

NADEŽDA GAVRILOVIĆ VITAS, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

LEDA AND THE SWAN

New Marble Sculpture from Skelani (*Municipium Malvesatium*)

e-mail: n.gavrilovic@ai.ac.rs

Abstract – A fragmented marble sculpture was found during the construction works on the canalisation collector in Skelani (*Municipium Malvesatium*). The sculpture presents a life-size bird's torso with his right webbed foot placed on a female's left thigh, part of a folded cloth and a child-like hand placed on the lower part of the bird's torso. It was identified as a mythological scene favoured in antiquity, of Leda and Zeus in the guise of the swan, at the moment of Zeus' seduction of Leda. This sculptural fragment holds even greater significance in the comprehension of Roman provincial art, since to date, it represents a unique example of this iconographic type, not only in sculpture, but in any other work of art in the territory of the Central Balkans.

Key words – Leda and the Swan, Sculpture, *Municipium Malvesatium*, Antiquity.

The museum collection of the Srebrenica National library houses various monuments and objects dated to prehistoric and Roman times from the territory of Srebrenica and middle Podrinje. In its permanent exhibition, among fragments of Roman architectural elements and different artefacts, there is preserved a fragment of a marble sculptural composition. It was found in the village of Skelani (*Municipium Malvesatium*, a locality situated in the eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia, today's territory of the Republic of Srpska) in 1999, but only after a decade, did it become a part of the museum collection.¹ Although we are dealing with only one fragment of a complete sculptural composition, its well preserved state was a facilitated circumstance which allowed the undoubted identification and further analysis of the sculpture in question. The fragment is made from white

marble and on its left side there are three holes for attachment, placed one above the other. At the top of the back of the fragment there are another four holes, also placed one above the other. On the top of the fragment (near the bird's neck), traces of recent damage are visible.²

¹ The fragmented marble sculpture was found in 1999, in the village of Skelani, during works on the construction of a canalisation collector. The exact place of its finding is unknown, but it is presumed that it was found near the location of the so-called "Brankova njiva", where archaeological remains dated to the Roman period were discovered during archaeological campaigns in 2008 and 2014.

² Traces of recent damage are probably made by machinery (during works on the canalisation collector, when workers accidentally stumbled upon the fragment of sculpture), suggesting the possibility of other part or parts of the sculpture remaining in or near the very place where the sculpture was found.



*Fig. 1–6. Sculptural fragment from Municipium Malvesatium
(photo: N. Gavrilović Vitas)*

*Сл. 1–6. Фрагменти скульптуре из Municipium Malvesatium-а
(фото: Н. Гавриловић Витас)*

Before proceeding with its identification and presenting the analysis of the marble sculptural composition from *Municipium Malvesiatium*, the description of the fragment in question follows:

The fragment is made from coarse-grained white marble, suitable for sculptural modelling. Its preserved height and width differ, since one side of the fragment is higher and wider (67.5 x 27 cm), while the other side is slightly shorter and narrower (60 x 20 cm). The fragment consists of part of a bird's neck, a large right wing of a bird with clearly distinguished feathers, part of the bird's right leg and webbed foot, a folded cloth, a female's left thigh and a small, child-like right hand placed on the lower part of the bird's wing (Fig. 1–6). The right leg of the bird is bent upwards at the knee and its webbed foot is placed on the female's left thigh. Between the bird's leg and the woman's thigh, heavy folds of the cloth fall downwards. There is a tree-trunk form behind the bird, obviously a kind of support, on which the bird is leaning. Broken off at the top and bottom, the support extended above and below the figure, which was sculpted completely free of the pillar in the part of the bird's wing and the female's figure. The whole sculptural fragment was carved in one piece with the support. Although the sculptural fragment in some parts obviously suffered mechanical damage, the first impression is that it was sculpted with considerable attention to detail. The part of the bird's neck is presented in a very detailed way, while the plumage of the bird's wing is most carefully and realistically sculpted and then polished, as is the female's left thigh. The sculptor made an effort to carefully model the bird's leg and foot too – although not as well preserved as the rest of the sculptural fragment, the bird's foot with a paddle between its talons is presented in detail. The cloth that falls downwards from the female's thigh is heavily wrinkled – the modelling of the folds is chiselled most attentively. Unlike previously described sculptural details, the small, child-like right hand placed on the lower part of the bird's wing is sculpted without paying attention to any of the details – all the fingers are of almost equal length, with no fingernails emphasised. The same “aloofness” in sculpturing treatment is visible in the modelling of the support on which the bird is leaning. The back of the fragment is not treated and, as we previously mentioned, there are four holes for attachment, placed one above the other at the top of the fragment's back. Also, another three holes for attachment are placed one above the other on the left side of the bird's wing, probably for attaching the rest of the

bird's wing. In addition, the middle of the tree-trunk form is drilled (on the top of the trunk) – there is a visible hole in the centre of the support against which the bird is leaning.

After examination of the sculptural composition fragment, there is no question of its identification – it represents a part of a famous mythological scene of Leda and the swan.³ One of the frequently used motives in not only Greek and Roman art, but in later periods as well (from Renaissance period onwards), the Leda and the swan scene depicts Leda being seduced by the god Zeus/Jupiter disguised as a swan.⁴ Like the myth itself (and like other myths with a similar content where a god transformed as an animal seduces a mortal), the scene of the union of the King of the gods with a mortal gained popularity very quickly and was present in antique art for many centuries.⁵

From the union with Zeus, Leda bore two children (certain ancient sources mention that she laid one egg from which, according to some writers, Castor and Clytemnestra, that is Castor and Polydeukes were hatched). However, according to other antique sources she laid two eggs – Helen was hatched from one egg and Castor and Polydeukes from the other.⁶ A slightly different

³ Leda, a queen of Sparta and wife of king Tyndareus, was seduced by Zeus in the guise of the swan. With Aphrodite's help, who disguised herself into an eagle and started to pursue him, Zeus transformed in a swan fell into Leda's arms for protection, from a pursuing eagle. The same night, Leda was embraced by her husband too and as a consequence, she became mother to four children: Castor, Clytemnestra, Polydeukes and Helena), two fathered by Zeus and two fathered by Tyndareus. According to some ancient writers, Polydeukes and Helena were Zeus' children, but there are other versions by which Leda and Zeus were actually parents to the Dioskouroi – Castor and Polydeukes, Chamay 1983, 44–45, Kahil et al. 1992, 231.

⁴ Imaginary love relationships between gods disguised as animals and mortals were quite popular in Greek mythology and art (with no less fame in Roman period as well), especially with god Zeus – in the guise of swan, he seduced Leda, in shape of a bull Europa and disguised as eagle Ganymede, Saelid Gilhus 2006, 78, 105.

⁵ The earliest presentations of Leda and the swan are dated to 5th century B. C. (like the scene from askos found in Crete, sculpture from Boston Museum of Fine Arts and terracotta from Boeotia, Kahil et al. 1992, 232, n. 1, 5 and 8) and are present in various antique works of art until the 6th century A. D.

⁶ According to the Peloponnesian version of the legend, Leda laid on the egg from which Helen and Polydeukes hatched. But, judging by the version favoured in Attica (after the construction of a new temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous about 440 B.C.), it was Nemesis who laid on the egg, which later came into the hands of Leda who afterwards fostered the babies hatched from the egg. But it is not until Hellenistic times, that the idea of Castor and Polydeukes

story appears in Euripides' "Helen", in which Zeus, in the guise of a swan, forces himself upon Leda (the scene is depicted in various antique works of art), and in *Anthologia Palatina* a new detail is added to the myth – the act of violence is placed on the bank of the Eurotas River (marked by the image of the river god in antique works of art depicting the scene of Leda and the swan).⁷

The mythological scene of Leda and the swan somewhat simultaneously appeared on Greek objects of small form, such as an askos from Crete and several terracottas, but also in sculpture.⁸ A marble sculptural composition of Leda and the swan in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, of unknown Greek provenience, dated to the late 5th century B. C., is considered to be the earliest known sculpture depicting Leda, holding and sheltering a swan in her arms.⁹ The Leda and the swan sculpture from Boston precedes a similar lost sculpture of Leda and the swan, which was dated to the 4th century B. C. and was attributed to the sculptor Timotheos.¹⁰ In scholarly literature, it is generally accepted that all currently known Roman sculptures of Leda and the swan, which show a standing Leda holding a swan in her lap with her right hand, while her left hand is holding up a sheltering cloak to protect Zeus disguised as swan from an eagle, represent copies of Timotheos' sculptural composition.¹¹ There are, to date, 32 known Roman sculptures of this iconographic type, along with many reliefs, mosaics, vases, lamps, gems etc., with this particular scene of Leda and the swan on them.¹² However, besides the iconographic type of Leda and the swan based on the lost Timotheos sculpture, in Roman art there are two more sculptural types of Leda and the swan:

1) Sculptures of a nude, reclined Leda in profile, raised on her elbows, with the swan positioned between her bent knees (or above her). The swan's wings are usually fully outspread, while his beak is turned towards Leda's mouth or breast.¹³

2) Sculptures of a standing, half nude Leda in profile (with heavy folds of cloth falling between Leda's legs), with one arm outstretched and a hand placed on the swan's neck. The swan is enormous, presented in life-size, also in profile, reaching with his beak for Leda's lips, with one foot placed on Leda's thigh. There is a variant of this iconographic type where, instead of reaching Leda's lips with his beak, the swan is placing his beak on Leda's nape (Leda's head is bent downwards). Often, there is a small Eros behind the swan, just standing and holding an object (a bow or a torch) in his hand, or placing his small hand on the swan's wing.¹⁴

sharing Helen's egg-birth, is introduced (in one version Helen was in the egg with Castor, in other version Helen was in the egg with Polydeukes). Finally, the idea of Helen, Castor and Polydeukes being born from one single egg, appeared in the Roman period, along with the same iconography on the works of art (from the second half of the first century A. D., for ex. stucco relief from a tomb on the Via Tiburtina near Rome), Ling 1993, 8–9.

