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A MESSAGE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE: HERCULES RESCUING HESIONE ON A STOJNIK FUNERARY MONUMENT

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Abstract. – The research of this study is dedicated to a unique iconographical scene in the territory of the Central Balkan Roman provinces, of Hercules rescuing Hesione from a sea-monster (*ketos*), depicted on a funerary monument found in 1931 at the site of Stojnik, in the vicinity of Belgrade, antique Singidunum, and now displayed in the lapidarium of the National Museum in Belgrade. The funerary monument was erected for the deceased, a veteran of cohorts II Aurelia nova, Publius Aelius Victorinus, by his wife Aurelia Rufina and their son Publius Aelius Acutianus. The rich iconography of the monument makes it a very important example of funerary art in the period from the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century – the eschatological symbolism of the presented scenes and motifs is more than clear and underlines not only the hope of the deceased's family for his eternal and blessed life after death, but also the deceased's victory over death and presents him as a symbol of courage and virtue. The architectural scheme of the monument, along with its iconography, suggests strong artistic influences from Noricum and both the Pannonian provinces, while the mythical tale of Hercules and Hesione was chosen, it is argued, not only because Hercules was one of the most favoured gods in the Roman army, but also because he was a protector of miners and mines.

Key words. – Hercules, Hesione, mythological scene, Singidunum, funerary monument

Although Hercules was one of the most popular mythical figures represented in ancient art, especially depicted in the scenes of his famous twelve labours, the episode where the hero is depicted rescuing Hesione is quite rare. The representation of this scene on funerary monuments is even more interesting bearing in mind that besides its decorative function within the complex imagery of the after-life the scene should also be interpreted in the context of its symbolism as well. For this reason, the funerary monument from Stojnik, which as an exceptional discovery that has not gained deeper iconographical analysis so far, has been taken as a showcase exemplar for the study of the scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione together with, and in regard to, other scenes, motifs, the architectural scheme and the epigraphic analysis of the inscription.

History and topography of the find

The funerary monument was found in 1931, on private property in the district of Stojnik (Sopot), in Belgrade, ancient Singidunum, and contains a mythological scene figuring Hercules rescuing Hesione from the sea monster (*ketos*), unique in the territory of the Central Balkan Roman provinces.¹ Unlike many other monuments, it was preserved during the Second World War and today it is to be seen in the *lapidarium* of the National Museum in Belgrade (fig. 1).

¹ The funerary monument was found in a private field belonging to Ljubisav Mihilović, in Stojnik, in a grave of a later period, where this funerary monument, along with another one, was used as *spolia* (the antique funerary monuments formed two longer sides of a grave of a later date), Вулић 1931, 219, n. 586.

Manes, that is to the spirits of the dead, in memory of the deceased husband and father, the veteran Publius Aelius Victorinus, by his wife and his son: *D(is) M(ani-bus) / Publius Aelius / Victorinus vet(eranus) / coh(ortis) II Aurel(iae) nov(a)e / vixit ann(os) LX Au(r)el(ia) Rufina co(n)iugi b(ene) m(erenti) et P(ublius) Ael(ius) Acutianus / et P(ublius) Ael(ius) Victorinus / patri et sibi vivi posu(erunt).*² As can be seen from the text of the inscription, the deceased, Publius Aelius Victorinus, was a veteran of the cohorts *II Aurelia Nova* and died when he was 60 years old. From his cognomen, we can see that he was a Roman citizen, who was outlived by his wife Aurelia Rufina and their son Publius Aelius Acutianus, who erected the monument. Publius Aelius Victorinus was a veteran of the cohorts *II Aurelia Nova*, whose official name had the epithets *milliaria equitata civium Romanorum*.³ This auxiliary unit, along with five more recently formed cohorts (two *cohors Delmatorum*, two *cohors Aureliae Dardanorum* and cohorts *I Aurelia Nova*), was created towards the end of the 2nd century, for the protection of mining areas in the vicinity of Singidunum (Guberevac, Sopot, Stojnik).⁴ All six cohorts were formed mainly from the indigenous population from the mentioned areas (or their vicinity) and in that way not only would the soldiers secure the mines against barbarian attack, but also the Roman state might hope to deal successfully with the potential internal threat from the indigenous *latrones*, who presented a threat to the safety of the mining districts in the Šumadija area.⁵ Archaeological excavations have confirmed that there was a military fort at Stojnik and the text of an inscription dated to AD 179 on a *cippus* found in Stojnik, confirms the existence of a hospital (*valetudinarium*) for the soldiers of cohorts *II Aurelia nova*.⁶ The region of Mount Kosmaj–Stojnik, together with the mines situated at Avala, Železnik and Rudnik belonged, in the opinion of S. Dušanić, to the imperial domain of Šumadija, where lead, silver, some gold and iron were exploited.⁷ Traces of Roman mining have been confirmed in these areas, and epigraphic monuments attest to the presence of imperial officials. The Kosmaj area yielded argentiferous lead (more than one million tons of ancient slag have been estimated, implying a vast exploitation that was particularly active in the period from the 2nd to the 4th century) and the *vicus metalli* of Kosmaj was situated in the vicinity of Stojnik fort and was called *Deumesus* (or similar).⁸ Regarding the fact that most of the soldiers recruited to the newly formed cohorts around 169 were indigenous inhabitants, S. Dušanić thinks

that the veteran, Publius Aelius Victorinus, was a local too, from Kosmaj or its vicinity.⁹

Iconography: description

As already stated, the funerary monument is made from grey limestone of local origin and it presents an architectural type of funerary stela. It had a rectangular top on which was a triangular pediment containing a figural scene. The figural scene is hardly recognisable today and its description is based upon the reports given by the first researchers of the monument, who claimed that the representation contained a woman standing in the centre, a dog (or some other animal with a mane) on her left side,¹⁰ and an unrecognisable ornament on her right side. The animal is turned towards the woman and it looks as though it is drinking from a vessel. In the external corners of the triangular pediment, two mythical sea monsters with long fish tails are presented, with their heads turned back and human skulls (?)¹¹ under their front legs. Since the top is missing, only the lower parts of this portion of the monument are preserved.

