

AKTI VIII. MEĐUNARODNOG KOLOKVIJA O PROBLEMIMA RIMSKOG PROVINCIJALNOG UMJETNIČKOG STVARALAŠTVA

AKTEN DES VIII. INTERNATIONALEN KOLLOQUIUMS ÜBER PROBLEME DES PROVINZIALRÖMISCHEN KUNSTSCHAFFENS

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON PROBLEMS OF ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART

LES ACTES DU VIII^{ÈME} COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL SUR LES PROBLÈMES DE L'ART PROVINCIAL ROMAIN

ZAGREB 5.-8. V. 2003.

RELIGIJA I MIT KAO POTICAJ RIMSKOJ PROVINCIJALNOJ PLASTICI

RELIGION UND MYTHOS ALS ANREGUNG FÜR DIE PROVINZIALRÖMISCHE PLASTIK

RELIGION AND MYTH AS AN IMPETUS FOR THE ROMAN PROVINCIAL SCULPTURE

LA RELIGION ET LE MYTHE COMME INSPIRATION POUR LA SCULPTURE ROMAINE PROVINCIALE

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CULT SYMBOLS AND IMAGES ON FUNERARY MONUMENTS OF THE ROMAN PERIOD IN THE CENTRAL SECTION OF DARDANIA

BY EXHLALE DOBRUNA-SALIHU

As in other areas that were within the various provinces of the Roman Empire, the region of the central part of Dardania, which in the classical period encompassed the territory of present-day Kosovo along with the northeastern bordering areas of Albania, bears numerous traces of the material and spiritual culture of the Roman period. This includes monuments with sculptural relief, and particularly monuments with a funerary character, of which the stelae are especially important. These monuments, with their relief motifs and depictions, offer a significant contribution to illuminating the many problems specific to this region in the classical period. These include several important questions in the sphere of religion and cults, with particular emphasis on the question of belief in the afterlife. An attempt will be made on the basis of the cult attributes – the symbols and depictions of individual Roman deities on these monuments – to show the religious affiliation of the deceased to a given cult, and thus the eschatological beliefs current in Dardania during the Roman period (1st–4th centuries). These symbols and images most often can be found on the stelae of this region and appear in three main forms: geometric, floral, and figural.

Geometric motifs are scarce. They are characterized by rosettes in various forms: with bent petals, a hexagon within a circle and a disc. The rosette usually appears alone, very rarely are several of them placed in a compo-

sition, and in most cases the rosette (or more than one) appears as the only motif of the main relief field.

A rosette with bent petals – or a windlass (Wirbelrosetten) can be found on two stelae and one altar that come from various places in Kosovo (*Municipium DD* near Soçanica, present day Prizren and Prishtina). On the altar it decorates the central part of the triangular pediment at the top of the front side, and on each stela it was of large dimensions and decorated the entire hemispherical field of the pediment¹ (fig. 1). Rosettes can also be found in this position on the stelae from the southern part of Dardania, from the territory of *Scupi* (Zlokuçan near Skoplje), as the decoration of semicircular and pentagonal gables, and throughout the entire Dardanian region the rosette is most frequent here, usually with three to four petals, which in fact represents a swastika and triquetrum.² In contrast, in the northern part of Dardania, on the territory of *Naissus* (Niš) and *Timacum minus* (Ravna near Knjaževac), the rosette is unknown.

A six-sided star rosette within a circle can be found on two examples of a stele from the same place, present-day Rahovec (Serb. Orahovac), and on a slab from the village of Smirna, near Vitia at present-day Gjilan (Serb. Gnjilane). On one stele a single rosette appears alone in the center of the flat gable (*attica*) above the portrait niche,³ while on another example there are three rosettes – two on the hemispherical pediment field and one in the center of the flat gable near the top of the

¹ N. Vulić, *Antički spomenici naše zemlje*. Spomenik 71 (55), 1931, 106 no. 254. – E. Dobruna-Salihu, *Nadgrobnе stele rimskog perioda s područja Kosova*, Arh. Vestnik 38, 1987, 195 fig. 6 199 (stele from Prizren). – N. Vulić, *Antički spomenici naše zemlje*. Spomenik 98 (77), 1941–48, 105 no. 228 (stele from Municipium DD); 198 no. 393 (altar from Prishtina).

² B. Dragojević–Josifovska, *Scupi et la region de Kumanovo*. Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure (further IMS) Vol. 6 (Beograd 1982) 71–72 no. 38; 111 no. 103; 112–113 no. 105; 113 no. 106; 121–122 no. 119. – E. Salihu, *Motivet astrale në monumentete mbivarrore të periudhës romake në Dardani dhe prania e tyre në kulturën popullore shqiptare*. Colloque scientifique: L'étude ethnographique des transformations contemporaines dans la culture populaire Albanaise (further Colloque scientifique) 7–8/12/1989 (Prishtina 1990) 92–94 fig. 2–3.