⁷ Allan 2008, 149; Chamay 1983, 45; Kahil et al. 1992, 231.

⁸ The askos, with an image of a nude Leda seated on a rock, presented in profile and turned towards a large swan, is dated to around the 5th century B. C. Several terracottas from Boeotia, Athens, Corinth, Tanagra and Delphi, dating from the 5th and the 4th century B. C., also present Leda holding a smaller swan, Kahil et al. 1992, 232–233, no. 1, 8–14. An Etruscan cup with a most interesting scene with three women and a swan should also be mentioned here – dated to 320–310. B. C., it represents a scene with three women, where the one in the centre is slightly bent towards the swan standing in front of her and gently caressing it. Above her, an eagle is flying towards the swan, obviously representing a reminder of Zeus' incognito presence, Chamay 1983, 45, pl. 14.

⁹ The marble sculpture of Leda and the swan from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is probably an Attic work of the late 5th century B. C. and it presents a female figure partly covered by a chiton (the right side of the female's body is completely exposed), who shields the swan with her right arm, while her left arm is raised to protect it from the eagle's attack. The sculpture is missing Leda's head, right hand and leg, left arm and part of the left foot, as well as the swan's head, neck and tail. Authors such as M. Comstock and C. Vermeule attributed the sculpture to the temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous, while B. S. Ridgway suggested that it presented a lateral acroterion. Before becoming a part of the collection in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Leda and the swan sculpture was part of the Farnese collection in the Palazzo at Caprarola, where it decorated a fountain in one of the Farnese gardens, Delivorrias 1990, 35–36.

¹⁰ Timotheos was a Greek sculptor from the 4th century B. C., known for his work on reliefs in the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (between 353. and 350. B. C.). Pliny mentions the names of four famous Greek sculptors who were each responsible for a different side of the building (Timotheos for the south), Pliny NH XXXVI, 36.30–31. Vitruvius also states that Timotheos worked along with Leochares, Bryaxis, Scopas and Praxiteles on the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, Vitruvius, VII, praef. 12–13. Timotheos is also known as the leading master sculptor on the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus, where he is mentioned in the inscribed temple accounts as a maker of "typoi" (meaning "relief, mould-made figure"), Jenkins 2006, 225; Richter 1927, 80–82.

¹¹ The main arguments for attributing the lost sculpture of Leda and the swan to Timotheos were the analogies in the sculpting manner and stylistic similarities between one of the Nereids from the Asclepius temple in Epidaurus and Roman copies of Leda and the swan: the contrast of the clinging, transparent drapery on the female torso, the heavy folds of cloth between the female's legs and the fact that the sculpture both conceals and reveals the female body (since full nudity wasn't acceptable in Timotheos' period of work). Judging by the manner in which the sculptures from the Asclepius temple in Epidaurus were modelled, (although the name of the sculptor is lacking in literary sources) and their stylistic analogy with the best preserved Roman copies of Leda and the swan (like the one in the Museo Capitolino or the one from the villa Albani in Rome), it is believed that the author of the lost sculpture of Leda and the swan was the sculptor Timotheos. The arguments in favour

It is quite clear that the fragment of sculptural composition from *Municipium Malvesatium*, belongs to the third iconographic type of Leda and the swan sculptures. Wrongly dated to the 3rd century B. C., but actually from the period between 50 and 100 A. D., the Argos relief was considered to be the earliest known monument of this iconographic type of Leda and the swan.¹⁵ However, the earliest known depictions of this type date from the 1st century B. C., like the marble relief from Rome and the bas-relief from the House of Pilate in Seville.¹⁶ Images of Leda and swan on these monuments, unlike those on classical representations of Leda and the swan, show Leda struggling with the swan, instead of holding, embracing or kissing him, like in later Roman replicas.¹⁷ On almost all the scenes of this iconographic type from the Roman period, the swan is enormous, life-size, with a torso slightly larger than Leda's own, except in a few monuments so far known where the swan is depicted in his normal size.¹⁸ The reason for such a presentation of the swan is very logical – it befits a deity who is, at the moment of the meeting or union with Leda, transformed into a bird.¹⁹ The erotic undertone is clearly present in Roman works of art (unlike the low-key, older monuments of Leda and the swan, where Leda is sheltering a normal sized swan), which certainly accounted for the huge popularity of the motif all over the Roman Empire until the late antiquity.²⁰ The almost always present small figure of Eros additionally emphasises the erotic connotation – in the majority of monuments, Eros is depicted either encouraging or pushing the swan towards Leda, to consummate their union.²¹ The presence of Eros is almost obligatory here, since he generally appears in scenes of amorous pursuit or abduction, in which the main protagonists are a deity and a heroine or a young hero (for example, the scenes of Zeus with Ganymede).²²

After these somewhat extended, but necessary for the full understanding of this particular type of Leda and the swan iconography, observations, we return to the analysis of the fragment of the sculptural composition from *Municipium Malvesatium*. We can now, with some certainty, conclude that it depicts an amorous scene between a nude Leda and Zeus disguised as swan, prior to their union, in a presence of a small Eros, whose child-like hand is placed on the swan's wing. Although we are dealing with only one fragment of the complete sculpture, there are sufficient elements for a stylistic analysis of the fragment and for making an assumption regarding how the whole sculptural composition looked. In the context of stylistic analysis, the closest sculptural

of the mentioned hypothesis are seen in the modelling of the female body parts, the drapery blown against the body, the arrangement of the folds of the garment of Nereids from the Asclepius temple in Epidauros, in comparison with the same elements in the figure of Leda in Roman copies of the sculptural group of Leda and the swan, Rieche 2010, 119; Richter 1955, 13.

¹² Rieche 2010, 119. There are only six Roman sculptures of Leda and the swan based on lost Timotheos' original statue, preserved in complete (only three of them have unbroken heads, while the heads of other three sculptures were broken and reattached). Those six copies are: sculpture from villa Albani in Rome from Augustian period, Rieche 1978, 23, Kahil et al. 1992, 239, n. 73a; sculpture from Copenhagen dated to Hellenistic period or the 1st century B. C., Rieche 1978, 23, n. 1, Kahil et al. 1992, 232, n. 6b; sculpture from villa Borghese from the first half of the 2nd century A. D., Rieche 1978, 23, n. 3, Kahil et al. 1992, 239, n. 73c; sculpture from Palace Ducale in Venice dated to the end of the Hellenistic period, Kahil et al. 1992, 232, n. 7; sculpture from Capitoline Museum in Rome from the first half of the 2nd century A. D., Rieche 1978, 24, n. 6, Kahil et al. 1992, 238–239, n. 73; sculpture from Madrid dated to the period of Antonini, Rieche 26, n. 12, Kahil et al. 1992, 239, n. 73d. One more sculpture should be added to the corpus of completely preserved Roman copies of Leda and the swan, which was part of the private collection of the Marques of Zetland, from Aske Hall in North Yorkshire. The sculpture is completely preserved and is dated to the 2nd century A. D., Sotheby's EST. 1744 – <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/antiquities-n08810/lot.16.html.html>.