Under the triangular pediment, there is a narrow frieze ornamented with motifs in the form of waves of simple guilloche. Under the frieze, a recessed aedicle flanked by two stout columns is presented, within which

² Вулић 1931, n. 586; *IMS I*, n. 120.

³ *IMS I*, 105, n. 116.

⁴ Four auxiliary units were formed around AD 169 in Moesia Superior: two *cohors Aureliae novae* and two *cohors Aureliae Dardanorum*.

⁵ Hirt 2010, 194.

⁶ *IMS I*, n. 116.

⁷ S. Dušanić also thinks that the areas near Kalanjevci (Štovna), Petrovac and Ripanj were those where mines were exploited by the Romans during Antiquity. In addition, Dušanić believes that, to a certain extent, in the context of their administration and the metal transport, the mines in the Šumadija imperial domain were closely connected with Tricornium (*Metalla Tricorniensia*) and Singidunum, Dušanić 2010, 549.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁹ *IMS I*, 110; S. Dušanić believes that the recruitment of the soldiers around 169, when cohort *II Aurelia nova* was formed, was raised among the local population, Dušanić 2010, 564.

¹⁰ N. Vulić thinks that a dog is presented, while M. Mirković and S. Dušanić see an animal with a mane, Вулић 1931, n. 586; *IMS I*, n. 120.

¹¹ N. Vulić recognised the round forms under the front legs of sea monsters as human skulls and S. Dušanić accepted the mentioned description. Due to the worse condition of the monument today, it is not possible to state with any certainty that human skulls are represented under the front legs of the sea monsters.

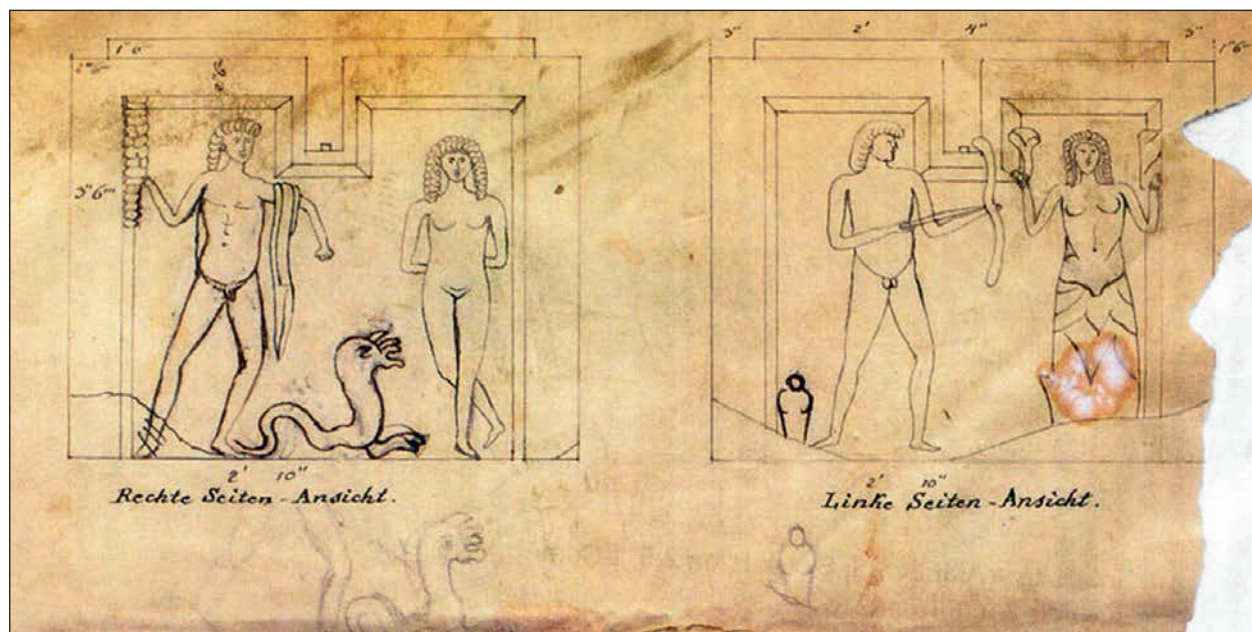


Fig. 3. Scenes from the lateral sides of the lost sarcophagus of Maximiana Aemilia, from Sisak (Siscia) (after: Migotti, Šašel Kos, Radman-Livaja 2018, S II. 9)

Сл. 3. Сцене са бочних зидова изубљеној саркофага Максимијане Елије из Сиска (Siscia) (према: Migotti, Šašel Kos, Radman-Livaja 2018, S II. 9)

is the main figural scene. In the centre of the scene a half-draped female figure (naked down to her waist) is presented frontally, and completely static; she is standing and, judging from her posture, it is clear that she is chained to a rock, her hands bound behind her back so that she cannot move. On her left side, a very muscular male figure is turned towards her, holding a bow and about to shoot an arrow from it in the direction of the sea monster (*ketos*), shown on the right side of the woman. The sea monster is presented very schematically, with its foreparts raised to threaten its female victim. Beneath this recessed aedicula, there is a frieze with a hunting scene. Unfortunately, due to the state of the monument's deterioration, we can only speculate as to which animals are presented. Looking from the left to the right side, N. Vulić and V. Kondić believe that a dog, turned to his right is presented, while S. Dušanić recognises a deer.¹² In the case of the next two animals, which are turned to the left (towards the first animal), N. Vulić and V. Kondić identify two wild boars, while S. Dušanić sees a horse and a wild boar.¹³ The inscription field is also recessed and is flanked by two columns with capitals. Under the inscription is an empty field.

