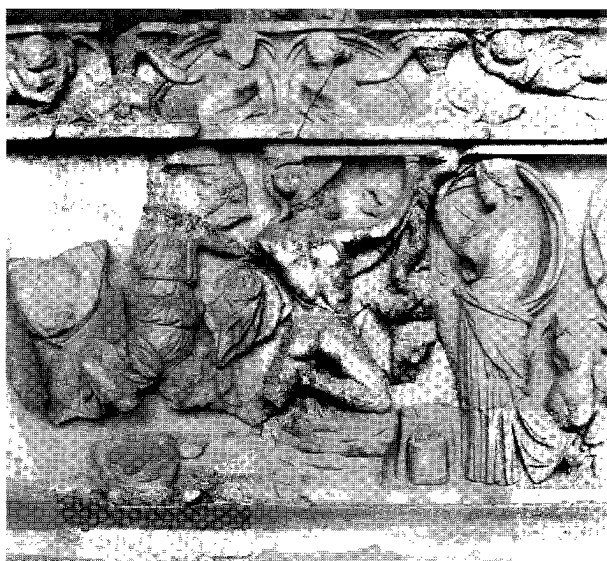


Fig. 7. Jason with the Golden Fleece and Personifications of the seasons, relief, centre of the front of the sarcophagus from the Catacomb of Praetextatus, Rome (Gaggadis-Robin 1994, fig. 18)

Сл. 7. Јасон са златним руном и персонификације годишњих доба, рељеф на централном делу предње стране саркофага из катакомбе Претекстуса, Рим (Gaggadis Robin V. 1994, сл. 18)

gods.<sup>55</sup> The very overcoming of obstacles leading both Jason and Perseus towards the accomplishment of their goals may in a way prove to be more important than the final act. As in the rites of initiation, the overcoming of obstacles and difficulties comes to be crowned with the passage to the next life stage.<sup>56</sup> However, Perseus raising Medusa's head is shown as so-called *Perseus Triumphans*. Jason also raises the object of his triumph thereby emphasizing the principal idea expressed on the front of the sarcophagus as *triumphus*.<sup>57</sup>

Contrary to the front of the sarcophagus exemplifying *virtus*, its sides show a different choice: an escape from the transience of human life through the mystic and ecstatic Dionysiac cult. Its adherents yielded themselves to religious ecstasies and orgiastic revels releasing their souls from the prison of their individual bodies and replacing their weak worldly selves with a higher, divine one.<sup>58</sup> The soul became united with the divine conceived of as the eternally creative power of nature.

The occurrence of Dionysiac scenes and heroes such as Jason and Perseus in a single funerary programme is an unusual iconographic configuration that raises a number of questions. On the first level, as already noted,

two different paths to salvation may be distinguished, which were corresponding and coexistent at the time the sarcophagus was made. On the other hand, the depicted objects of triumph emphasize the triumphal aspect of the entire programme.

In order to understand this programme better, we should also point to the Jason–Dionysus and Perseus–Dionysus relationship, though with no intention of interpreting it as the maker's original idea.

Classical sources pay little attention to the relationship between Jason and Dionysus except for citing that it was through the god's mediation that Aetes approved of the marriage of Medea and Jason.<sup>59</sup> In funerary art, however, the connection between the two personages is more significant. V. Gaggadis-Robin, analyzing the sarcophagus from the Catacomb of Praetextatus (fig. 6),<sup>60</sup> indicates a connection between the portrayal of Jason with the Golden Fleece and the Dionysiac theme. Above the central scene showing Jason runs a frieze with the personifications of the seasons, on Dionysiac sarcophagi of the second half of the second century usually depicted above the central *clipeus* motif (fig. 7). On the Praetextatus Sarcophagus the *clipeus* was replaced by Jason and the Golden Fleece. The role of the *imago clipeata*, symbolizing the ascent of the soul from matter (*hyla*) and its elements into the highest heaven (*ogdoas*),<sup>61</sup> was taken over by Jason with the Golden Fleece which, as an expression of the striving for immortality, becomes complementary to the Dionysiac theme.