¹³ Iconographic type of Leda and the swan representing reclined, nude Leda with swan beside or above her is known from the 2nd century B. C., to which is dated a terracotta relief found in Egypt. From that period onwards, it became a very popular motif in Roman art, with clear erotic note – on fresco-paintings, mosaics, sarcophagi, reliefs, lamps, mirrors, gems, Kahil et al. 1992, 242–244, n. 110–121, n. 126–135. This motif was also considerably popular in Coptic art, leading researchers in the past, to somewhat narrow and not accurate conclusions, that this scene and other pagan images were used for decorating Christian churches. The expression „Leda Christiana“ was coined, as an allusion that Leda and the swan scene in Christian art could be explained as a representation of the conception of Anna, mother of the Virgin, through the offices of a celestial dove settling on her lap, Torp 1969, 103. However, authors like H. Torp and more recently T. K. Thomas, give solid arguments that Greek and Roman mythological motifs used in Coptic art had funerary meaning and once decorated the interior walls of tombs, not Christian churches. For example, on late antique Egyptian Christian tomb reliefs, Leda is shown as physically mature woman, wearing jewellery and veil or coiffure of married women, probably symbolizing the union of a husband and wife or, as in Asmolean relief, strong familial and parentage bonds, Thomas 2000, 68–70.

¹⁴ Alterations to this basic iconographic type are visible in the different details added to the scene: the swan's beak is near or kissing Leda's mouth (for example, in the marble relief from Knossos or the sculptural composition from Venice, where Leda is kissing the swan, Kahil et al. 1992, 233, n. 16, 241, n. 96); Leda's head is bent downwards and the swan's beak is placed on Leda's nape (like in the famous Argos relief or the almost identical Brauron relief, Ibid, 233, n. 15, 241, n. 100); the swan's and Leda's heads are not close (the marble sarcophagus from Aquincum, Kahil et al. 1992, 237, n. 63). The small Eros is presented with a large egg in his hand on a situla from the Dacian locality of Concesti (now in Ermitage, inv. n. 2160/2), where he is holding an oversized egg in his right hand,



Fig. 7. Sculpture from the National Archaeological Museum in Venice (photo: I. Sh., <http://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=5472>)

Сл. 7. Скулптура Лезде и лабуда из Националног археолошког музеја у Венецији (фото: I. Sh., <http://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=5472>)

analogies to which our sculpture could be linked must be taken into account:

1) The marble sculpture of Leda and the swan from the National Archaeological Museum in Venice (inv. n. 30).²³ Leda is presented nude, in profile, facing left, while the life-size swan is also presented in profile, with its right wing outspread, while its left wing is “shielding” Leda’s nude figure (Fig. 7). She has loosely tied hair, arranged in a *krobylos* on the top of the head and in bun on her neck. Leda is bending slightly with her knees and it seems that she is trying to clutch a cloth with her left hand, maybe in an attempt to cover herself. With her right hand she is holding the swan off, as he is trying to kiss her mouth with his beak. At the same time, he is pinning Leda with his right foot placed on her left thigh and he is pressed upon her so tightly that one part of his feathers is visible between

and on a plate from the “Seuso treasure”, Eros is, with his left hand, holding on to a low altar, with a large egg in his right hand. Of course, the egg is a reminiscence of the birth of Leda’s and Zeus’ children (they were hatched from an egg). Both objects are dated to the 5th century A. D., Ibid 238, n. 64–65. Besides Leda and the swan, other figures or objects can be part of the scene – a tree (the marble relief from Knossos, Ibid, 233, n. 16, the marble relief from the House of Pilate in Sevilla, Turner 1992, 186), an altar (the marble relief from Rome, now in the Staatliche Museum, Berlin, IDAI. objects Arachne – <https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1120925?fl=20&q=Leda&resultIndex=12>), an armchair (the fresco from Casa di Meleagro in Pompei, Kahil et al. 1992, 239, n. 76) and a small Eros, who is present on numerous monuments. Also, in rare cases, Leda is presented completely nude, like in a bas-relief from Champieu, de l’Hervillier 1851, 189, pl. 160, n. 2.

¹⁵ The marble relief from Argos, now in the British Museum in London (inv. n. 2199), presents Leda and the swan in a tight embrace, which looks more like the swan’s dominance over Leda – both figures are presented in profile, Leda’s body is crouched with bent knees, her head is turned downwards, with the swan placing his beak on her nape (as so many male animals do in mating). The swan’s wings are fully outspread; his right foot is on Leda’s left thigh. There is a folded cloth between Leda’s legs, falling downwards to the ground. The relief from Argos is in a form and style very similar to the marble relief from Brauron (now in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, inv. n. 1499), which represents a simple rectangular relief with no frame, and slightly damaged (the upper right corner is missing, while the lower left corner was broken, but has been repaired). The scenes of Leda and the swan from the Argos and Brauron reliefs are almost identical, which leads H. Wiegartz to presume that they represent replicas, with the only slight difference being that the Argos relief was more carefully carved. The Brauron relief is either a Greek original work from 400–300 B. C. or a classical copy from the 1st century A. D., Wiegartz 1983, 171–172, Abb. 2.

¹⁶ However, there is a possibility that the sculptures of this iconographic type are copies of a lost Hellenistic relief from the 3rd century A. D., when the erotic note was implemented in the scene of Leda and the swan, by enlarging the swan so that the seduction would be more plausible, Chamay 1983, 46. As R. P. S. Moorey observes, the protective gesture of Leda shielding the swan became, in time, an act of passion, culminating in the explicit scenes of Leda and the swan coupling, Moorey 1971, 214. The marble relief from Rome (now in the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, inv. n. 923) is dated to the 1st century B. C. The iconographic composition is very similar to the scene from the marble relief from Knossos – a nude Leda is presented on the left side, in profile, with a folded cloth which is sliding down her legs. The swan is presented on the right side, also in profile, with widely stretched wings and its left foot placed on Leda’s right thigh. Leda’s and the swan’s head are close, like they are looking into each other’s eyes. Both figures are flanked by two trees, behind Leda there is an altar and behind the swan there is small, winged Eros, who is pushing the swan towards Leda with his right hand, IDAI. Objects Arachne – <https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1120925?fl=20&q=Leda&resultIndex=12>. It is, however, interesting to observe the great resemblance between the Rome relief and the relief from Knossos. The marble relief from the House of Pilate represents a scene of Leda and the swan, where Leda is on the right side, while the swan is on her left side. The swan’s beak is on Leda’s neck (her head is slightly bent downwards), his wings are fully outspread and his right foot is on Leda’s left thigh. Richly folded drapery falls downwards between her legs. There is a tree behind the swan, Turner



Fig. 8. Sculpture from the Dion Archaeological Museum (<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/300615343856729739>)

Сл. 8. Скулптура Лее и лабуца
из Археолошкој музеја Дион
(<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/300615343856729739>)

her legs. The swan's plumage resembles the feathers of an eagle, rather than a swan, possibly as a reminder of his divine origin.

The treatment of the swan's plumage and webbed foot is very close to the modelling of the *Municipium Malvesatium* sculptural composition. Also, the cloth is treated very similarly. However, we can't overlook the richly modelled plumage of the Venice group's swan and webbed foot with clearly chiselled talons, reminiscent more of those of an eagle than a swan, while the feathers of the swan's wing from the *Municipium Malvesatium* composition are treated much softer and the webbed foot is sculpted as a swan's foot and not as the foot of a bird of a prey. The sculptural group of Leda and the swan is dated to the middle of the 1st century A. D.

2) The marble sculpture from the Dion Archaeological Museum, found in the ancient Macedonian city of

1992, 186. One more monument should be added to this group of Leda and the swan monuments, although it is not from the 1st century B. C., but from the first half of the 1st century A. D. It is a marble relief which was a part of the frieze of the facade of the sanctuary complex Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, in Caria, dedicated to Aphrodite and the Julio-Claudian Emperors. Although somewhat damaged (the swan's head and Leda's arm are missing), the relief shows an almost identical scene of Leda and the swan to that in the relief from the House of Pilate – the only difference is the presence of the small Eros, who is standing behind the swan, with his hand on the swan's wing, Smith 1987, 97; Kahil et al. 1992, 241, n. 99.

¹⁷ Classical vase paintings with the scene of Leda and the swan depict a mythological rape or pursuit by the swan/Zeus and, as H. A. Shapiro notices, physical contact between Leda and the swan is shown less often, Shapiro 1992, 61, 64–65. There are several other monuments that depict Leda struggling with the swan, like the monument from Madrid or an unpublished sarcophagus from Chios. On both monuments, like in the previously described reliefs from Argos, Brauron and the House of Pilate, the swan is firmly holding Leda (pinning her with his webbed foot on her thigh), who is trying to pull away from him, clutching a cloth in an attempt to cover herself, Wiegartz 1983, 173–174. In classical Roman monuments, however, the rapport between Leda and the swan is amorous and erotic – they are presented either kissing or in a moment before the kiss or Leda embracing and caressing her lover.

¹⁸ On two frescos – one from Casa di Meleagro in Pompei and the other from Herculaneum, Kahil et al. 1992, 239, n. 76–77.

¹⁹ The enlargement of the swan's figure is easy to understand, since in the Greek mind mortals and gods were alike, but gods were more powerful and, therefore, larger in form. This is why this type of swan presentation enlarges the bird – to emphasise its divine status, but also to highlight the honour that a god bestows on the mortal Leda, by visiting her, Clarke 1994, 98.