Iconography interpretation

The poor preservation of the figures in the central scene within the central recessed aedicula of the funerary monument from Stojnik, made it difficult, even for the first researchers, to accurately identify the main protagonists. Yet, the muscularity of the male figure on the left and the partially draped or naked female figure in the centre, standing as though she is chained to the background, together with the image of sea-monster, makes it possible for us to be reasonably sure that it represents the mythological scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione from the *ketos*.¹⁴ The element that might puzzle the viewer in the scene is that Hercules holds a bow instead of a club, his usual attrib-

¹² Вулић 1931, n. 586; Kondić 1965, 227–228, n. 30; *IMS* I, n. 120.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Although N. Vulić (as later V. Kondić) did not presume which mythological scene is presented on the funerary monument from Stojnik, he was on the right path when he noticed a great likeness between the scene presented on the monument and the scene of Hesione's rescuing, shown in Roscher's *Mythological Lexicon*, Вулић 1931, 246.

ute, which, on the Stojnik monument, is depicted on the ground, behind the hero's left leg. However, representations of Hercules holding a bow or shooting an arrow are familiar in Greek and Roman art and by no means rare, although Hercules is usually shown, on completing his deeds or resting from them, draped with the skin of the Nemean lion, and with his club beside him. It is interesting, though, that in the earliest known scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione, a Corinthian column krater dated to the 6th century BC, the god holds a bow and not a club.¹⁵

The mythological scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione is recorded as one of Hercules' deeds, which took place following his return from his expedition against the Amazons. Hesione was a Trojan princess, daughter of King Laomedon and sister of the future Trojan king, Priam, who, because of the wrath of the gods Apollo and Poseidon directed at her father, was sacrificed to the sea monster (*ketos*), in order to deliver Troy from both the sea monster sent by Poseidon and a plague sent by Apollo.¹⁶ The scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione on the Stojnik monument depicts the moment when Hercules arrives to liberate her and kills the *ketos*. The mythical scene of Hercules' rescue of Hesione, although not much favoured in Greek and Etruscan art, became quite popular in Roman art, particularly in the 2nd and the 3rd centuries in the northern provinces of the empire.¹⁷ The reason for the popularity of this theme, mostly on funerary monuments,¹⁸ is explained by the popularity of the hero-god Hercules, whose life and fate in the afterlife inspired the artisans who produced provincial Roman art, but also because the episode was seen as an allegory of death and the afterlife, here symbolised in Hesiones' rescue from death and Hercules' victory over the monster.¹⁹ The fact that Hercules had, beside all his other aspects, a chthonian function too, made him and the different episodes in his life, suitable themes in Greek and Roman sepulchral art.²⁰ However, as in the case of the funerary stele from Stojnik, the context, regarding the person of the deceased and his life, must be taken into account when analysing and interpreting the monument in question. In that regard, we should start from the mythological scene and how it is presented. Although the figures of the main protagonists are not so clearly visible today, Hercules' muscular body is emphasised, through his attributes, the bow in his hands and his club beside his left leg. He is presented naked, as is Hesione too, although she sometimes has, as here, her lower body covered. In the Roman period, Hesi-

one was usually presented naked or half-draped, in contrast to Greek art where she is always presented clothed.²¹ The figure of the sea monster, *ketos*, is crudely modelled on the Stojnik monument, with its small triangular head in profile and a massive body, yet it can be perceived that his head and upper part of the body are leaning towards Hesione with the intention of causing her harm. In Greek and Roman art, the *ketos* is shown in connection with Hesione, Andromeda and

¹⁵ Oakley 624, num. 3.

¹⁶ Hesiona, Hesione (Ἡσιόνη) was a Trojan princess who is first mentioned in Homer's Iliad, in a myth concerning the building of Troy's walls for King Laomedon, by Apollo and Poseidon on Zeus' orders. However, Laomedon refused to pay the gods their wages and the furious Poseidon sent a sea monster – *ketos*, to destroy everything on his way, including Troy and its citizens. The oracle predicted to Laomedon that the only way to please the monster was to sacrifice his daughter Hesione. Laomedon promised to give his immortal horses as reward to anyone who would kill the *ketos* and Hercules did that by entering the sea monster's belly and slaying it, thus rescuing Hesione who was chained naked to the rocks and waiting for her grim fate; to be devoured by the *ketos*. Later, Hercules gave his blessings to his friend Telamon to wed Hesione, and, indeed, Telamon appears in some iconographical scenes together with Hercules and Hesione in Greek and Roman monuments, Oakley 1997, 623.

¹⁷ The earliest known depiction of Hercules rescuing Hesione from the *ketos* is that on a Corinthian column krater dated to 560 BC, while somewhat later the scene appears on Attic and Etruscan wares. Other scenes from the myth, like Laomedon and Priam beseeching Herakles to save Hesione, Heracles and Laomedon making a pact, Hercules claiming the horses of Laomedon, Hercules punishing Laomedon, Hesione marrying Telamon, and Hesione, Hercules and the young Priam, are less often presented in Greek and Roman art. Ibid., 623–628. The *ketos* is presented, skillfully and in detail, in the scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione from Dunaujvaros (now in the Magyar Nemzeti Museum's lapidarium, inv. num. 66.1906.1) <http://lupa.at/3958/photos/4> and on the sarcophagus of Gaius Severinius Vitalis, dating from the 2nd century, <https://pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/139483811>.

¹⁸ It has been shown on about 30 examples of the Hercules and Hesione mythical episode, that it is mostly presented on the funerary monuments (around 20), two mosaics and five frescoes, dating from the 1st to the 4th century, Birchler, Chamay 1995, 52.

