

ILLYRICVM ROMANVM

STUDIOLA IN HONOREM MILOJE VASIĆ



EDITED BY
Ivana POPOVIĆ
Sofija PETKOVIĆ



INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, BELGRADE
Monographs No 73

MONOGRAPHS No 73

PUBLISHER

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, Belgrade

FOR PUBLISHER

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GRAPHIC DESIGN

Danijela Paracki & D_SIGN, Belgrade

PRINT

ALTA NOVA, Belgrade

Printed in 300 copies

ISBN 978-86-6439-054-5

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Belgrade 2020

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Votive relief with a representation of a Reclining Hercules, from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*)*

Abstract. – In the city territory of Antique Remesiana, in 1979, near the southern necropolis of the city, a marble votive icon with a representation of a Reclining Hercules was found. The presentation of the reclining god, with a lion skin on his left shoulder and a club in his right hand is so far unique in the territory of the Roman province of Moesia Superior and represents Hercules in a way that he was frequently represented in marble statuary, bronze statuettes, reliefs and coins in other Roman provinces. Through the iconographical analysis of the representation of the Reclining Hercules, a close connection between him and the god Dionysus, as with the river-god images, has been underlined. This close connection implies certain characteristics of the god Hercules in this type of iconographical representation, close to the scenes and symbolism the god Dionysus encompassed in the connection with his triumph over death and gaining immortality in the afterlife, through taking part in a funeral banquet. The fact that the marble icon of the Reclining Hercules was found near the southern necropolis of the antique city of Remesiana, could point to a possible small sanctuary of the god or a temple of some other deity (Dionysus?), in which the votive icon of the Reclining Hercules also stood. The icon is dated to the 3rd century.

Key words. – Votive relief, Reclining Hercules, Bela Palanka (Remesiana), funeral banquet

In 1979, in the territory of the antique city of *Remesiana*, today's Bela Palanka, a marble votive icon of the god Hercules was found.¹ The finding place of the icon is situated at the very fringe of *Remesiana*, near the southern city necropolis and is dated to the 4th century.²

The votive icon represents an unpublished cult object with the representation of a Reclining Hercules (Fig. 1). The icon is modelled from white,

fine-grained marble, with dimensions of 0.3 × 0.35 × 0.03 m. The condition of the icon is very solid, except for a small missing part from its upper middle part and a barely visible scratch on the man's hair, on the left side. In the centre of the icon, there is a relief-carved representation of a reclining, nude, bearded man. He is presented in a reclining position, lying on his left side, with his left leg bent and facing the viewer, resting his

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



Figure 1. Marble votive icon from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*) (private photographic documentation of Prof. Dr Dragan Mitić, with his consent)

left arm on a rock, and covered by the skin of a slain Nemean lion (analogous to other known representations, it can be presumed that the man is leaning on the rock, which can't be clearly seen because of the lion's skin thrown over the base on which the man is lying). The lion's skin, which falls from man's left shoulder, ends with a lion's head with a forbidding face and an open mouth. The man is presented nude, mature, with a thick beard and curly hair, holding a club in his raised right hand. His face is carefully and well modelled, his eyes are of an oval shape, the cheeks are well rounded, his nose is straight and the mouth is surrounded with a thick beard, while the curls of his hair are skilfully presented. Although his face is modelled very realistically and with an artisan's knowledge, his body is carved quite simply and not in the manner in which the god is usually presented – with the strong and emphasised musculature of the upper and lower torso by which the god Hercules is known and how he differed from other Roman gods. In the scene from the votive icon from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*), the man's body is presented quite clumsily, which implies that the sculptor clearly had some difficulties with

the modelling of his body and did not possess sufficient skill and artistic knowledge to make a true representation of the deity's body. This lack of the artisan's skill is most noticeable in the way he carved the god's legs; while the right bent leg

¹ The icon was found by a professor from Bela Palanka, Dragutin Ilić, while he was digging in his own backyard. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to Prof. Dr Dragan Mitić, who provided me with all the details about the finding of the votive icon with the representation of a Reclining Hercules.