²⁰ The erotic undertone present in Roman monuments and objects with the representation of Leda and the swan is caused not only by the depiction of their amorous relationship, tight embrace or sometimes clearly sexual position in which they are depicted (for example, the scenes with a reclined Leda and the swan placed between her legs or on her), but is also highlighted by Leda's nudity. A. O. Koloski-Ostrow thinks that in the monumental Greek art from the 5th century B. C., baring the breast is the classic choice of partial physical exposure for female representations and that accidental breast baring also becomes a positive erotic symbol for a mortal woman when she is raped by a god. As an example, she argues that in the case of the Boston sculptural composition of Leda and the swan, from the 5th century B. C., Leda's peplos opens down her right side, exposing her right breast to the eyes of the viewer, Cohen 2000, 70–71.

²¹ As H. Wiegartz points out, Eros is almost always present and is clearly a thematic companion to Leda and the swan, Wiegartz 1983, 173–174. On classic monuments, Eros is often presented as a chubby, little boy, sometimes with wings, sometimes with a bow or a torch, behind the swan, encouraging him or placing his small hand on the swan's wing, pushing him towards Leda.

²² It is interesting, however, to observe that Eros is not depicted in numerous scenes of Leda and the swan with clear sexual connotation (the second iconographic type of Leda and the swan iconography mentioned in the text above) – he doesn't intervene in the moment of copulation, but only in the scenes of seduction or pursuit, Calame 1999, 71.

²³ The height of the sculpture: 74 cm, Wiegartz 1983, 174–179.

Dion (Fig. 8).²⁴ The sculpture was discovered in 1994, in the banquet hall of a ruined house in the southern part of the city, along with a Dionysus statue.²⁵ Unfortunately, the sculpture from Dion is partly damaged – Leda's head, upper torso and part of her left arm are missing. Still, from the rest of the sculpture, a great likeness to the iconography of the Venice group can be observed – Leda is nude, her right arm is stretched and placed on the swan's neck to hold him off, while her right hand is holding the cloth (part of the cloth can be seen between Leda's legs, unlike in the Venice group where part of swan's wing is presented between Leda's legs). Leda is slightly bending her knees, besides which a heavy mass of folded cloth falls. The swan's right foot is strongly pressed onto Leda's left thigh, while his right wing is outstretched. The bird is trying to kiss Leda's mouth with its beak (such a presumption is allowed by the position in which swan's head is, although Leda's head is missing). The swan's plumage is modelled in detail, as is his webbed foot. Similar to the Venice sculpture, there is a column or support behind the swan, on which the bird is leaning.

The sculptural group from Dion bears more of a resemblance to our sculpture than to the Venice sculptural composition – the swan's feathers are modelled very similarly to the plumage from our fragment and the webbed feet are almost identical – they are chiselled in the same way, although the Dion foot has slightly prominent talons. However, there is a small difference between the way the Dion artist and the craftsman of the *Municipium Malvesatium* fragment resolved swan's tail – in the Dion sculpture, the feathers of the swan's tail realistically fold and end between Leda's legs, while in our fragment, the feathers of the swan's tail are similar to the folds of the cloth. Another very close iconographic analogy can be seen in the sculpture of Leda and the swan from the San Antonio Museum of Art, dated to the Roman period, particularly in the treatment of the swan's plumage, webbed foot and the small Eros' hand placed on the lower part of the swan's torso.²⁶

As for other analogies to our sculptural group, in the context of the sculpting manner and the dating, besides the above mentioned, it is significant to consider scenes from two Leda sarcophagi – from the Beth She'arim necropolis and the tomb of Herodes Atticus from Kephisia, in Athens. The Leda sarcophagus from catacomb 11 of the mausoleum at Beth She'arim caused great interest among scholars, since it represents a unique example of this type of sarcophagus found in Palestine, in which Jews were buried in the antique period

²⁴ The name Dion itself means „sacred place“ and by most scholars, the city was called like that because of its' proximity to Mount Olympus (the home of god Zeus and the Greek pantheon). The city of Dion was developed as a sanctuary – there are records of 6th century A. D. writer Stephen of Byzantium, who writes about the temple dedicated to Zeus at Dion. However, archaeological excavations with yielded sculptural finds and votive monuments from Dion, confirmed worship of more than dozen gods and goddesses, like Demeter, Asclepius, Athena, Kybele, Hermes, Dionysos, Isis etc., Harrington 1996, 28–30.

²⁵ Ibid, 34. As Leda and the swan statue, Dionysos statue was also used as a table support – a leg of a marble table.

²⁶ The sculptural composition of Leda and the swan is a part of the Gilbert M. Denman Gallery for Ancient Sculpture in the San Antonio Museum of Art. Unfortunately, besides its mention in the article “Golden Oldies” written by M. Ennis in “Texas monthly”, published in 1990 (p. 59–60), we didn't succeed in acquiring more details about the sculpture (place of find, dating etc.).

²⁷ The necropolis at Beth She'arim was discovered in 1936 and excavated until 1958. It represents one of the major Jewish necropolises in the period of antiquity and the central necropolis for Jews, not only from Beth She'arim and Roman-Byzantine Palestine, but also from Diaspora, particularly Syria, Levine 2005, 197–198. Numerous fragments of marble sarcophagi from Beth She'arim's catacombs show a rich display of figures and ornaments, among which is a considerable number of Greek and Roman deities and mythological scenes (humans in togas, the goddesses Nike and Aphrodite, Eros, Amazons etc., Chancey 2005, 212.

²⁸ On the better preserved long side, there is a scene of an assembly of people standing in a courtyard in front of a palace facade – one of the men is identified as Achilles, while the whole scene is considered to represent events on Scyros. On the other long side of the Leda sarcophagus, a huntress is presented with two men – one man is riding a horse. It has been presumed that the scene presents the Calydonian hunt, with Atalanta and Meleagros as the main figures, Levine 2005, 203.

²⁹ The Leda sarcophagus from the Beth She'arim necropolis is, without doubt, imported, as were many other sarcophagi which were used for Jewish burials. However, unlike other sarcophagi, the Leda sarcophagus bears a clear erotic scene which, in the eyes of conservative Jewish rabbis, must have looked quite offensive. Although M. Avi-Jonah suggested that the Leda sarcophagus was subjected to iconoclastic behaviour and turned around (towards the wall, so that the scene of Leda and the swan couldn't be seen) by the Muslims, it is more likely that the damaging of Leda's face and body parts was done by other Jews, either contemporaries or Jews from later generations, Fine 2005, 228; Fine 2010, 455–456. About the general Jewish attitude toward nudity in Greco-Roman art and certain examples, see Poliakoff 1993, 56–62.

³⁰ The burial chamber of Herodes Atticus in Kephisia, was found by accident in 1866. Although it was already robbed, the chamber still contained four carved marble sarcophagi and a few small objects. One of the sarcophagi, known in scholarly literature as the “Leda sarcophagus”, contains beautifully carved scenes of the family of Helen of Troy. The decoration of the Leda sarcophagus was commissioned for the purpose of celebrating the family identity, more specifically to commemorate the deceased: Herodes' daughter Elpinike and, perhaps, her husband L. Vibullius Hipparchus, Perry 2001, 461–462.

³¹ The Caryatids are presented standing at the four corners of the sarcophagus. The scene of Leda and the swan is presented on

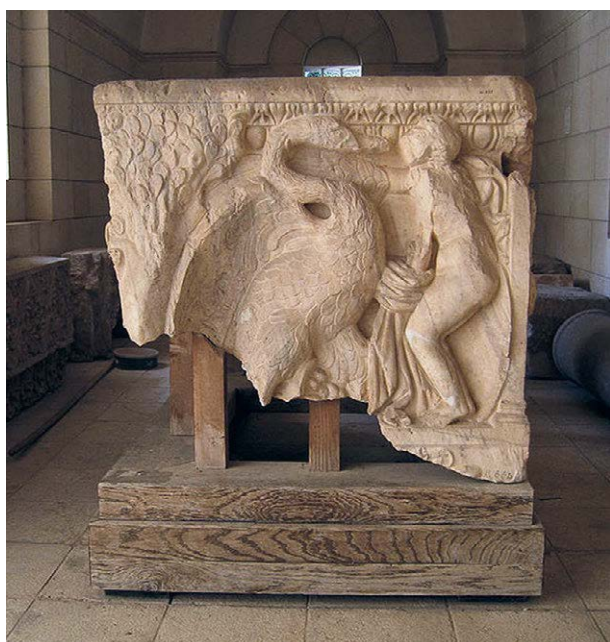


Fig. 9. *Leda sarcophagus from the necropolis at Beth She'arim* (photo: Yair Talmor; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leda_and_the_SeanBeit_Shearim.jpg)

Сл. 9. Ледин саркофаг из некрополе у Бет Ше'арим-у (фото: Yair Talmor; [tps://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leda_and_the_SeanBeit_Shearim.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leda_and_the_SeanBeit_Shearim.jpg))

(Fig. 9).²⁷ Three sides (two long and one short) of the Leda sarcophagus are preserved and on the short side there is a scene of Leda and the swan, in which Leda is presented nude on the right side, in profile, standing with both legs bent at the knees, holding with her right hand the swan's neck.²⁸ There is a folded cloth in Leda's left hand. The life-size swan is presented opposite to Leda, also in profile, with an outstretched right wing, trying to kiss Leda on the mouth. Behind the swan there is a tree with a top full of leaves. Although, unfortunately, some parts of the relief are damaged (Leda is defaced, her breast and arm are missing),²⁹ a clear stylistic analogy to the fragment from *Municipium Malvesiatium* can be seen in the treatment of the swan's neck and plumage. The Leda sarcophagus from Bet She'arim is dated to the 2nd century A. D.