¹⁹ In Roman funerary monuments the *exemplum Herculi* and various episodes from his life and deeds were most suitable for expressing ideas about dying and departure from this world, the fragility of a human life, the hope for divine protection and the destiny of triumph over death and the acquisition of immortal life, Bayet 1974, 210.

²⁰ Hercules' chthonian dimension was confirmed as early as in the 7th–6th century BC, on Thasos, where the dual cult of the god existed: the cult of Hercules as a hero and the cult of Hercules as a god. He was respected as a celestial, but also chthonian, deity, as in cities of southern Italy and Etruria. Berquist 1973, 40–41; Bayet 1926, 408.

²¹ Ibid., 628.

Scylla and is usually presented with a serpentine body, canine head, forearms that resemble those of a lion, fish tail and fins or flippers.²² The sea surrounding is emphasised by an ornamental register in the form of waves in the narrow frieze between the monument's triangular pediment and recessed aedicula, but also by the two sea monsters with long fish tails depicted beyond the external corners of the triangular pediment of the monument. The animals depicted on the frieze between the aedicula and inscription field on the Stojnik funerary monument, represent not only those which are usually shown in hunting scenes, but also those which are also connected to the god Hercules (a doe or a dog, and wild boars). In this context, we should mention a funerary monument from Smederevo Fortress, detailing a scene of Hercules returning Alcestis from Hades, which also contains a frieze with a hunting scene (one lion and four dogs).²³ Hunting scenes are frequent in Roman sepulchral art, particularly on funerary monuments from Noricum and both Pannonian provinces, from the first century, from where, in the 2nd century, this motif was transferred to the territory of Moesia Superior.²⁴ Hunting scenes appear on seven funerary stelae from Moesia Superior (but not south of Viminacium), which all belong to more complex architectural types of stelae, which only persons who were of a higher social status could have afforded.²⁵ Symbolising scenes of a happier life after death and the victory of life over death, the hunting scenes on Roman funerary monuments also expressed the heroism of the deceased and his virtues, which will have ensured immortal life after death.²⁶ The motif of the fabulous sea monsters in the external corners of the triangular pediment, which contribute to the "marine" atmosphere of the central scene in the monument's aedicula have already been mentioned, but what should we make of the central scene within the pediment? As is mentioned in the description of the scene by Vulić, who described it almost a hundred years ago, and we could believe that in that time the motifs were more visible since the monument was probably in much better condition, in its centre is recognised a standing figure of a woman, with a dog on her left side, turning towards her and drinking from a vessel. If we accept his interpretation, it could be said that this scene corresponds with the main mythological episode of Hercules rescuing of Hesione and all other presented iconographical motives, and we are in agreement with the aforementioned hypothesis of a connection between chthonian Hercules and the female

figure with the dog who, in such a context, would probably represent a goddess with a chthonic dimension as well.²⁷ Since epigraphic monuments from the Kosmaj area, where our monument was found, confirm the worship of several goddesses venerated primarily as the protectresses of miners and mines, but also as chthonian deities, our first thought would lead us towards an identification of Dea Orcia²⁸ or Terra Mater.²⁹ The

²² Ogden 2013, 116.

²³ The hunting scene with one lion and four dogs presented under the mythological scene of Hercules returning Alcestis to Admetus from the funerary monument built as *spolia* in the outer wall of the tower between the so-called tower of Jerina in Smederevo Fortress and the tower with the benefactor's inscription, is probably an allusion to Admetus' success in bringing together a lion and a wild boar to draw a chariot. Judging by the Smederevo relief of Alcestis' return and all the presented iconographical details (Alcestis dressed in a long chlamys with a veil, Admetus grieving on a *kline*, the motif of Medusa's head in the triangular pediment etc.), it is clear that the sculptor of the monument knew the myth of Alcestis well, for more see Gavrilović 2008, 9–10.

²⁴ The hunting scenes, not being frequent in the Republican or Augustian period, became popular from the 1st century. Their popularity spread in this period from Northern Italy to the provinces of Noricum and both Pannonias, as is confirmed by numerous funerary monuments from Brigetio, Cibalae, Sirmium, Savaria, Sopiane and Scarabantia. Dautova-Ruševljanin 1983, 59. The cultural ties that existed between the above mentioned territories (including the province of Dalmatia) with Moesia Superior, is attributed to the appearance of the hunting motif in the funerary monuments from this province. However the scenes of the hunt from Noricum and the two Pannonias do not appear only on stelae of complex architectural types, as is the case in Moesia Superior, but also in simpler types of monuments.

²⁵ Hunting scenes are presented in seven funerary stelae from Moesia Superior, including our funerary monument from Stojnik: five monuments were found in Viminacium. *IMS* II, n. 73, 77, 92, 106, 110 and one monument is built in the outer wall of one of Smederevo fortress' towers. Вулић, Ладек, Премершгајн 1903, 66–67. For more information about hunting scenes in Moesia Superior see: Pilipović 2006, 337–352.

²⁶ Toynbee 1982, 39; Cumont 1966, 448–449.

²⁷ *IMS* I, 136.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 20. The votive monument dedicated to Dea Orcia presents a solitary testimony of the goddess' cult, not only in the Roman provinces of the Central Balkans, but in the whole Roman empire. S. Dušanić thinks that although the name of the goddess is Latin, derived from name of the god Orcus and reveals a chthonian goddess, *paredros* of Orcus, her origin is probably Celtic, Thracian or some other northern group. Her chthonian character is also confirmed with her presumed temple with reliefs showing bats, found in Kosmaj. Dušanić 2010, 506, 674; Gavrilović 2007, 135–142.