On the other hand, classical sources do not refer to any particular event linking Perseus and Dionysus, except Pausanias<sup>62</sup> who relates about their conflict at

<sup>55</sup> Jason obtains the Golden Fleece with the help of Medea's love, whose heart he had won with the help of Eros and Aphrodite, Apoll. Rh. Arg. III, 7 ff; Val. F. Arg., V, 329 ff; Perseus prevails over Medusa with the aid of Hermes and Athena, Apd. Bibl. II, 4, 2; Athena was the protectress of the greatest Greek heroes; besides Jason and Perseus, she also protected Heracles and Theseus, and all of their offspring, cf. Срејовић & Цермановић-Кузмановић 1979, 62.

<sup>56</sup> Jones Roccas 1994, 348; Gaggadis-Robin 1994, 82.

<sup>57</sup> F. Kanitz (1985, 183), however, saw Jason on the front as the personification of foolishly brave and successful enterprise, and Perseus as a man endowed with divine powers bridling the wild and uninhibited forces of nature.

<sup>58</sup> Foucher 1981, 689–693.

<sup>59</sup> Dracontius, *Poet. lat.* V, 192 ff.

<sup>60</sup> Gaggadis-Robin 1994, 27–28, no 12, figs 16–23.

<sup>61</sup> Gerke 1973, 11.

<sup>62</sup> Paus., II. 20.4; II. 22.1; II. 23.7–8.



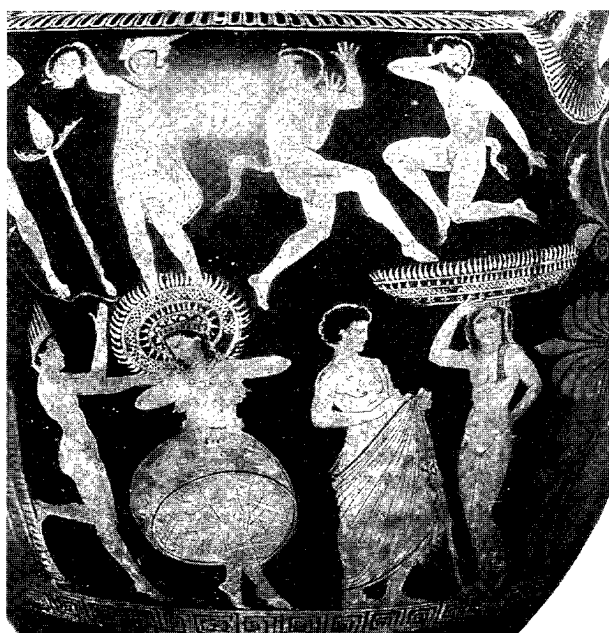


Fig. 8. Perseus with Medusa's head between satyrs, painted volute krater from Taranto (Wuilleumier 1933, fig. 3)

Сл. 8. Персеј са главом Медузе између сатира.  
Сликани крајтер са волушмама из Таранџа  
(Wuilleumier P. 1933, sl. 3)

Argos, emphasizing that following their reconciliation the Argives built a temple to Dionysus. This enmity of Perseus towards Dionysus is interpreted by R. Graves<sup>63</sup> as conservative resistance to the extravagant conduct of maenads and to the spread of the wine cult prior to its official recognition.

Their joint representation in art<sup>64</sup> being as rare as the sources referring to their relationship, it seems appropriate to cite the examples. An antique amphora, now in New York, shows a young man with a *kibisis*, and on the other side Dionysus between two satyrs.<sup>65</sup> Similar is a krater from Rome depicting a young man with a *kibisis* next to maenads and satyrs in a *thiasos*.<sup>66</sup> In both cases, the young man is holding the *kibisis*, which suggests his identification as Perseus. However, closer to the Viminacium programme is a volute krater from Taranto,<sup>67</sup> a unique example of the two myths occurring together, though on the opposite sides of the vessel (fig. 8). The Bacchanalia are depicted on one side, while the other shows two compositions: dancers with baskets in the lower zone, and in the upper – Perseus *Triumphans* raising Medusa's head in one hand and holding a *harpe* in the other, as on the

Viminacium sarcophagus, though here in company with five satyrs.