The Leda sarcophagus from Kephisia was found in a marble burial chamber where the famous sophist and Roman consul Herodes Atticus and his family were buried (Fig. 10).³⁰ On the left side of the sarcophagus, Leda and the swan in life-size are presented – Leda is on the right side, completely nude, in a slightly crouched

the left end of the sarcophagus, while Eros stringing his bow is presented on the other end. The Dioskouroi brothers, flanking the figure of their sister Helen, are presented on the front, while a scene with Triton and Nereid is presented on the back, *Ibid*, 465–467.

³² G. Koch and H. Wiegartz are prone to date the Leda sarcophagus from Kephisia to between 170 and 180 A. D. However, E. E. Perry presumes that it is possible to date the Kephisia sarcophagus to around 170–175. A. D based on, among other facts, the possible date of Elpinike's death, who was presumably buried in the sarcophagus, Perry 2001, 484–487.

³³ The relief from Knidos of Leda and the swan presents Leda completely nude, crouched, with her left hand holding the lower part of the body of a life-size swan who is pressed firmly against her, with outspread wings (with its left wing shielding Leda) and with its right webbed foot placed on Leda's left thigh. Parts of the cloth can be seen between Leda's legs. Behind the swan, a small, chubby, winged Eros is pushing the bird towards Leda. For more details see Wiegartz 1983, 174, fig. 3. An almost identical representation can be seen on a Roman terracotta lamp (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. n. 17.194.2385).

³⁴ The marble relief from Lauriacum (now in the Castle Museum, Linz, inv. n. B 1691) presents a naked Leda with a cloth flying above her, firmly holding the neck of the swan (life size), which is perched on her right thigh. The swan's beak is close to Leda's mouth. Behind the swan, a small figure of Eros is holding a sceptre in his left hand and a *fulmen* in his right hand (both attributes present Zeus' emblems). To the right of Leda an apple tree is presented and also an arched door-way. The relief is dated to 4th century A. D., Toynbee 1977, 392, iiiia; Kahil et al. 1992, 240, n. 85.

³⁵ The fragmented relief from locality Villach in Noricum, unfortunately presents only a part of swan's neck and torso (with visible plumage) and Leda's hand placed on swan's neck. Judging by the dimensions of swan's neck and part of the torso, it can be presumed that the swan was presented life size, UBI ERAT LUPA, F. Harl – <http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/monument.php?id=1073>

³⁶ The marble relief from Stubenberg (now in lapidarium of Universal museum Joanneum in Graz, inv. n. 117), presents nude Leda on the right, in profile, with her knees bent, holding the swan's neck with her right hand and placing her left hand on its tail. The swan is on the left, also in profile, with fully outspread wings, placing his right foot on Leda's left thigh and trying to kiss her in the mouth. The relief is dated from 1st to 2nd century A. D., Toynbee 1977, 392, ii; Kahil et al. 1992, 240, n. 82.

³⁷ The fragmented relief from Poetovio (now in Pokrajinski muzej Ptuj, inv. n. RL 129), on which unfortunately only Leda's legs and parts of swan's tail and cloth falling downwards, are visible. Since swan's legs are not in the scene, it can be presumed that either his feet was in the air or, analogous to our fragment, his foot was placed on Leda's thigh, UBI ERAT LUPA, F. Harl – <http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/monument.php?id=9358>

³⁸ The lamp from Oltenia bears the images of Leda and the swan, where Leda is presented naked, on the right, in profile, with her knees bent and her hands between her legs. The swan, presented life-size is on the left, also in profile, has fully outspread wings (shielding Leda with his left wing) and is gently kissing Leda. The details are done with great attentiveness – Leda's hair is arranged in a low bun, the swan's plumage and tail are presented very realistically. The lamp is dated from the last decades of the 1st century to the 2nd century A. D., Ota 2009, 461–463.

³⁹ We can be only certain that Leda's head wasn't bent with the swan's beak on her's nape, because all the iconographic exam-



Fig. 10. Leda sarcophagus from the burial chamber of Herodes Atticus (figure 1, Perry 2001, 463)

Сл. 10. Ледина саркофага из гробнице Херода Аттика (фиг. 1, Perry 2001, 463)

position, with her legs bent at the knees and with her left arm placed on the swan's upper part of the torso (just below the swan's neck). She is trying to hold the swan off, at the same time grasping his cloth with her right hand to cover herself. Her head, with the hair in a high bun, is bent downwards, as is the swan's head, who is still trying to kiss Leda's mouth with his beak. With his wings fully outspread, the swan is keeping balance in the air, while grasping with his right foot the folded cloth which falls to the ground. The scene is flanked by two caryatids.³¹ The likeness between the scene of Leda and the swan from the Kephisian sarcophagus and our fragment can be perceived in the similar posture of the figures and the treatment of the end of the swan's tail and the cloth between Leda's legs. However, the iconography is not identical – the swan from the Leda sarcophagus doesn't place his foot on Leda's thigh and his talons are those of a bird of prey, rather than webbed and swan-like. The Leda sarcophagus of Herodes Atticus is dated between 170 and 180 A. D.³² A close iconographic analogy to the *Municipium Malvesatium* fragment can also be observed in a relief from Knidos, where a small Eros is placing both of his hands on the swan's wings, pushing him towards Leda.³³

ples of this particular type, present Leda's head on one part of the swan's torso – which is not the case with the sculpture from *Municipium Malvesatium*.

⁴⁰ Besides the already mentioned sculptural and relief compositions, it is important to mention a pillar (or altar?) from Bordeaux (dated to the beginning of the 2nd century A. D.) and a plate from Alexandria, Kahil et al. 240, n. 83, n. 88. On a mosaic from Sousse, dated to the middle of the 2nd century A. D., Leda is presented with her head bent, while the swan has placed his beak on her nape, Ibid, 241, n. 98. The mosaic from Coedii Domus (in the Castellone Archaeological Park, at Suasa, in Ancona) represents a scene of Leda and a life-size swan, both in profile. Leda is presented on the right side, nude, slightly crouched, and with a cloth on her right shoulder falling downwards. The swan has its wings outspread and is trying to kiss Leda's mouth with its beak. It firmly places its left foot on Leda's left thigh. Below the swan, there is a Zeus' *fulmen*. The mosaic is dated to the middle of the 3rd century A. D., San Nicolas Pedraz 1999, 369, fig. 18. However, certain authors think that this kind of Leda and the swan composition (a similar one is presented in the marble relief from Lauriacum), presents an act of copulation, rather than Zeus' seduction of Leda. Terracotta reliefs are known from the locality of Kôm el Chougafa, Alexandria, Kahil et al. 1992, 240, n. 87–88; terracotta vessels from Mainz, Alexandria and London, Ibid n. 89a–c; a medallion mould from Bonn, with the inscription [Iuppiter in cygno cu]M LEDA IVNXSIT AMOREM (little Eros is pushing the swan towards the inscription), Ibid n. 90. A bronze mirror now in the Art Museum, Berkeley, dated to the 4th century B. C., shows Leda in profile, on the right side, slightly crouched, with a life-size swan, also in profile, on the left side, with both wings fully outspread, its right foot pressed onto Leda's left thigh, kissing Leda on the mouth, Ibid, n. 19. The lamps with this iconographic type of presentation are those from London (dated to the 1st century A. D.), Carthage and Carnuntum (dated to the 2nd century A. D.), Kahil et al. 1992, 240, n. 91–93; for gems with the image of this iconographic type of Leda and the swan, see Dierichs 1990, 46–49.

⁴¹ Even in later periods, for example, the 3rd century A. D., in some sculptures, there is still a visible Hellenistic influence, in the feeling of the plastic relief, the fineness of the detail and the fullness of the sculpture, Bianchi Bandinelli 1970, 274, ph. 251.