² The votive icon was stolen soon after its finding, but it was retrieved several years later and today it is situated in the city library of Bela Palanka, oral information from Prof. Dr Dragan Mitić. Several necropolises have been confirmed, situated on all sides of the city, formed along the roads and dated from the 4th to the 6th century, Гушић 1987, 27. The most important ones are the southern necropolis, eastern and northern city necropolis (known locally as the "Latin graveyard"), Јовановић 2013, 237–251. The southern necropolis is made from two parts near the Mokranjska River – one part is on the left bank, while the other is on the right bank, Гушић 1987, 27. Unfortunately, no systematic excavations have been led so far in the area of the southern necropolis, near which the votive icon of the Reclining Hercules was found.

of the deity is presented very realistically, his left leg, which goes under the right leg, is modelled quite clumsily, without any perspective or proportion (particularly the thigh).

Regarding the description of the represented scene on the marble votive icon from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*), it is clear that the god who is presented is Hercules – the attributes with which the nude, mature bearded man is presented, the lion's skin and the club are well known for the Roman god/hero. However, the way in which he is presented on the votive icon is not so typical for usual presentations of the image of the ideal physical force and one of the main *dii militaris*, who was mostly depicted as a victorious god of immense strength and with a bulging musculature, with a lion-skin and a club, either performing one of his labours or just standing and resting after finishing one of his fabled twelve deeds. Associated with the cult of *Hercules Victoris*, the god is presented in the described way in the majority of the marble sculptures, sculptural compositions, bronze statues and votive reliefs found in different localities of Moesia Superior (*Ratiaria*, *Singidunum*, *Viminacium*, *Transdierna*–Tekija, etc.), dating from the end of the 1st to the end of the 3rd century.³ In fact, as we previously mentioned, the type of Hercules presentation as a reclining god is, so far, completely unknown in the territory of Upper Moesia. However, the iconographically similar type of Hercules presentations to scenes of a reclining god are those in which the god is depicted sitting on a rock (holding some of his usual attributes in his hands like, for example, a club, a cup of wine, Hesperides' apples, skyphos, etc.), which is thought to be a later variation of reclining presentations of the god. This iconographical type of Hercules presentations as a divinity who sits on a rock and rests after his endeavours has been confirmed in Moesia Superior, as the widely known *Herakles Epitrapezios* iconographical type.⁴ This iconographical type of the god Hercules is presented in a few bronze statuettes, of which the most famous is that of Herakles from the locality Tamnič.⁵ However, to return to the reclining type of Hercules representations, as M. Bieber points out, E. Loewy,

who first collected examples of the iconographical type of the Reclining Hercules, thought that it first appeared in paintings and, later, in statuary and relief form.⁶ It is quite certain that the statuary representations of Hercules as a sym-

³ Along with the votive inscriptions dedicated to *Hercules Augustus*, *Hercules Victor*, *Hercules Invictus* and *Hercules Conservator*, finds of marble sculptures and sculptural compositions, bronze statuettes and votive reliefs, confirm that the most popular dimension of the god Hercules in the territory of Moesia Superior was his function as the god of victory and protection and that he was primarily worshiped by soldiers and administratives, along the Danube Limes and in the northern and eastern part of the Roman province of Moesia Superior, Gavrilović 2014, 51–55.

⁴ One of the most famous statues by Lysippos, a bronze statue of *Herakles Epitrapezios*, was considered to be in the possession of a collector, Novius Vindex, from the 1st century, about which we are informed by the Roman poets Statius and Martialis, who described the statue of the god as a nude, mature man seated on a rock with a spread lion skin, holding a drinking cup and a club in his hands. The name of Lysippos was inscribed on the base of the statue (there are some doubts, however, as to whether the inscribed name of Lysippos was carved by Novius Vindex himself, Zadoks-Jitta 1987, 97). It has been stated, by Statius and Martialis, that the previous owners of the bronze statue were Alexander the Great, Hannibal and the famous Roman general and statesman Sulla. However, almost the same iconographical type of Herakles was confirmed in the 5th century B. C., representing the mortal hero in the moment of the feast. However, Lysippos' iconographical type of Herakles Epitrapezios represents a deity after his apotheosis, as an immortal, Picard 1926, 176–178; Richter 1950, 290–291; Bieber 1955, 36, 41, fig. 80; Boardman, Palagia, Woodford 1988, 774–775.