This exceptionally important scene cannot be seen as a simple illustration of the cited literary source. Examining the origin of the symbiosis of the two compositions, P. Wuilleumier refers to a possible connection with Pausanias' text, though observing that there is nothing horrifying about Medusa and that the satyrs are holding *thyrsos* and dancing rather than carrying arms. Hence the suggestion of the possible reason for this unusual combination of the two compositions: firstly, the satyrs may be Perseus' attendants, a role in which they are shown with Heracles or some other hero in accordance with their connection in literature;<sup>68</sup> secondly, P. Wuilleumier finds their attitude derisive rather than hostile, and therefore sees this symbiotic scene as echoing Aeschylus' satyr plays connecting this genre with the story of Perseus.<sup>69</sup>

For a better understanding of the programme communicated by the Viminacium sarcophagus, Wuilleumier's reasons for this symbiosis should be borne in mind even if not literally applied. It should also be noted that the iconography of maenads associates them only sporadically with Heracles or Eros.<sup>70</sup>

Given all the cited connections of Jason and Perseus with Dionysus, both in literature and in art, the programme of the Viminacium sarcophagus can hardly be

<sup>63</sup> Perseus, just as Pentheus, exhibited hostility towards the Dionysiac cult spreading from Thrace to Athens, Corinth, Sicyon, Delphi and other civilized cities. Periander and Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, as well as the Athenian tyrant Peisistrates, chose to sanction the cult. In the late 7th and early 6th centuries BC the cult was finally recognized and official Dionysiac feasts were instituted, cf. Grevs 1992, 98.

<sup>64</sup> C. Gasparri (1986, cat. nos 791–803) cites the scenes with Perseus and Dionysus within a thematic whole dedicated to Perseus and his enemies such as Pentheus, Lycurgus or Telephos; Perseus was also depicted with Apollo and, perhaps not as often, with Heracles, where he embodies the »ephebian ideal of responsible heroic conduct«, cf. Jones Rocco 1994, 347.

<sup>65</sup> Gasparri 1986, 514, cat. no 800.

<sup>66</sup> Reinach 1912b, 200, no 1.

<sup>67</sup> Wuilleumier 1933, 3–89; Gasparri 1986, 514, cat. no 800.

<sup>68</sup> This symbiosis between Heracles or some other hero and satyrs on painted vases is certainly inseparable from their association as portrayed in Greek tragedy, cf. Wuilleumier 1933, 9, note 3. For more on the relationship between Heracles and Dionysus in Greek tragedy, as well as on that between Heracles and satyrs both in satyr plays and in the arts, see Galinsky 1972, 69, 81–100.

<sup>69</sup> Only fragments of Aeschylus' satyr play *Fishermen with a Net* have survived where Danaë and little Perseus are hauled out from the sea by satyrs. The first to suggest a possible connection between this play and the Taranto crater was P. Wuilleumier 1933, 8, notes 1 and 9.

<sup>70</sup> Walters 1914, 440, cat. nos E 67 and 336, cat. no D 201.

a reflection of Pausanias or Aeschylus. As has already been said, it should be understood rather as a complex expression of triumph over the transience of life.