⁴² As we already mentioned, scenes of Leda and the swan are also known from Coptic art (until the 5th and 6th century A. D.). One of the best known preserved reliefs was found in Egypt (now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford), it is dated to the beginning of the 5th century and presents the moment when Zeus, disguised as a swan, approaches Leda. In the centre of the scene is a nude Leda, presented from behind, turning her head backwards toward a normal sized swan and grasping his neck with her left hand. The whole scene is flanked by two nude nymphs while, beside Leda's head, a mature bearded head is presented (possibly a river god). P. R. S. Moorey presumes that this relief presents a product from the final stage of provincial Egyptian art in late antiquity and that it may come from the side of a sarcophagus, Moorey 1971, 214–215, fig. 59; Kahil et al. 1992, 237, n. 52. As T. K. Thomas emphasises, examples like the Ashmolean relief show that Christians freely relied on Hellenistic iconography and were aware of the meaning of mythological motifs – one more argument supporting the previously stated can be seen in a wedding hymn from the 6th century, composed in honour of a Christian bridegroom named Matthew, in which he is compared to Zeus and his bride to Leda, Thomas 2000, 69.

⁴³ A trapezophoron is a decorated table support (usually of a marble table), which presents applied Greek sculpture to various

Turning towards the geographically closest analogies, among the most important monuments which must be mentioned are a relief from Lauriacum (Noricum),³⁴ a fragmented relief from Villach (Noricum),³⁵ a relief from Stubenberg (Noricum),³⁶ a fragmented relief from Poetovio (Pannonia Superior)³⁷ and a clay lamp with the image of Leda and the swan from Oltenia (Dacia).³⁸

Unfortunately, having only one part of the sculptural composition of Leda and the swan, we can only presume what the rest of it looked like – were their heads distanced from each other at the same level or close to each other or, maybe, joined in a gentle kiss?³⁹ Judging by the closeness of the folded cloth to the swan's body and Leda's thigh to the swan's torso (and also by the closest iconographic analogies), we are quite confident in the second or third possibility, that is of Leda's and the swan's heads being close together, probably kissing each other. What was the exact position of the swan's wings and did the small Eros hold an object in his other hand? The answer to these questions, alas, can be found only with the discovery of the rest of the sculptural composition.

At the end of the discussion about closest stylistic and territorial analogies to the sculptural fragment from *Municipium Malvesatium*, it should be emphasised that this iconographic type, besides sculpture, reliefs and sarcophagi, has also been confirmed in mosaics, terracotta and small forms, like mirrors, lamps and gems.⁴⁰

Regarding the question of whether the sculpture from *Municipium Malvesatium* presents a provincial work, certain details undoubtedly point to its provincial origin – the lack of skill in the modelling of the small hand of Eros and the swan's webbed foot and the failure to achieve a more plastic presentation of the swan's foot pressed onto Leda's thigh (unlike the Dion sculpture, where the indentations from the swan's foot in Leda's thigh are discreetly accentuated). Comparing our fragment to its closest analogies, a certain lack of knowledgeable and more plastic modelling is visible in a few details, for example, in the not so skilful resolving of the lower part of the swan's wing (which is folded towards Leda's legs), all of which assures us that we are dealing with a provincial sculptural work.⁴¹ Based on the above mentioned stylistic characteristics of the sculptural group from *Municipium Malvesatium* and its close iconographic and stylistic analogies, the composition can be dated from the middle of the 2nd century to the middle of the 3rd century A. D.⁴²

At the end of our analysis of the sculptural fragment of Leda and the swan from *Municipium Malvesatium*,

forms of furniture, in this particular case, a table. It can be carved to include a lion's or panther's head and/or forepaws, winged lions, griffins, in the form of a Greek or Roman deity (frequently presented are a resting Herakles and Telephos, Dionysos in different scenes – pouring wine or leaning on a tree trunk covered with grapes and ivy, a hunting Artemis, a standing Asclepius etc.), or in the form of a Greek or Roman mythological scene etc., Stirling 2008, 101–147. In the first centuries, Dionysian images (Dionysus and the members of his thiasos) and scenes (particularly a drunken Dionysus) were quite popular, as were images of oriental servants, Ganymede etc. The stone tables began to be used as votive offerings from the 5th century B. C. in Greece. As F. Sinn emphasises, table supports decorated with grotesque figures and floral ornaments were favoured in Hellenistic Athens, and at the beginning of the imperial period in Italy. Later on, various table designs were used and placed in houses and funerary contexts, Sinn 2015, 304.

⁴⁴ Stephanidou-Tiberiou 1993, 42. The analysis of table supports showed that the statues used in that function usually followed sculptural parallels in terms of pillar and figure size. Ajootian 2000, 501. Also, figures that were used as ornaments of the table supports were rarely partially or completely free from the pillar like supports – only a few such examples are known (a figure of a satyr, images of Erotes carrying birds, Dionysus alone or with satyrs and Pans etc.) and even then, such sculptural compositions include struts to support an individual sculpture, while the strut itself represents the support for the table leaf (for example, Ganymede and an eagle table support from Rome, now in The Vatican inv. n. 2445), Ibid, 492–493, fig. 6.

⁴⁵ Tables with one support, *monopodia* or *cartibula*, stood against a wall and displayed only one side (wall paintings show that they were usually placed in an atrium or in dining rooms and used to store glassware, vessels or other banqueting supplies). They probably also originated in late Hellenistic Delos and Athens and were usually decorated with a herm. Tables on three legs, known as *mensadelphica*, were designed like the paws of lions, tigers etc. and decorated with lion's, griffin's or some other animal's head. They were extensively produced in Italy, in Athens and in Asia Minor (in the late antiquity), Ibid 304–306. Table supports were used in temples as altars, offering tables and supports for portable altars, patera or lamps, while in household *lararia*, they were used as stands for statues of lares, Ajootian 2000, 501.

⁴⁶ For the sculptural composition from Venice, Wiegartz 1983, 174–179, fig. 4.6; Kahil et al. 1992, 241, n. 96. For the sculpture from Dion, Harrington 1996, 34. The support behind the swan's figure in the San Antonio sculpture, which extends above and below the figure, implies that it was used as a table support too. Other sculptures were also used as table supports – the Leda and the swan sculpture from Cyrene, dated to around 240 A. D., which is another rare example of a table support relatively free from the pillar (like the above mentioned sculpture of Ganymede and the eagle) Wiegartz 1983, 168–170, pl. 26.3; a sculpture from Ephesus, also dated to around 240 A. D., Ibid, 193–195, pl. 26.2; a sculpture from Istanbul dated to the beginning of the 3rd century A. D., Ibid, 185–186, fig. 7, pl. 25.1., a sculpture from Chios dated to the 3rd century A. D., Kahil et al. 1992, 242, n. 95.

⁴⁷ It is well known that sculptures of Leda and the swan adorned fountains in antique times, especially from the 1st century B. C. and 1st century A. D., Sinn 2015, 303, 306–308. Along with the statues of Dionysus, nymphs, Athena, Aphrodite, the torso of a life-size statue of one of the Antonine emperors and a bust of another emperor, the sculpture of Leda and the swan was discovered in the eastern

one more important question imposes itself – what was the function of this sculptural group – was it a sculpture that adorned a house or a garden of some well situated citizen or maybe it was something else? The pillar like support on which the swan is leaning implies very strongly the possibility that the statue of Leda and the swan could maybe have had the function of a *trapezophoron* – the leg or pedestal of a table (usually a marble table).⁴³ The height of our fragment (60 to 67 cm) could contribute to the hypothesis since, based on it, we can presume that the height of the whole statue varied between 90 and 100 cm, which corresponds to dimensions of currently known table supports (as T. Stephani-dou-Tiberiou points out, trapezophora may be 1.275 m high or even higher).⁴⁴ If we further develop our hypothesis, we can presume that the statue of Leda and the swan could have been a *monopodium* (a one legged table support) or, less likely, one of two, three or four table supports.⁴⁵ In support of our theory, besides other mythological figures and scenes, several sculptures of Leda and the swan were confirmed to have been used as table supports, among them our closest analogies – the statues of Leda and the swan from Venice and Dion, and probably the sculpture from the San Antonio Museum of Art as well.⁴⁶ However, other possibilities are also probable (although, in our opinion, less likely), that the sculpture maybe adorned a fountain composed around it or that it was placed in *termae*, *triclinium* or garden.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The sculptural fragment found in *Municipium Malvesiatium* represents one of the well-liked and popular mythological scenes from Greek and Roman art – *Leda and the swan*. Various scenes from the myth are known in secular and funerary Greek and Roman art, but from the Hellenistic period, two main iconographic types of the scene of Leda's and swan's encounter and the act of Leda's seduction by the swan, were formed – a standing Leda who is in a close embrace with a life-size swan, and a reclining Leda with a swan on or above her.⁴⁸ Unlike in other provinces of the Roman Empire, as far as it is known to the author of this paper, the first iconographic type of Leda and the swan has not, so far, been confirmed, not only in sculpture, but in any other art form, in the territory of the Balkans.⁴⁹ This fact makes the sculptural find from *Municipium Malvesiatium* even more significant, but it shouldn't be a surprise, considering the importance of the locality where the sculpture of Leda and the swan was found.