⁵ The iconographical type of Lysippos' Herakles Epitrapezios was also the role model for the bronze statuette found in the locality of Tamnič, near Negotin (now in the National Museum in Belgrade, inv. number 2775/III). The bronze statuette of Herakles from Tamnič is a statue 17 cm high that represents a young, nude, beardless Herakles who sits on a rock with a lion skin on his back and a club beside him. In his right hand, perhaps he held a drinking cup or Hesperides' apples, but it is also possible that the god's arm, which is stretched out forward with an open hand, represents a gesture of good will and generosity, characteristic for the rulers from the Severan dynasty. The facial traits of the Herakles from Tamnič are similar to those of one of the Severan rulers, most likely Alexander Severus. Therefore, the bronze statuette is dated to the period between 222 and 235, Срејовић 1958–1959, 43–52; Величковић 1972, 5051, cat. 71, ph. 71a, b, c; Gavrilović 2014, 38, 102, n. 47, ph. 36.

⁶ Bieber 1945, 275.

posiast appeared towards the end of the 4th century B.C. and one of the earliest examples stood in Attica.⁷ Although quite frequent throughout the Hellenistic period, this iconographical type of Hercules appears in Rome and Roman provinces only from the 1st century B.C.⁸ Contrary to the often emphasised heroic aspects of Hercules, representations of a Reclining Hercules accentuate the human side of the deity's nature – the god is resting, usually holding a drinking cup, a skyphos, a cake, a bow, an apple or a crown in one hand and a club in the other hand (or a club is presented beside him), feasting after gaining immortality and a blissful afterlife. This scene is frequently copied and presented in numerous funerary monuments all over the Roman Empire, where the deceased is pictured instead of the god Hercules or as the god Hercules in scenes of a funeral banquet.⁹ Analogous to other demigods, such as Castor and Pollux, Hercules gained, as a reward for his bravery and famous deeds, immortality and a happy afterlife and it is well known that from Stoic philosophy onwards, the idea of a man gaining for his deeds and virtues the gift of rebirth and immortality presented the ultimate reward for those who hoped to continue to live forever blissfully.¹⁰

E. Loewy named the iconographical type of the reclining god *Hercules Olivarius*, because on the base of the reclining figure there was an inscription dedicated to the deity who bore the mentioned epithet.¹¹ However, there is another iconographical type which is connected to the reclining figure of Hercules, known as *Hercules Cubans*, named after the sanctuary dedicated to the god in Rome,¹² in which fragments of at least two statuettes of the god were found, one presenting the god sitting on a rock with a skyphos in one hand and a club in the other hand – clearly the iconographical type of *Herakles Epitrapezios*, and the other statue presenting Hercules reclining on a couch with a tripod in front of him and a drinking cup on it (Fig. 2).¹³ Beside these two statuettes of the god Heracles, presented in the afterlife resting, banqueting and rejoicing in immortality, a statuette of the god Bacchus was also found, along with Dionysiac ornaments decorating the

⁷ It is possible that the sculptural type of the Reclining Hercules, which appeared in the 4th century B.C., was inspired by the sculpture of Dionysus which stood in the east pediment of the Parthenon, Boardman, Palagia, Woodford 1988, 777. Sculptural and statuary examples of the Reclining Hercules were, from the 4th century B.C., known in the cities of Magna Graecia and perhaps in Sicily and in Selinunte and in the coinage of Croton, Heraklea and Metapontum, Bayet 1974, 236.

⁸ Ibid, 795.