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Analogies for the unique repertory shown in the Jason Sarcophagus can only be found at the level of individual scenes. Although not an infrequent subject in funerary art, Jason's triumph finds no analogies in Upper Moesia and the neighbouring Roman provinces. The relief of Perseus with Medusa, as far as we know, is also the only example from this province. Yet the occurrence of the theme in Pannonia is attested by two figures of Perseus, from the areas of Mursa and Bassiana.<sup>71</sup>

However, other examples of this myth in funerary art are more complex. J.M.C. Toynbee mentions three examples from Pannonia where, in addition to Perseus and Medusa, is also Athena holding a shield.<sup>72</sup> All the three show the moment prior to Perseus' triumphant pose from the Viminacium relief. Certain iconographic parallels can be observed in the sarcophagus from the Bardini Museum.<sup>73</sup> In this case, the side niches contain Athena and Perseus, in the middle being the central motif of *Gorgoneion*. The figure of Perseus is considerably damaged, but the type is identifiable as *Triumphans*, just like the Viminacium one.

The satyr and maenad on the sides of the sarcophagus, although belonging to a theme that was not only popular but also iconographically very rich, find no closer analogies in the territory of Upper Moesia and the neighbouring Roman provinces. The satyr's closest analogies are either examples made in other media or those of a later date.<sup>74</sup> Its closest analogy, in terms of geography and date, was found by M. Vasić in a bronze vessel coming from a grave at Viminacium.<sup>75</sup> There is also a cast bronze weight (*pondus*) from Stepojevac showing the bust of a faun on the profiled base.<sup>76</sup> The maenad is similar to other examples of this dancing follower of Dionysus: a fragmented figure from Mursa,<sup>77</sup> a figure from Carnuntum, and the reliefs from Celeia<sup>78</sup> and Aquincum.<sup>79</sup>

Close in conceptual terms, although within a completely different iconographic whole, are the reliefs in the Tomb of the Ennii.<sup>80</sup> The left-hand side shows a Satyr trying to seize the cape from a nymph. This relief, flanked by panels filled with acanthus ornaments, forms part, as the Viminacium one, of a complex whole, in this case consisting of the myths of the pursuit of Europa and Ganymede. Although the satyr and maenad are quite different from the Viminacium ones, their

occurrence within a single iconographic programme along with two mythological compositions relates this relief, and therefore the sepulchral monument, to the Viminacium one.

The Jason Sarcophagus, that is its overall iconographic programme, has no direct analogies in the known examples of funerary art, either in Upper Moesia or in Illyricum. It is, therefore, important to point to related iconographic programmes, such as the sarcophagus from the Catacomb of Praetextatus or the Ennian tomb in Šempeter. The abovementioned painted vases, although of a different date and in a different medium, are rare and thus important examples of the symbiosis of mythological themes occurring in the Viminacium sarcophagus. The very structure of the sarcophagus with the tripartite division of its front side – the inscription tabula in the middle flanked by two niches with reliefs and a volute in the upper part – is characteristic of Lower Pannonian sarcophagi, and especially of their production at Sirmium and Mursa.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>71</sup> The statue from Mursa, although a considerably damaged and rough piece of work, clearly shows a naked hero with a chlamys fastened at the right shoulder. He holds a dagger in his bent right arm, and Medusa's head in the lowered left hand. The Perseus from Bassiana probably decorated a shrine or a small chapel, the statue's backside being very roughly executed. It is a naked young man with long wavy hair, Phrygian cap and a cloak fastened at the left shoulder. There is a *harpe* in the form of a sword in his right hand, and Medusa's head in the left. cf. Dautova-Ruševljanin 1989, 117, Pl. 34/1.

<sup>72</sup> Toynbee 1977, 402.

<sup>73</sup> Schefold 1961, no 63.

<sup>74</sup> The statues from Mediana date to the 3rd or 4th century, cf. Tomović 1992, 111, cat. no 159, fig. 41.5; 113, cat. no 166, fig. 21.4. On the fragment of a slab from Taurunum bearing the depiction of Liber and Pan-Silvanus there is a thick-haired satyr turning to the left and cutting a grape cluster with the pruning knife in his right hand. cf. Dautova-Ruševljanin 1989, 89. An intaglio from Doclea is carved with a satyr holding a *pedum* in his right hand and fruits in the left, cf. Popović 1992, 23, cat. no 15.