²⁹ The cult of the goddess Terra Mater is affirmed on a votive monument dedicated to Jupiter, Liber, Libera and Terra Mater, by a veteran of the Legion IV Flavia. *IMS* I, n. 16. Also, her temple has been epigraphically confirmed on the slopes of Mt. Rudnik, in a lead and silver mine. *Ibid.*, n. 168.



Fig. 4. Relief with the scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione, from a funerary monument from Dallfingen (after: Oakley 1997, n. 22)

Fig. 5. Stone relief with the representation of Hercules rescuing Hesione, from Hallstatt (source: <http://lupa.at/569/photos/1>)

Сл. 4. Релјеф са сценом Херкуловој сјасавања Хесионе са надгробној сјоменика из Далфингена (према: Oakley 1997, н. 22)

Сл. 5. Камени релјеф са представом Херкуловој сјасавања Хесионе из Халиштајта (извор: <http://lupa.at/569/photos/1>)

only confirmation of the Dea Orcia cult comes from a votive monument found in Avala, dedicated to the goddess in her obvious Underworld capacity, by two *duoviri coloniae Singiduni*, which is dated to 287 AD. The cult of Terra Mater has been confirmed by a votive monument from Singidunum, dedicated to her and to Jupiter, Liber and Libera. A close relationship with Dea Orcia is suggested not only through Terra Mater's patronage over miners and mines, but also in her own persona as a chthonian deity.³⁰ Both goddesses were regarded as the main protectresses in the mentioned territory and, along with the goddesses Diana and Ceres and the gods Hercules, Jupiter and Vulcanus, were worshipped in the mining areas in the vicinity of antique Singidunum.³¹ Although we cannot be sure which of the mentioned goddesses would have figured in the scene within the triangular pediment of the Stojnik funerary monument, the chthonian dimension of the female deity with a dog is undisputable, as is her connection with the god Hercules in his functions of the protector of mines and miners, the army, but also as a chthonic god in the Kosmaj area.

Finally, regarding this intriguing scene, the authors of this paper would like to offer one more possible interpretation. Although we used the “aDStretch application for rock art digital enhancement” for the purpose of a possibly better identification of the scene, the results were not sufficient to provide more information (Fig. 6).³² Existing lines and surfaces are more visible and that only provided an opportunity for a different interpretation of the animal on the left. The head of the animal is damaged but, based on the tail, which is long and stretches to the corner of the triangular pediment, it is possible to say that instead of a dog, a panther is actually depicted here. In such a space, the panther could be presented with a vessel and as sacred animal of the god Dionysus, the Roman

³⁰ Dušanić 2010, 674–675.

³¹ Ibid, 670–683.

³² <https://www.dstretch.com/Apps/index3.html> The authors express their gratitude to their dear colleague Emilija Nikolić for providing the use of this application.