⁹ Ibid, 777–779, n. 1008–1063.

¹⁰ At the end of his life as one of the bravest mythological god/heroes whose courage and boldness acquired him the admiration of not only emperors and generals, but ordinary people as well in the Graeco-Roman times, Hercules was carried off to heaven and joined the Olympian gods at their table. However, that privilege of deification of mythological figures was soon allowed to the aristocracy as well (Horace writes that Emperor Augustus will rest between Hercules and Pollux and drink the nectar with them in heaven) and later to ordinary mortals – scenes of funeral banquets in Roman funeral monuments confirm that the dead are shown banqueting in heaven, after gaining immortality, as gods and emperors also did), Cumont 1922, 113, 204–205.

¹¹ In 1895, in Rome, near the round temple in region XI (in which an unspecified monument of Hercules Olivarius is mentioned in an entry of the 4th century regionary catalogue *Notitia Urbis Romae*, which listed major monuments and buildings in Rome), a statue base for a reclining figure was found. The inscription on the base was dedicated to the god with the epithet *Olivarius* which, by the hypothesis of the author F. Coarelli, could have been the epithet of the god Hercules, because of the trade organisation that donated the statue to the temple of Hercules Victor, which was, in F. Coarelli's opinion, the trade organisation dealing with olives and olive products (the argument for this hypothesis was that in the *Notitia Urbis Romae*, the temple of Hercules Olivarius was situated between the Porta Trigemina and the Velabrum, and in the Velabrum, there was a vegetable market where olives and olive oil were sold). The inscription on the base for the reclining statue reads: [----]o *Olivarius opus Scopae minoris* and the hypothetical reconstruction of the inscription by F. Coarelli is: [*Hercules Victor volg*]o *Olivarius opus Scopae minoris*, which is quite strange, because it would be a phrasing without analogies in Rome. Also, this hypothesis is not so plausible, since the inscription cannot be attributed with any certainty to the temple in question. As M. L. Popkin states, it is highly unlikely that an olive merchant could afford to build as monumental a temple to Hercules as the round temple on the Tiber was. There is also no indication that the temple on the Tiber was known as Hercules Olivarius' temple, for more see Popkin 2016, 194; Schultz 2006, 63–64; Ziolkowski 1988, 311–313; Bieber 1945, 275.

¹² The sanctuary of *Hercules Cubans* was listed in *Notitia Urbis Romae* as a temple situated in Regio XIV. In 1889, east

interior of the sanctuary (like a *thyrsus*, a staff of the god Dionysus and bas-reliefs with Dionysiac elements), which brings us again to the closer connection between the gods Hercules and Dionysus. The close connection between Hercules, who, after his apotheosis received the honour of sitting at the table of gods and feasting with them, and Dionysus, who, as Hercules, also triumphed over death and became a symbol of an endless, enjoyable and content afterlife, is very easy to understand. Not only were both deities victorious over death and gained immortality through resurrection in the afterlife, but they formed a close bond early on. From the 6th century B.C., the cult of Hercules and Dionysus was worshipped as a common cult and it is quite certain that the reclining image of Hercules banqueting was formed under the influence of Dionysus' iconography and symbolism.¹⁴ Their togetherness as gods with certain mutual religious aspects continued through the Hellenistic and Roman period – many known presentations of Hercules and Dionysus with a dog from monuments found in Thrace and Moesia Inferior, funerary monuments with the image of a Reclining Hercules banqueting and dionysiac ornaments (grapevines, a bunch of grapes, vine leaves, a pomegranate, a pine cone etc.) and monuments with an image of the deceased presented as Hercules, clearly imply the chthonic aspect of the gods, whose lives and heroic deeds were very frequently shown side by side, particularly on mosaics and on 2nd and 3rd century sarcophagi.¹⁵ The iconographical type of the Reclining Hercules banqueting is known as early as from the 6th century B.C., from Greek vase painting, where the god is shown resting under a tree and, soon afterwards, he is frequently presented drinking and feasting, often in the company of the god Dionysus.¹⁶ As we have already mentioned, in the 4th century the Reclining Hercules iconographical type appears in statuary form, probably due to Lysippos, whom we already mentioned as the author of another iconographical type, Herakles Epitrapezios. In this context, certain authors, such as A.-N. Zadoks-Jitta, doubt Lysippos' authorship of Herakles Epitrapezios, because "Epitrapezios" translates as "at the table",