<sup>75</sup> Vasić 1905, 156.

<sup>76</sup> Крунић 1997, 247, cat. no 394.

<sup>77</sup> Although the figure is considerably damaged, it clearly is a young woman seen from the back and facing right, with the upper body bent to the left. Carved from Upper Italian marble, this figure is most likely a 2nd-century import from the south, cf. Dautova-Ruševljanin 1989, 121, Pl. 36/3.

<sup>78</sup> The Carnuntum one is dancing with her *himation* sliding down, while the Celeia relief shows two dancing maenads clad in long belted *himations* and holding wands. cf. Dautova-Ruševljanin 1989, 121.

<sup>79</sup> Her pose in this relief is quite similar to that of the Viminacium maenad and she also is holding a round object in her left hand, and the double pipe in the right one. cf. Ferri 1933, 208, fig. 249.

<sup>80</sup> Klemenc 1961, 42–43, fig. 36.

<sup>81</sup> Dautova-Ruševljanin 1989, 96–97, nos 40, 41, 168 and 169.

As far as the style and craftsmanship of the Jason Sarcophagus is concerned, it falls among the best achievements of funerary art, and not only in Upper Moesia. The three-dimensional quality of relief carved in deep niches combines with the knowledge of anatomy and well-balanced composition to reach the highest standards of work drawing upon Hellenistic traditions.

There are no data that could indicate the owner of this supreme work. As in most sarcophagi of the type from Lower Pannonia, the front inscription, likely to have been painted, has not survived.<sup>82</sup> Despite this fact, the owner may be presumed to have come from wealthy and, quite probably, cultured circles, given that he was able to understand and accept, if not to think out, the very complex programme of the sarcophagus. The question remains open as to whether the affinity for triumphal and heroic themes of this, doubtless affluent, citizen of Viminacium, is also indicative of his military career, as suggested by F. Kanitz, who believed the sarcophagus had belonged to a »soldier of great valour«. <sup>83</sup> On the other hand, the affinity for such a funerary repertory may have derived from the craftsmen, probably Greek, who made the sarcophagus.<sup>84</sup> Regardless of whose role was decisive, the Jason Sarcophagus certainly confirms that the owner belonged to the city's higher socioeconomic stratum,<sup>85</sup> and that the craftsmen he hired were very skilled and

well-acquainted with the highest achievements of funerary art.

The presence of such a sumptuous sarcophagus at Viminacium should certainly be understood in the context of the city's prosperity, both economic and cultural, in the second half of the second or early third centuries.<sup>86</sup> Seen in that light, the Jason Sarcophagus belongs to a group of outstanding works of funerary art made in the territory of the city and transcending in importance the provincial boundaries within which they were made.<sup>87</sup>

These considerations of the reliefs on the Jason Sarcophagus have not only suggested the possible meaning of its individual scenes, but also their interrelatedness and therefore the programme of the sarcophagus as an integrated whole. Although on the surface the reliefs may appear to express different paths towards the immortality of the soul, they in fact depict the realization of goals and represent a complex expression of triumph over death, attesting that the owner was a distinguished citizen of Viminacium and perhaps suggesting his military career. The study of these compositions is but one of the possible ways towards the understanding of the importance and meaning of the Jason Sarcophagus, a piece whose outstanding qualities will undoubtedly continue to draw the attention of researchers.

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<sup>82</sup> On a good part of the Upper Moesian sarcophagi with tripartite fronts – the inscription tabula flanked by niches containing reliefs – the inscriptions were written in paint and now are missing, cf. Dautova-Ruševljanin 1989, 97.

<sup>83</sup> Каниц 1985, 182.

<sup>84</sup> The issue of the origin of these craftsmen is a very complex one. F. Cumont (1894, 28) believed that the sarcophagus had been made somewhere in Greece and thence transported to Upper Moesia, and M. Djordjević (1989–90, 142) has referred to Greek craftsmen active in Viminacium workshops. A different view was held by M. Vasić (1905, 156–157), who emphasized arguments in favour of the importance of Upper Moesian workshops.