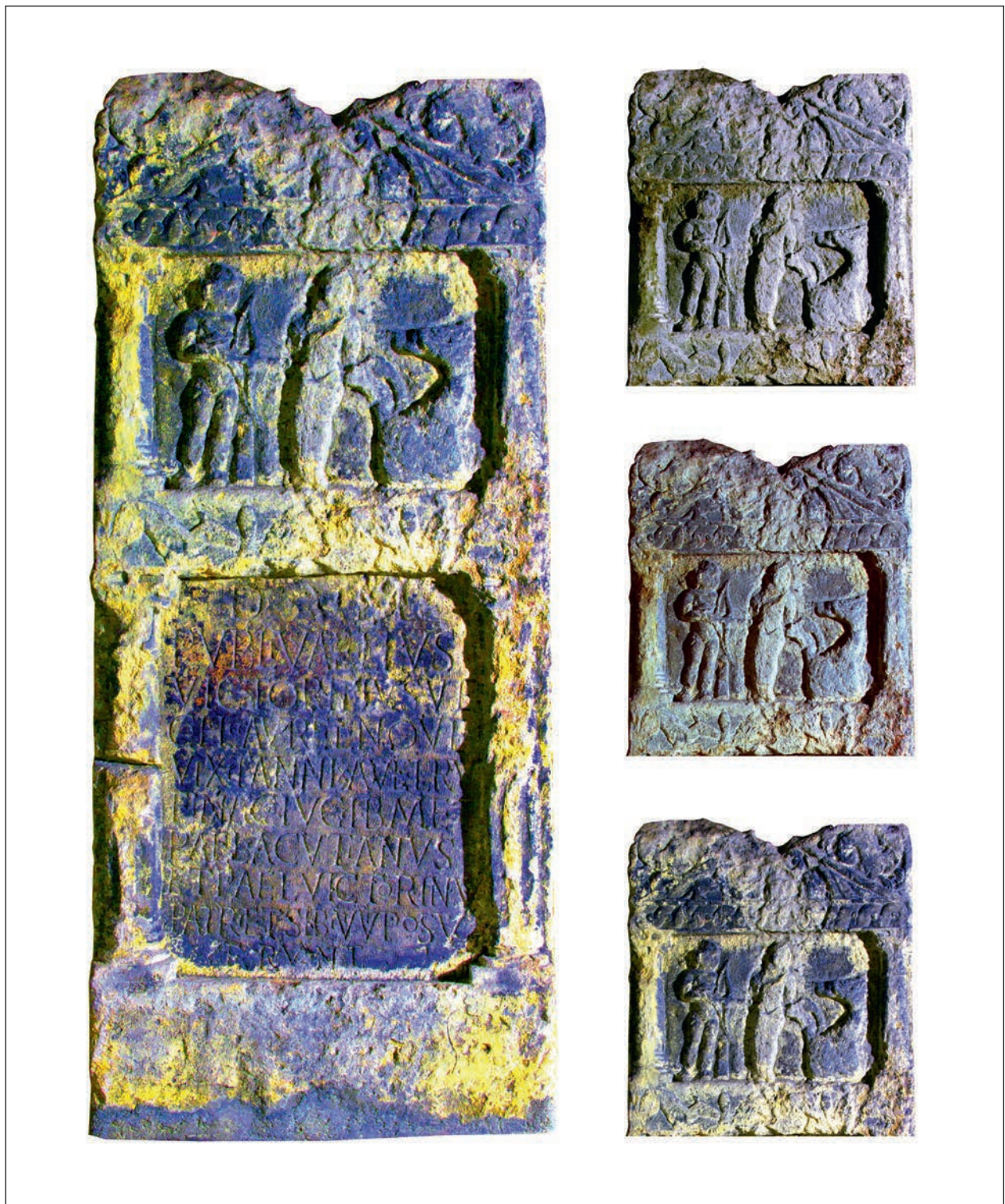


Fig. 6. Funerary monument from Stojnik with the representation of Hercules rescuing Hesione with applied “aDStretch application for rock art digital enhancement” (photo-documentation: National Museum in Belgrade, inv. num. 22_43 and <https://www.dstretch.com/Apps/index3.html>)

Сл. 6. Надгробни сѐмоеник из Сѐојника са ѓредсѐаваом Херкуловој сѐасавања Хесионе кроз ѓримењену аѓликацију “aDStretch application for rock art digital enhancement”

(фоѓо-документиѓација: Народног музеј у Беоѓрагу, инв. бр. 22_43 и <https://www.dstretch.com/Apps/index3.html>)

Bacchus;³³ it is possible that this scene can point to a Dionysiac context.³⁴ Bearing in mind the popularity of this cult and its strong association with the cult of death and immortality, it is possible that here too, as in already known finds,³⁵ both gods are engaged in conquering death, in a scene with a deep eschatological meaning for any mortal when it comes to the choice of his personal pictorial narrative and afterlife message.

The funerary monument from Stojnik represents a Roman monument unique because of its iconography in the territory of Moesia Superior; containing a scene from the myth of Hercules rescuing Hesione. The closest geographical analogy can be found in the scenes from the lateral sides of the lost sarcophagus of Maximiana Aemilia, from Sisak, dated to the first half to the mid 3rd century (fig. 3).³⁶ The representations of a hero holding a bow and rescuing a half-draped girl (on one of the lateral sides of the sarcophagus), and of a hero holding a club and saving a naked girl (on the other lateral side), were recognised as presentations of Perseus and Andromeda.³⁷ However, we are more inclined to agree with the authors B. Migotti, M. Šašel Kos and I. Raman-Livaja, who believe that because of the attribute of a club and good knowledge of the mythical episode of Hercules' rescue of Hesione in Pannonia Superior, these scenes as presented on the lateral sides of the sarcophagus of Maximiana Aemilia depict Hercules and Hesione, rather than Perseus and Andromeda.³⁸

Since there are strong mythological and iconographical analogies with the tale of Perseus saving Andromeda (in both tales an innocent girl tied to a rock is to be sacrificed to the sea monster *ketos*, which is killed by a hero),³⁹ sometimes it is very hard to say which mythical story is presented, as, for example, with the sarcophagus of Maximiana Aemilia, but the opposite can also be true, as is demonstrated by the relief from Golubići, which was thought to present Hercules with Hesione, but actually shows Perseus and Andromeda.⁴⁰

Close iconographical analogies with the scene from the Stojnik monument can be observed on two stone reliefs – a relief from Dallfingen dated to the 2nd–3rd century, on which Hercules is holding a bow in his left hand and approaching a naked Hesione, standing frontally, and a funerary limestone relief from Hallstatt, dated to the 2nd century.⁴¹ The only difference between the scenes from the Stojnik monument and the Hallstatt funerary relief is that on the latter, Her-

cules is holding a club, not a bow and is swinging it over his head. The detail of Hercules holding a bow is known from three other iconographic presentations, a lost sarcophagus from Rome, a marble discus from Vienna⁴² and a funerary relief from Intercisa (Dunapentele).⁴³ In the context of the stylistic characteristics of the Stojnik funerary monument, although its state has deteriorated, it is clear that the artisan was well acquainted with the myth of Hercules' rescue of Hesione and also aware of the popularity of Hercules in the mining area of Kosmaj. There are similarities in the way the human figures are carefully and skilfully modelled between the scene from the Stojnik monument and the representation on the sarcophagus of Gaius Severinus Vitalis from Köln, dated to the 2nd century.⁴⁴ However, less skill is shown in the artisan's modelling of the animals in the Stojnik monument, where the *ketos* is presented quite basically, as also are

³³ Toynbee 1973, 82–86.

³⁴ The authors would like to thank to Prof. Bojan Đurić, who drew their attention to the possibility of such an interpretation.

³⁵ We will not enter into the elaboration of the close connection between Hercules and Dionysus, which exists from the 6th century BC, when they were worshipped together on Thasos. Bergquist 1973, 29. We will just emphasise that both deities triumphed over death and, thus, became the symbols of good and brave deeds with which they earned a happy and blissful afterlife.

³⁶ Vukelić 2009, 406–407. The sarcophagus of Maximiana Aemilia was found in the area known as the necropolis of New Sisak, that is the south-western necropolis. For her hypothesis that the scenes from the sarcophagus' lateral sides present Perseus and Andromeda, V. Vukelić provides no valid argument apart from her personal opinion. Vukelić 2009, 393–420.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The arguments of the authors depend on the club in the god's hand and also the fact that the motifs of Hercules and Hesione were familiar in Norico-Pannonian art. Migotti, Šašel Kos, Radman-Livaja 2018, 20–22, S II. 9.

³⁹ Although the representations of Perseus and Andromeda and Hercules with Hesione are contemporary and date from the 7th century BC, the scenes of Hercules with Hesione are much rarer in Greek art than the former ones. Birchler, Chamay 1995, 52.