but the Greeks did not seat at the table but preferred to recline and the iconographical type of Herakles Epitrapezios presents the god seating, not reclining. Therefore, the authoress presumes that the original Herakles Epitrapezios was not the model for the seated Herakles on a rock (known from the so-called sculpture of Herakles Alba Fucens), but that it was a reclining figure of the god that served as the inspiration for the Herakles Epitrapezios iconographical type.¹⁷

of the Viale di Trastevere, near Porta Portese in the Horti Caesaris, the remains of a sanctuary built into the tuff rock (ancient quarry) were found. The centre of the small temple was a niche in which statuary fragments were found, presenting Herakles Epitrapezios and a Reclining Hercules. Before the niche, there was a table with a relief with the figures of dancers (?) and small twin altars, dedicated by L. Domitius Permissus as a gift, by the order of the god. Besides the statuettes presenting the god Hercules, seven marble busts of charioteers on herms were also found in the sanctuary, as statuettes of other divinities. The sanctuary was founded in the first centuries B.C. and was used for several centuries, Richardson 1992, 185; Flower 2017, 141–142.

¹³ Besides at least two statuettes of god Hercules, statues of other divinities were found in the sanctuary as well: statues of Minerva, Bacchus, Jupiter, Venus, perhaps Serapis, etc. For more about the sanctuary, see Estienne 2003, 55–67.

¹⁴ Hercules and Dionysus were venerated in a common cult, but they were also linked and presented together in various monuments in Roman provinces and were the patron gods of Leptis Magna, the birthtown of Septimius Severus, Collins-Clinton 1977, 26.

¹⁵ Dionysus' infancy and later life, as Hercules' apotheosis and banqueting were frequent themes on Roman sarcophagi and mosaics, with even presentations of two gods competing in drinking, like in the mosaic at Sepphoris and at Antioch, Ibid, 25; Bowersock 2006, 18; Bayet 1974, 250–251; Bayet 1974a, 341, 360.

¹⁶ Bayet 1974, 236–237. Also, from the 6th century B.C. already, different reclining figures banqueting were presented in small bronze and terracotta, Zadoks-Jitta 1987a, 103.

¹⁷ Iconographically, the most similar type to the sculpture of Herakles Epitrapezios, differing only in the attribute of apples instead of a drinking cup in his right hand, is the iconographical type known as *Herakles Alba Fucens*, so-called because it was found in the *thermae* at the locality of Alba Fucens. The sculpture of Herakles Alba Fucens is dated to the first quarter of the 1st century B.C. and it is presumed that it represents a Hellenistic variant of Herakles Epitrapezios, Boardman, Palagia, Woodford 1988, 776–777.

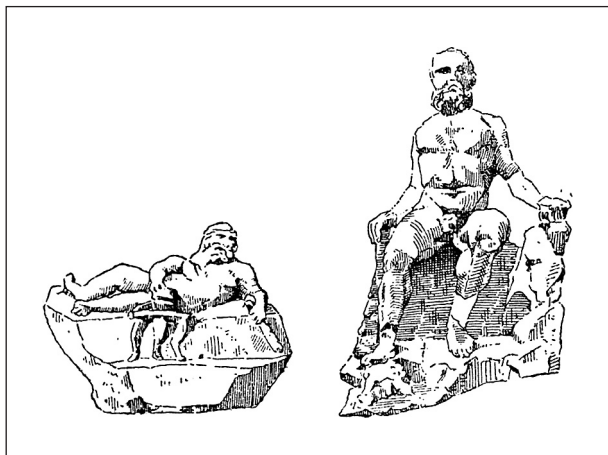


Figure 2. Two statuettes of the Reclining Hercules and Herakles Epitrapezios from the sanctuary of Hercules Cubans in Rome (Estienne 2003, fig. 6)