<sup>85</sup> The epigraphic evidence indicates that there was at Viminacium a class of very rich citizens making considerable donations to the municipal coffers on various occasions, cf. Mirković 1986, 48, nos 22, 42, 56 and 61.

<sup>86</sup> It was under Septimius Severus (193–211) and Caracalla (211–217) that Viminacium was at the peak of its prosperity. For more, see: Mirković 1986, 48 ff.

<sup>87</sup> To be singled out from the Viminacium funerary monuments of the same date are certainly the marble stelae of Marcus Valerius Speratus (*IMS* II 110) and Gaius Cornelius Ruphus (*IMS* II 73). To be noted as well are many painted tombs, of which chronologically the closest to these monuments is a cruciform *memoria*, now mostly ruined, containing fragments of red fresco plaster and dating to the early second half of the 3rd century, cf. Korac 2000, cat. no 5035.

## ABBREVIATIONS:

<b>VHAD</b> .....	<i>Vjesnik hrvatskog arheološkog društva</i> , Zagreb.
<b>AEM</b> .....	<i>Archäologisch-epigraphische Mittheilungen aus Österreich</i> , Wien.
<b>ANRW</b> .....	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , Berlin–New York.
<b>IMS</b> .....	<i>Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure</i> I. II. III/2, IV, VI, Beograd 1976–1995.
<b>Latomus</b> .....	<i>Revue d'études latines</i> , Bruxelles.
<b>LIMC</b> .....	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , I–VIII, Zürich, Munich, 1981–1997.
<b>RA</b> .....	<i>Revue archéologique</i> , Paris.
<b>Roscher Lexikon</b> .....	Rocher W.H., <i>Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie</i> .

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## ПРИЛОГ ПРОУЧАВАЊУ ЈАСОНОВОГ САРКОФАГА ИЗ ВИМИНАЦИЈУМА

Јасонов саркофаг из Виминацијума, данас у Барутном магацину »Пећине« у Доњем граду у Београду, својим иконографским програмом, као и стилем у коме је изведен, чини јединствено дело не само на простору провинције у којој је настао. Значај као и значење овог саркофага се зато може бити повод различитим истраживањима, од којих једно свакако чини сагледавање приказаних митолошких композиција. Поред значења ових композиција као појединачних фунералних тема, посебност овог саркофага управо чини њихова корелација и функционисање у оквиру целине коју сачињавају.

На предњој страни су тако представљени, као једноставнији иконографски типови, изузетни херојски подвизи: Јасон са златним руном као и Персеј са Медузом. Они означавају победу над злом и живота над смрћу што може да буде и основно значење ове стране саркофага. Персеј који држи високо подигнуту Медузу као *Perseus Triumphans* аналогон је Јасону, који такође високо подиже предмет свог тријумфа. Једину особеност чини појава грифона, уобичајеног пратиоца Диониса или Артемиде, поред Персејевих ногу. Поред тога што су симболи божанске снаге и сталне будности, значајна и њихова улога психопомпа. Они, као и медузе на саркофазима са дионисијским темама, означавају прелаз из света живих ка Океану. Ако би се грифон поред Персејевих ногу разумео на овај начин он би онда наглашавао позитиван аспект Персејевог тријумфа над смрћу.