part of the *thermae* of Bet Shean (Nysa-Scythopolis), Foerster 2005, 3–14. Several sculptural compositions of Leda and the swan were found in an atrium, a *triclinium* or a garden, for example, the Leda and the swan mosaic from Kouklia-Palaepaphos (Cyprus), dated to the first half of the 3rd century, was found in the *triclinium*, Saliou 1990, 369–375, fig. 1, 2. Here we should mention that a fresco painting of Leda and the Swan decorated the *triclinium* in the House of Vettii, in Pompeii (on the south wall, opposite the entryway, in the winter *triclinium* of the house, a Leda and the swan scene was presented) and the reception room in the House of Jupiter and Gany-mede in Ostia (the fresco presents Leda holding the swan in her lap), Clarke 1991, 232; Clarke 1994, 96–98. The statue of Leda and the swan from the territory of the Villa Spithoever, now in the Copenhagen Glyptotek, was found in the garden. A number of sculptures of Leda and the swan have a rock support, like the sculpture from Formia, which A. Rieche explains as a Roman addition, designed for the use of the sculptures in gardens, Newby 2016, 131–132.

⁴⁸ Leda and the swan scenes on Greek and Roman funerary art carried a message of female beauty and charm, a kind of feminine ideal, Zanker, Ewald 2012, 306. It is known that motifs on sarcophagi can imply personal qualities of the deceased and, as J. Huskinson in her study about Roman sarcophagi points out, this is true of the Leda and the swan motif as well. As the authoress observed, Roman women in the 3rd century A. D. wanted to present themselves as the ideal combination of physical and intellectual qualities, which is clearly shown on the sarcophagi where *clipeus* portraits of serious looking women, fully draped and carrying scrolls, are placed above mythological nudes like Leda. This kind of presentation was symbolising a balanced definition of the deceased and represented a different image compared to earlier scenes of women on sarcophagi friezes, Huskinson 2015, 173. However, the scene of Leda and the swan could carry a deeper symbolism and meaning, as it probably did on some sarcophagi and funerary monuments, like for example, on a cinerary chest from Rome, dedicated to the centurion Marcus Coelius Superstes by his brother (the chest is dated to the late Flavian period). The central scene presents Leda crouching and caressing a swan, with Cupids before and behind her, pouring water on her neck out of a vase, *CIL* VI 33018. In his work “*Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*”, Hyppolytus states that Leda should be compared to Edem and the swan to Elohim and, using the doctrine of the Ophite sect, he confirms the belief that Leda and the swan symbolise the union of the soul with the divine, King 1933, 71. Therefore, the scenes of Leda and the swan, in a funerary context, symbolised the union of the soul of the deceased and the divine and, thus, the immortality of the soul of the deceased. As stated above, in the passage about Coptic art, the Leda and the swan scene was used in a Christian funerary context – even along with Christian motifs, as can be observed in the sarcophagus of Publius Aelius Sabinus from Tortona, where a strange mixture of pagan and Christian emblems are represented, one beside the other. The sarcophagus presents images of the Dioskouroi brothers, Gorgon heads and Leda and the swan, but also the figure of the Good Shepherd with a ram on his shoulders, Appell 1872, 32–33.

⁴⁹ A beautiful and high quality mosaic from the 4th century A. D., with a scene of Leda and the swan in the presence of a river god, was found on the podium of the entrance to the reception room in the villa with peristyle at Mediana (Naissus). Unfortunately, the mosaic is largely damaged and few details are preserved – in the bottom right corner of the composition, the river god is represented in a semi recumbent position with a wreath of pointed leaves on his head and a reed in his left hand. In the bottom left corner, the figures of Leda and the swan were presented (only the swan's torso, its left

Municipium Malvesatium was one of the three most important Roman centres in the territory of Podrinje (along with Domavia and Spolunum), which received the status of *municipium* between 117 and 158.⁵⁰ Archaeological excavations confirmed important public and private objects, along with votive and funerary monuments, which testify to the rich and diverse life during the Roman reign.⁵¹ Therefore, it should be no surprise that various mythological themes from Roman imagery were well known to the Romanised population of *Municipium Malvesatium* and used for decorating their houses and other private and public objects. Although

we can't be certain of the exact details of the iconography of the sculpture of Leda and the swan from *Municipium Malvesatium*, without any doubt it represented a solid local work of art by local craftsman, which was sculpted between the middle of the 2nd and the middle of the 3rd century A. D. Hopefully, with new archaeological excavations, maybe the rest of the sculpture of Leda and the swan will be brought to light and contribute to a better knowledge and understanding of Roman provincial art in the territory of the Balkans.

Translated by the author

Starinar is an Open Access Journal. All articles can be downloaded free of charge and used in accordance with the licence Creative Commons – Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Serbia (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/rs/>).

Часопис *Старинар* је доступан у режиму отвореног приступа. Чланци објављени у часопису могу се бесплатно преузети са сајта часописа и користити у складу са лиценцом Creative Commons – Ауторство-Некомерцијално-Без прерада 3.0 Србија (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/rs/>).

outspread wing and legs are preserved, as are a small part of Leda's dress and her feet. It is clear that on the Mediana mosaic, a scene is presented where Leda prepares herself for bathing in the river Eurotas and Zeus, disguised as a swan and in the presence of a river god, approaches her. However, as in the case of the Leda and the swan mosaic from the so-called House of Aion (Nea Paphos, Cyprus), the mosaic from Mediana presents a scheme of decoration, without any deeper symbolic meaning, Vasić et al. 2016, 22–23.

⁵⁰ As the oldest Roman settlement in the territory of Podrinje, *Municipium Malvesatium* was a very important centre for mining (the exploitation of silver) and trade (the vicinity of Drina was beneficial for the transport of people and goods to larger centres, such as Sirmium or Salona), which enjoyed an intensive life until the late antiquity, for more details see Гавриловић, Поповић 2015, 217–218.