Figure 3. Votive relief of the Reclining Herakles from Athens (<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/heracles-andonis-katanos.html>)

From the 4th century B.C. onwards, the iconographical type of the Reclining Hercules was seen in marble statuary, reliefs, bronze statuettes, terracotta figurines and coins, with different attributes in his hands or beside him, which could imply other existing iconographical types on which it was modelled.¹⁸ Retaining its popularity through the Hellenistic period, the iconographical type of the Reclining Hercules also retained its symbolism of an immortal hero who is resting after deserving and achieving happiness in the afterlife. At the same time, in the 2nd century, the Stoics gave even greater weight to Hercules, making him a moral and spiritual hero, who also ascended from a mortal being to a god. It was that context of a dignified hero/god who deserved his afterlife and all the joys in the company of the Olympian gods that was contained in the image of the Reclining Hercules, who represented a symbol of bliss, plenty and immortality. However, his attitude of repose and joyful banqueting in the afterlife could have had other implications as well, connecting him with his aspect of fertility (Reclining Hercules holding *cornu copiae*, the attribute of plenty)¹⁹ or with the thermal springs and his dimension as an iatric deity and the protector of health.²⁰ In that context, the

strong similarity in the banqueting pose and symbolism of the Reclining Hercules and reclining river-gods must be mentioned – both iconographical types contained the idea of immortality,

¹⁸ Bieber 1945, 276.

¹⁹ This variation of the iconographical type of the Reclining Hercules, with a cornucopia in his hand, emphasises his connection with his agrarian aspect and implies his fertility dimension as well, like in the terracotta statuette from Capua, dated to the 2nd century B.C., now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/152643> (accessed on the 8th December 2019. year).

²⁰ Herakles' aspect as a fertility god is known from the archaic period, as his connection with sources of rivers and later on, he is venerated as the healing deity of the hot springs. In that context, there is a very close bond in the attitude (pose), but also in the cult dimensions of Herakles and reclining river-god. Bearing that in mind, we should remember the association of Herakles and a river-god Achelous from the early representations of the Archaic period, which continued during the Hellenistic period, when Herakles became the protector of life giving waters and the deity with healing powers, Gais 1978, 367–371. As the protector of health and an iatric deity whose sanctuaries were built in the vicinity of thermal springs and spas, Hercules was worshipped all over the Roman Empire with dedicants calling him *Salutifer* and respecting him in the union with Asclepius, Hygeia, Nymphs etc., Gavrilović 2014, 56–57.

blissfulness and contentment in the afterlife.²¹ That is the reason why sculptures of the Reclining Hercules were sometimes used even as fountain figures like, for example, the statue from Buffalo in the Albright Art Gallery.²²

Returning to the votive icon with the representation of the Reclining Hercules from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*), there are noticeable iconographical and stylistic similarities with the statuette from the Archaeological Museum in Chieti (found in the sanctuary of Hercules Curinus, in Sulmona) particularly in the treatment of the hair and head, as with the votive relief of the Reclining Hercules from Athens (Fig. 3).²³ A close analogy in a similar presentation of the body can be found in the bronze statuette from Ephesos, now in London, but also in the bronze statuette from an unknown locality in Italy, now in Bonn.²⁴ As for geographically closer analogies, a marble votive icon from Madara, now in the Archaeological Museum in Sofia (inv. no. 4710) is very similar in the pose of the deity and the attribute of the club that the Reclining Hercules holds in his hand, while another representation from a marble votive icon also from Madara, now in the Archaeological Museum in Sofia too, is analogous in the context of the pose and attributes (the lion's skin and the club), but both cult objects from Thrace represent votive icons of better quality and more skilful artisanship compared to the votive icon from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*).²⁵ Marble votive reliefs from Thrace are dated to the 3rd century. Judging by the stylistic characteristics of the votive icon from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*), it can be dated to the 3rd century and it can be presumed that it was produced either in some local workshop or perhaps imported from Thrace.