На бочним странама саркофага је Менадин и Сатиоров оргијастички плес. Дионисово присуство, иако нема епифаније, прожима сцену и огледа се у жару вина којим су Сатир и Менада обузети, као и у кантаросима са виновом лозом којим су фланикрани. Посебност ових рељефа чини приказ змије увијене око сатиrove руке. Она је чешће приказивана око Менадине руке, где се тумачила као израз екстазе и заноса. Њавероватније је и овде представљена у сличном контексту показујући вечито смењивање доба, што је потпуно у складу са одликама култа Диониса. Такође је важно указати да је змија увијена око руке један од симбола Сабазијевог култа и да су групе његових присталица играле у заносу са змијама у рикама (Demost., *De Coron.*, XVIII, 259 и даље; Aristoph., *Aves*, 875; *Vespae*, 9; *Lys.*, 387 и даље). Сабазије је често поистовећиван са Дионисом, а с обзиром да његов култ, иако посведочен, није био посебно изражен на простору Виминацијума овај иконографски елеменат на се ипак тешко може разумети као његова директна рефлексива.

На следећем плану за разумевање овог програма је потребно указати на односе Јасон-Дионис или Персеј-Дионис како у класичним изворима тако и у фунералној уметности. Значајнија веза између Јасона и Диониса се најбоље може видети на примеру саркофага из катакомбе Претекста. На овом саркофагу је Јасон са златним руном приказан заједно са дионисијском темом на месту где се уобичајено налазио *clipeus*. Мит о Јасону и златном руни је овде као и на вими-

нацијумском саркофагу, изражавајући тежњу ка бесмртности, комплементаран са дионисијском темом.

Односу Персеја и Диониса класични извори такође не поклањају посебну пажњу, осим Паусанија (Paus. II, 20, 4; II, 22, 1; II, 23, 7–8) који говори о њиховом непријатељству. Оно може да се протумачи и као конзервативан отпор екстравагантном понашању Менада и ширењу винског култа пре установљавања званичних Дионисових гозби. Најзначајнији пример њиховог заједничког, иначе веома ретког, приказивања у уметности представља кратера са волутама из Таранга. На њему је, поред сцене Баханалија, приказан између сатира Персеј са Медузом. Сатири, као и на виминацијумском рељефу, не носе оружје већ своје уобичајене атрибуте и плещу због чега се тешко може говорити о илустрацији њиховог непријатељства. Њихов подругљив, пре него непријатељски, став може да буде и одјек Есхилове сатиричне драме, Рибари са мрежом, која спаја овај жанр и причу о Персеју. Оваква размишљања се могу применити и на програм виминацијумског саркофага без тежње да се посматрају као искључиви путеви за његово разумевање.

Сагледавајући програм Јасоновог саркофага из Виминацијума као јединствене целине на првом плану је могуће увидети да он изражава два различита пута стицања вечног блаженства. Насупрот примерима *virtus*-а на предњој страни саркофага ту је и пут који води кроз мистичко-екстатични култ Диониса, бога природе која се непрестано подмлађује. Међутим, пажљивијим приступом увиђа се да су ови путеви крунисани успехом и да акценат овог програма управо чине победоносно уздигнути предмети тријумфа чинећи програм овог саркофага комплексним изразом тријумфа над смрћу. Данас није познато ко је био наручиоц овог дела, али је сигурно потицао из образованог и веома имућног слоја становништва. Изражена наклоност према тријумфалним, херојским, митолошким темама можда може да укаже и на његову војничку каријеру.

Јасонов саркофаг, односно његов целокупан иконографски програм нема директних аналогича у досада познатим примерима сепулкралне уметности, не само провинције Горње Мезије већ и Илирикума. Због тога је важно нагласити постојање блиских иконографских програма иако се за њих не може рећи, осим за саркофаг из катакомбе Претекста, да су настали у периоду Царства, или да у изведени у истом материјалу. Наведене сликане вазе су ипак, колико је до данас познато, најближи примери симбиозе митолошких тема приказаних и на виминацијумском саркофагу. Међутим по питању трипартитне поделе предње стране и композиционе организованости рељефа у дубоким нишама са страна натписног поље и употреби мотива панонске волуте, Јасонов саркофаг изражава своју блискост са саркофазима Доње Паноније. Поред наведених аналогича овај саркофаг свакако треба разумети и као најбољи израз културно-економског успона града у време његовог настанка.