⁴⁰ Imamović 1977, 432, n. 204; Toynbee 1977, 377, i.

⁴¹ Oakley 1997, n. 22 and n. 33.

⁴² Ibid, n. 35, 36, 628.

⁴³ On the funerary relief from Intercisa, Hercules is presented with a club, but on his back the bow and arrows are visible. Toynbee 1977, 382, ii.

⁴⁴ The sarcophagus of the veteran Gaius Severinus Vitalis, who served in the XXX Legion Ulpia Victrix from Köln, besides the scene of Hercules rescuing Hesione, figures also a scene of Theseus slaying the Minotaur. The sarcophagus dates from the first half of the 2nd century, <https://pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/139483811>.

the figures of the animals in the hunting scene. Although the monument was made of a local stone, quarried from the site of Bogovica, near Stojnik, by the complex architectural type of the stela and by the choice of the iconographical motifs, it is clear that the deceased was a person of good financial status and had a certain social impact within the society in which he and his family lived. Judging by the iconographical and stylistic characteristics, but also the palaeographic characteristics and known facts about the activity of the *cohors II Aurelia nova*, the Stojnik monument should be dated between AD 171 and AD 200.

Conclusion

Besides the usual decorative function of a myth on funerary monuments, the choice of mythological imagery as a vehicle for their funerary message, which depended on the commissioner, in this case wife and son, cannot be neglected.⁴⁵ The language of images and their rhetorical effects on funerary monuments can be comprehend as archetypes, panegyric or forms of mythopoesis.⁴⁶ However, the relationship between the deceased and the mythological figures was oriented toward self-representation and commemoration, in order to idealise the memory of the deceased and to create a ritual space for mourning and consolation.⁴⁷ Bearing in mind that the complexity of the mythological interpretation could be understood as “culturally demanding language”, it might have been expected that an important factor in choosing of the myth would have been cultural identity.⁴⁸ Considering the power of images, in this case associated with the inscription as a personal background of the suggested interpretation, some conclusions can be recapitulated.

Judging by the motifs and the mythological tale of Hercules rescuing Hesione presented on the Stojnik funerary monument, we believe that the inspiration for it came from Pannonia inferior, where funerary art was rich in mythical themes and symbolism, such as: Iphigenia in Taurus, the legend of the Sabine women, Apollo chasing Daphne, Helena and Eros, Hercules, a maenad or / and Venus, the sphinx, and possibly Endymion, and where the population was open to the symbolism that the themes, such as those mentioned, were associated with for them.⁴⁹ It is quite logical that, as J. M. C. Toynbee rightly emphasised, the myths that are allegories of death, salvation and victory over death, such as the tale of Hercules rescuing Hesione from death, were favoured in sepul-

chral provincial art.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is quite logical that Publius Aelius Victorinus, who was a soldier employed in guarding the mines in the Stojnik area, would worship the deities associated with these mythical stories, who were protectors of the army, miners and mines and would put himself under their protection. The fact that Hercules was one of the *dii militares* and very popular among soldiers, but was also venerated in Moesia Superior’s mining areas as the protector of mines and miners, makes him the best choice in that context, which is, as we already saw, confirmed with examples of other funerary monuments of soldiers carved with the mythical episode of Hercules’ rescue of Hesione;⁵¹ for example the sarcophagus of the veteran Gaius Severinius Victorinus from Köln, or a relief on a block from Muchhausen, dedicated by the veteran L. Severinus Victorinus,⁵² or a funerary relief from the Legionary fortress at Chester⁵³ and, of course, our monument from Stojnik. The mythological representations on funerary monuments, besides carrying messages of the sadness and sorrow of the deceased’s family for their lost loved one, also contain their hopes and wishes for the deceased’s fate and happiness, which are to be secured in the afterlife. Among all mythological persons, there is none more suitable, because of his life and fate after death, than Hercules.⁵⁴ The presentation of the mythological tale of Hercules’ rescue of Hesione from the sea monster as a paradigm of virtue conquering the power of evil, combined with carefully chosen motifs of the chthonian goddess with a dog or vessel with a panther beside, suggesting a Dionysiac context, the fabulous sea monsters with chthonic dimension and the hunting scene, undoubtedly point towards the securing of a happy eternity through the example of virtue and brave deeds. The episode that precedes Hesione’s rescue by Hercules is actually her sacrifice to the sea monster and, in such a context, it

⁴⁵ Newby 2014, 256–257, with reference 6.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hölscher 2004; Elsner 2014, 316–350; Koortbojian 1995.

⁴⁷ Birk 2014, 33–47.

⁴⁸ Zanker and Ewald 2012, 34–36.

⁴⁹ Migotti, Šašel Kos, Radman-Livaja 2018, 181.

⁵⁰ Toynbee 1977, 407.

⁵¹ Henig 1970, 261.

⁵² Toynbee 1977, 382, iv, 383, vi,

⁵³ Henig, Webster 2004, 29–30.

⁵⁴ Cumont 1966, 415.

may additionally be possible to consider a connection between this kind of background scene and the practice of *devotio* – involving the death of commanders in the field, vowed to commit themselves and the enemy troops to the gods of the underworld in order to ensure a Roman victory.⁵⁵ Thus, the mythological episode of Hercules rescuing Hesione on the Stojnik fu-

nerary monument symbolises, in an eschatological and possibly soteriological context,⁵⁶ the life of the deceased as a victory of life over death, as Publius Aelius Victorinus, with his virtues and courage, earned eternal life as his ultimate reward.

Translated by the authors

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⁵⁵ Schultz 2016, 58–76.

⁵⁶ Bayet 1974, 248; Birchler, Chamay 1995, 56.