⁵¹ The first archaeological excavations in Skelani were led by K. Patch in 1896, when he discovered 80 votive monuments and two early Christian basilicas. In archaeological campaigns from 2008 and 2014, new objects were discovered with representative architecture, fresco paintings and mosaics, which, together with other finds of votive and funerary monuments (where the cults of different gods like Jupiter, Mars, Liber, Asclepius, Diana, Mithra etc. were confirmed), testify to how rich and developed a centre *Municipium Malvesatium* actually was in the period of the Roman reign, Ibid 197–220.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Ajootian 2000** – A. Ajootian, A Roman Table Support at Ancient Corinth, *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Vol. 69, n. 4, Princeton 2000, 487–507.
- Allan 2008** – W. Allan, *Euripides: „Helen“*, Cambridge University Press 2008.
- Appell 1872** – J. W. Appell, Monuments of early Christian art sculptures and catacomb paintings, Oxford 1872.
- Bianchi Bandinelli 1970** – R. B. Bandinelli, *Rome. La fin de l'art antique*, Rome 1970.
- Calame 1999** – C. Calame, *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece*, Princeton University Press 1999.
- Chamay 1983** – J. Chamay, Léda, le cygne... et l'aigle, *AntikeKunst: Zeitschrift für klassische Archäologie*, 26, Basel 1983, 44–47.
- Chancey 2005** – M. A. Chancey, *Greco Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, Cambridge University Press 2005.
- Clarke 1991** – J. R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy 100 B. C. – A. D. 250: Ritual, Space and Decoration*, University of California, Los Angeles 1991.
- Clarke 1994** – J. R. Clarke, The decor of the house of Jupiter and Ganymede at Ostia Antica: private residence turned gay hotel?, in: *Roman Art in the Private Sphere: New Perspectives on the Architecture and Decor of the Domus, Villa and Insula*, ed. E. K. Gazda, A. E. Haackl, University of Michigan Press 1994, 89–104.
- Cohen 2000** – B. Cohen, Divesting the female breast of clothes in classical sculpture, in: *Naked Truths, Women, sexuality and gender in classical art and archaeology*, ed. by A. O. Koloski-Ostrow, C. L. Lyons, London–New York 2000, 66–93.
- de l'Hervillier** – E. C. de l'Hervillier, Antiquités Romaines. Première étude sur les découvertes de Champlicu, *Revue Archéologique*, No. 1, Paris 1851, 184–196.
- Delivorrias 1990** – A. Delivorrias, Disiecta Membra: The Remarkable History of Some Sculptures from an Unknown Temple, in: *Marble: Art Historical and Scientific Perspectives on Ancient Sculpture*, (papers delivered at a Symposium organized by the Departments of Antiquities and Antiquities Conservation and held at the J. Paul Getty Museum, april 28–30 1988, Malibu 1990, 11–46.
- Dierichs 1990** – A. Dierichs, Leda-Schwan-Gruppen in der Glyptik und ihre monumentalen Vorbilder, *Boreas. Münster-sche Beiträge zur Archäologie*, B. 13, Münster 1990, 37–50.
- Fine 2005** – S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World Toward a New Jewish Archaeology*, Cambridge University Press 2005.
- Fine 2010** – S. Fine, Death, Burial and Afterlife, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. C. Hezser, Oxford 2010, 440–465.
- Foerster 2005** – G. Foerster, A Modest Aphrodite from Bet Shean, *Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology*, Vol. 4, Jerusalem 2005, 3–14.
- Гавриловић, Поповић 2015** – Н. Гавриловић, Б. Поповић, Касноантички *domus* у Скланима (*Municipium Malvesatium*), *Старинар*, LXV, Београд 2015, 197–220 (N. Gavrilović, B. Popović, Kasnoantički *domus* u Skelanima (*Municipium Malvesatium*), *Starinar* LXV, Beograd 2015, 197–220).
- Harrington 1996** – S. P. M. Harrington, Sanctuary of the Gods, *Archaeology*, Vol. 49/2, Boston 1996, 28–35.
- Huskinson 2015** – J. Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi: Art and Social History*, Oxford 2015.
- IDA.I. objects arachne** – Central object database of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) and the Cologne Digital Archaeology Laboratory (CoDArchLab), <https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1120925?fl=20&q=Leda&resultIndex=12> (accessed: December 2. 2016).
- Jenkins 2006** – I. Jenkins, *Greek Architecture and its Sculpture*, Harvard University Press 2006.
- Kahil et al. 1992** – L. Kahil, N. Icard-Gianolio, P. Linant de Bellefonds, Leda, *LIMC*, vol. VI. 1: 231–246.
- King 1933** – G. G. King, Some Reliefs of Budapest, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 37, n. 1, Chicago 1933, 64–76.
- Levine 2005** – L. I. Levine, Bet Še'arim in Its Patriarchal Context, in: *„The Words of a Wise Man's Mouth are Gracious“ (QOH 10, 12)*, ed. M. Perani, Berlin 2005, 197–226.
- Ling 1993** – R. Ling, A Relief from Duke Street, Aldgate, Now in the Museum of London, *Britannia*, Vol. 24, London 1993, 7–12.
- Moorey 1971** – P. R. S. Moorey, Two Fragments of Early Coptic Sculpture (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 113, n. 817, London 1971, 214–215.
- Newby 2016** – Z. Newby, *Greek Myths in Roman Art and Culture: Imagery, Values and Identity in Italy, 50 BC–AD 250*, Cambridge 2016.
- Ota 2009** – R. Ota, Mythological scenes from Dacia province: Perseus killing Gorgon Medusa and Zeus seducing Leda, *Pontica*, 42, Constantza 2009, 459–464.
- Perry 2001** – E. E. Perry, Iconography and the Dynamics of Patronage: A Sarcophagus from the Family of Herodes Atticus, *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Vol. 70, n. 4, Princeton 2001, 461–492.

Poliakoff 1993 – M. Poliakoff, They should cover their shame: attitudes toward nudity in Greco-Roman Judaism, Source: Notes in the History of Art, Vol. 12, n. 2, (Essays on nudity in Antiquity in memory of Otto Brendel), The University of Chicago Press 1993, 56–62.

Rieche 2010 – A. Rieche, Verweigerte Rezeption. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte der „Leda des Timotheos“, in: *Das Originale der Kopie: Kopien als Produkte und Medien der Transformation von Antike*, Berlin–New York 2010, 117–138.

Richter 1927 – G. Richter, ΤΥΠΙΟΣ and Timotheos, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 31, no. 1, Boston 1927, 80–82.

Richter 1955 – G. Richter, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age*, London 1955

Saelid Gilhus 2006 – I. Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Thought*, New York 2006.

Saliou 1990 – C. Saliou, Léda callipyge au pays d’Aphrodite. Remarques sur l’organisation, la fonction et l’iconographie d’une mosaïque de Palaepaphos (Chypre), *Syria*, 67/2, Damascus 1990, 369–375.

San Nicolas Pedraz 1999 – P. San Nicolas Pedraz, Leda y el cisne en la museografía romana, *espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie I, Prehistoria y Arqueología*, 12, Madrid 1999, 347–387.

Shapiro 1992 – H. A. Shapiro, Eros in Love: Pederasty and Pornography in Greece, in: *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. A. Richlin, New York and Oxford 1992, 53–72.

Sinn 2015 – F. Sinn, Decorative Art, in: *A Companion to Roman Art*, ed. B. E. Borg, Chichester 2015, 301–321.

Sotheby’s EST. 1744 – Sotheby’s Egyptian, Classical and Western Asiatic Antiquities, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/antiquities-n08810/lot.16.html.html> (accessed: December 6, 2016)

Smith 1987 – R. R. R. Smith, The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 77, London 1987, 88–138.

Stephanidou-Tiberiou 1993 – Th. Stephanidou-Tiberiou, *Trapezophora me Plastike Diakosmese*, Athens 1993.

Stirling 2008 – L. Stirling, Pagan Statuettes in Late Antique Corinth. Sculpture from the Panayia Domus, *Hesperia*, 77, Princeton 2008, 89–161.

Thomas 2000 – T. K. Thomas, *Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture: Images for this World and for the Next*, Princeton University Press 2000.

Torp 1969 – H. Torp, Leda Christiana. The problem of the interpretation of Coptic sculpture with mythological motifs, *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium Historiam pertinentia*, IV, Rome 1969, 101–122.

Toynbee 1977 – J. M. C. Toynbee, Greek Myth in Roman Stone, *Latomus*, 36/2, Bruxelles 1977, 343–412.

Turner 1992 – C. Turner, *The Penguin Guide to Seville*, Indiana University 1992.

UBI ERAT LUPA – The picture database www.ubi-erat-lupa.org, F. Harl – <http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/monument.php?id=1073> and <http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/monument.php?id=9358> (accessed: December 12, 2016).

Vasić et al. 2016 – M. Vasić, G. Milošević, N. Gavrilović Vitas, V. Crnoglavac, *Constantine’s villa at Mediana*, Niš 2016.

Wiegartz 1983 – H. Wiegartz, Leda und der Schwan in der kaiserzeitlichen attischen Plastik, *Boreas. Münstersche Beiträge zur Archäologie*, B. 6, Münster 1983, 168–196.

Zanker, Ewald 2012 – P. Zanker, B. C. Ewald, *The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi*, Oxford 2012.

Резиме: НАДЕЖДА ГАВРИЛОВИЋ ВИТАС, Археолошки институт, Београд

ЛЕДА И ЛАБУД

Нова мермерна скулптура из Скелана (*Municipium Malvesatium*)

Кључне речи. – Леда, лабуд, скулптура, иконографија, *Municipium Malvesatium*, антика.

Приликом грађевинских радова 1999. године на изградњи колектора за канализацију у Скеланима (*Municipium Malvesatium*) случајно је пронађен фрагмент мермерне скулптуре. Сада смештена у просторијама Народне библиотеке у Сребреници, скулптура представља очувани део торза птице, приказане у људској величини, чије десно стопало са пливајућом кожом почива на левој женској бутини, испод које пада наборана тканина. Леђа птице почивају на ослонцу у виду стуба, који се наставља изнад и испод фигуре птице. На доњем делу торза птице приказана је мала, дечја шака. Фрагмент мермерне скулптуре из *Municipium Malvesatium*-а представља један од три главна иконографска типа античких представа Леде и Зевса, прерушеног у лабуда, у тренутку Зевсовог завођења Леде, а у присуству детета Ероса.

Овај тип иконографских представа појављује се у хеленистичком периоду, а током римске владавине задобија завидну популарност и бива представљан како у скулптури, ре-

љефима, статуама, фреско-сликарству и на мозаицима, тако и у предметима мале форме, као што су лампе, огледала, геме итд. Скулпторални фрагмент из *Municipium Malvesatium*-а аналоган је иконографски и стилски римским скулптурама из Археолошког музеја у Венецији, Археолошког музеја у Диону и Музеја уметности у Сан Антониу, мада има знатних сличности и са представом са саркофага из некрополе са локалитета *Bet Še'arim* и саркофага Херода Атикуса из Атине.

Анализа стилских карактеристика скулптуре као и начин моделовања указују на рад локалног мајстора, датован у период од половине 2. века до половине 3. века.

С обзиром на ослонац приказан иза лабудових леђа, а узимајући у обзир и поменуте аналогне примерке, највероватније је да је скулптура Леде и лабуда из *Municipium Malvesatium*-а представљала део намештаја, односно да је украшавала ногу стола.