Unfortunately, as frequently is the case with archaeological artefacts, the true context of the finding of the votive icon with the representation of the Reclining Hercules from Bela Palanka, is not known. The only fact that we possess is that it was found in the area near the southern city necropolis, dated to the 4th century, which adds an additional implication to its already presumed funerary context, because in the Roman imperi-

al period funerary iconography the image of the Reclining Hercules was a symbol of blessed immortality and bore a clear chthonic symbolism.²⁶ Therefore, it may be presumed that it could have been situated in some *sacellum* or *sacrarium*, dedicated either to the god Hercules or perhaps to some other deity (Dionysus?), in which temple a votive icon of Hercules also stood.

The votive icon from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*) represents a scene of the Reclining Hercules, which is, to date, unique and the only cult object with this particular iconographical scene of the god in the territory of the Roman province of Moesia Superior. Its chthonic symbolism contained in the presentation of Hercules as the god who was a role model of a supreme hero and who, due to his boldness and brave deeds, deserved immortal life and to feast in the company of the gods, tells us that this cult object was probably a part of some *sacellum* or *sacrarium*, dedicated either to the god Hercules or some other divinity in which *sacrarium* god Hercules was honoured as

²¹ As R. M. Gais points out, the similar iconographic types of Reclining Hercules and reclining river-gods, also had similarities in their functions: they symbolized the fertility and life itself through the banqueting pose which contains in its centre the idea of a feast and happiness in the afterlife, Gais 1978, 370.

²² Bieber 1945, 276.

²³ Boardman, Palagia, Woodford 1988, 1023. The votive relief of Reclining Hercules from Athens, was found in Monastiraki Square in Athens (now in National Archaeological Museum Athens) and it is dated in the 2nd century, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/heracles-andoniskatanos.html>

²⁴ Boardman, Palagia, Woodford 1988, 1029 and 1045. There is also a striking similarity in the treatment of the lion's head on the skin of the animal from the statuette from Baiae, now in the National Museum in Naples, Ibid, 1025.

²⁵ Рабаджиев 2016, 261, fig. 12,

²⁶ Ibid, 777.

²⁷ Discussing the problems of river-god iconography, R. M. Gais also refers to the reclining banqueting figures (other than river-gods) and, in that context, she mentions Herakles and states that "although many banqueting representations simply show *symposia*, a large number of such scenes, particularly in terracotta or stone relief, can be interpreted as funerary or votive in nature", Gais 1978, 364.

well. As, unfortunately, currently known epigraphic monuments from Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*) do not confirm the cult of the god Hercules, the presumption regarding the existence of a temple dedicated to the god remains, for now, in the domain of a hypothesis. The fact that the votive icon was found in the vicinity of the southern city ne-

ropolis, in our opinion, strengthens the already clear chthonic dimension of the scene presented in the marble relief from Bela Palanka, since it is well known that many scenes in terracotta or stone are interpreted as votive or funerary.²⁷

Translated by author

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ABBREVIATIONS

LIMC – *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, I–VIII, Zürich–München, 1981–1997; VIII, Zürich, Düsseldorf, 1997

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CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

902/904"652"(497.11)(082)
904"652"(497.11)(082)

ILLYRICVM Romanvm : studiola in honorem Miloje Vasić
/ edited by Ivana Popović, Sofija Petković. – Belgrade : Institute
of Archaeology, 2020 (Belgrade : Alta Nova). – 286 str. : ilustr.
; 28 cm. – (Monographies / Institute of Archaeology ; 73)

Tiraž 500. – Str. 7–9: Editor's word / Ivana Popović and Sofija
Petković. – Napomene i bibliografske reference uz tekst. –
Bibliografija uz svaki rad. – Bibliografija: str. 285–286.

ISBN 978-86-6439-054-5

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COBISS.SR-ID 16394505



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