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СА ОНЕ СТРАНЕ ГРОБА: ПРЕДСТАВА ХЕРКУЛОВОГ СПАСАВАЊА ХЕСИОНЕ. ПРИМЕР НАДГРОБНОГ СПОМЕНИКА ИЗ СТОЈНИКА

Кључне речи. – Херкул, Хесиона, митолошка сцена, Стојник, надгробни споменик

Међу ретким римским надгробним споменицима са митолошким представама из Горње Мезије издваја се споменик од сивога кречњака из Стојника, и то по иконографској сцени – јединственој на простору римских провинција централног Балкана – која приказује Херкулово спасавање Хесионе од морског чудовишта кетоса. У питању је надгробна стела архитектонског типа, са троугаоним забатом, митолошком сценом представљеном у едикули и са натписним пољем. Фунерарни споменик је богато декорисан различитим мотивима, а из текста натписа сазнаје се да је посвећен Сенима мртвих због смрти Публија Елија Викторинуса, ветерана кохорте II Аурелије нове. Споменик су подигли његова супруга Аурелија Руфина и њихов син Публије Елије Акуцианус. Кохорта II Аурелија нова била је једна од шест кохорти које су пред крај другог века основане у циљу чувања рудника у области Шумадије, и то регрутовањем углавном локалног становништва, коме је највероватније припадао и преминули Публије Елије Акуцианус. С обзиром на то да су археолошка истраживања потврдила постојање војног логора на простору Стојника, као и постојање болнице за војнике кохорте II Аурелије нове у поменутој области, претпоставља се да је ова кохорта била задужена за безбедност како рудничке експлоатације олова, сребра, злата и гвожђа, тако и рудара из области Стојника.

Надгробни споменик садржи неколико иконографских сцена различите садржине: у средини троугаоног забата приказани су женска фигура која стоји и десно од ње пас који пије из суда (?), односно суд, у средини сцене, са пантером десно од њега (услед недостатка горњег дела сцене и утицаја атмосферализације, немогуће је извршити сигурну идентификацију мотива у средини забата). У спољним угловима троугаоног забата представљена су два морска чудовишта, с дугим риблим репом, како предњим ногама стоје на људским лобањама (?). Испод троугаоног забата је танак фриз, а испод њега је представљена едикула са митолошком сценом. У центру сцене приказана је млада нага (или полунага) девојка, са рукама прикованим за позадину (стена?), док је с њене леве стране приказан наг мушкарац, наглашене мускулатуре, поред чије се леве ноге налази батина, који у рукама има лук из којег одапиње стрелу ка морском чудовишту што је представљено из профила са девојчине десне стране. Морско чудовиште кетос нагиње се горњим делом тела и предњим ногама према девојци у намери да јој науди. Испод ове митолошке сцене налази се фриз са представом лова, у којој су приказани јелен (пас?) и два дивља вепра.

Испод фриза се налази удубљено поље са натписом, фланкирано стубовима са капителима, а испод њега је празно поље. Иако Херкулово оружје у иконографској представи спасавања Хесионе није батина што се налази поред њега, већ лук са стрелама – лук као оружје бога појављује се на првој до сада познатој представи Херкуловог спасавања Хесионе из 7. века пре н.е. (коринтски кратер), као и на још свега три рељефа са простора других римских провинција. Митолошка представа Херкуловог спасавања Хесионе од морског чудовишта припада његовим доживљајима након похода на Амазонке. Пошто део његовог обећања датог боговима Аполону и Посејдону није испуњен, на тројанског краља Лаомедона и Троју послато је морско чудовиште, а једини начин да се оно умири било је жртвовање Лаомедоневе кћери Хесионе. Лаомедон обећава ономе ко му спасе кћер своје бесмртне коње, те Херкул одлази да се суочи с морским чудовиштем, које убија а Хесиону спасава од сигурне смрти.

Мит о Херкулу и Хесиони спада у алегоријске приче о победи над смрћу и задобијању бесмртног живота након смрти путем врлине. Оне су управо због своје симболике биле омиљене на римским надгробним споменицима. Херкул, који је представљао једно од омиљених војних божанстава, заштитника рудара и рудника, али такође и бога са хтонском димензијом, био је, захваљујући свом животу и храбрим делима, идеалан пример за смртнике који су настојали да себи обезбеде исту судбину попут Херкулове у контексту живота након смрти заслуженог храброшћу, моралом и часношћу. Есхатолошка, а могуће и сотериолошка, симболика надгробног споменика из Стојника додатно је подвучена представом у троугаоном забату, мотивима морских чудовишта у спољним угловима забата и сценом лова у фризу између митолошке сцене у едикули и натписног поља споменика. Претпоставка је да се у централној представи унутар забата, у приказу жене са псом, може препознати једна од хтонских богиња која је поштована на рудничком простору Стојника – Деа Оркија или Тера Матер, или пак то да је имплициран дионизијски хтонски контекст, уколико је представљен суд са пантером десно од њега. Представе лова познате су пак са седам надгробних споменика у Горњој Мезији и симболизују храброст и врлину покојника путем којих он достиже бесмртност у животу после смрти.

Митолошка представа Херкуловог спасавања Хесионе била је у периоду римске владавине нарочито популарна на

надгробним споменицима из северних провинција, а претпоставља се да је тај тип представа у Горњу Мезију доспео из Доње Паноније, где је био добро познат и омиљен, нарочито међу војницима.

Митолошка представа са надгробног споменика из Стојника има географски најближу аналогију у сценама са бочних страна изгубљеног саркофага Максимијане Елије

из Сиска, као што је иконографски слична представама са рељефа из Далфингена и сцени са надгробног споменика из Халштата. На основу стилских карактеристика, надгробни споменик из Стојника датује се у период од 171. до 200. године н.е. и представља за сада једину представу Херкуловог спасавања Хесионе од морског чудовишта са простора римске провинције Горње Мезије.