³ Vulić (note 1, 1931) 106 no. 254. – Dobruna-Salihu (note 1) 196; 199 fig. 7

stele⁴ (fig. 2). On the slab, whose front side bears the inscription (*titulus*), the reverse shows a large circle encompassing small circles with a motif of a six-sided rosette.⁵ It is characteristic for this motif that on the slab and both stelae where it appeared on the flat gable it was executed in the technique of engraving, an ancient technique whose roots derive from woodcarving, in which the Illyrians were highly skilled.⁶ A six-sided rosette is otherwise only found in the rest of Dardania within a wreath at *Timacum minus*.⁷

A rosette in the shape of a disc is present in only one example of a stele from *Ulpianum* (near Gračanica). It is located in the center of the hemispherical pediment,⁸ which is characteristic for the southern part of Dardania.⁹

All three forms of rosettes are quite ancient and their source can be sought in the prehistoric period. They never ceased to be in use, so that on monuments from the Roman period they in fact appear as motifs derived from the local prehistoric tradition.¹⁰

The religious meaning of this motif has been known since ancient times, and as an astral symbol belonging to astral cults. The reason that this motif and other astral motifs were used specifically on funerary monuments is that even in the ancient Orient they were connected to life after death. Similarly, in the Mediterranean they were closely connected with the cult of the afterlife, as was also later the case in the Roman period.¹¹ This was also noted by F. Cumont, who studied the funerary monuments of the western Roman provinces that bear

such motifs (Pannonia, Noricum, Rhaetia, Gaul and northern Hispania¹²), and showed that they illustrate a lunar-solar eschatology based on the belief that after the soul left the body it rose towards the heavens and continued its existence among the astral spheres.¹³ Such a rosette with bent petals, whose form has been interpreted as representing the circular movement of the sun, on funerary monuments represents the final point to which the soul aspires.¹⁴ B. Gabričević, in his study of the astral motifs on the funerary monuments of the province of Dalmatia (one group of which appears in the interior), in northwestern Bosnia (in the vicinity of Bihać and Bosanski Petrovac), in southwestern Bosnia (in the Livno and Duvno Plains)¹⁵ and in the coastal section (at Ruduša near Sinj),¹⁶ established the same situation, noting that “astral motifs on the funerary monuments from the Roman period need not be a decorative convention, rather – when the circumstantial context indicates – living symbols of a belief in an afterlife of the soul”.¹⁷ On the basis of this, the motif of a rosette (in all three different forms) should have the same meaning as a solar symbol on the mentioned monuments from Dardania. This is further indicated both by the size and the position of these motifs on the stelae, which exhibit similarities with the monuments not merely of the province of Dalmatia,¹⁸ but also other provinces where astral motifs appear.¹⁹

On the one hand, the origin of the astral motifs on the funerary monuments, it was said, should be sought exclusively in the East,²⁰ while on the other hand, in

⁴ E. Dobruna-Salihu, *Plastika dekorative dhe figurative në Dardani gjatë kohës romake – Sepulkrale dhe e kultit* (Prishtinë 2003) 102–103 no. 199 fig. 179.

⁵ Cfr. E. Shukriju, *Stella nga Smira dhe “Gradina” e Gushiçës*. *Gjurmime Albanologjike – Seria e shkencave historike* 20, 1990 (1991) 33–39. – Salihu (note 2) 93.

⁶ D. Sergejevski, *Japodske urne*. *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muz. Sarajevo* n. s. 4–5, 1949–50, 66. – idem, *Iz problematike ilirske umjetnosti*. *Godišnjak. Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja* 3/1, 1965, 120; 124.

⁷ Vulić (note 1, 1941–1948) 88 no. 188. – P. Petrović, *Timacum minus et la vallée du Timok*. *IMS Vol. 3/2* (Beograd 1995) 88 no. 38; 107–108 no. 65.

⁸ Dobruna-Salihu (note 4) 177 no. 100 fig. 92.

⁹ Dragojević-Josifovska (note 2) 181 no. 241; 182 no. 242. – E. Petrova, *Eden dočnorimski grob od okolinata na Kumanovo*. *Macedoniae Acta Arch.* 7–8, 1981–82 (1987) 99 fig. 3 – Dobruna-Salihu (note 4) 177 no. 99 fig. 91.

¹⁰ Sergejevski (note 6, 1949–50) 77–78. – I. Čremošnik, *Rimski spomenici iz okoline Bibača*, *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muz. Sarajevo* n. s. 12, 1957, 220–221. – A. Stipčević, *Kulturni simboli kod Ilira* (Sarajevo 1981) 17. – B. Gabričević, *Antička nekropola u Sinju. Prilog proučavanju prapovijesnih vjerovanja*. *Vjesnik Arh. i Hist. Dalmatinsku* 72, 1983, 51 n. 91.

¹¹ I. Čremošnik, *Narodna simbolika na rimskim spomenicima u našim krajevima*. *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muz. Sarajevo* n. s. 12, 1957, 218; 221.

¹² F. Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Paris 1942) 179–252.

¹³ Cumont (note 12) 225.

¹⁴ Gabričević (note 10) 72.

¹⁵ B. Gabričević, *Detalji autohtone komponente u našoj antici*. *Mogućnost* 3/4, 1956, 197 n. 8. – Čremošnik (note 11) 221 ff. – D. Sergejevski, *Iz problematike ilirske umjetnosti*. *Godišnjak. Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja* 3/1, 1965, 125 n. 3.

¹⁶ Gabričević (note 10) 5–97.

¹⁷ Gabričević (note 10) 72; 74.

¹⁸ A particular similarity to the example from Rahovec is exhibited by the rosettes on two stelae from Krnjeuše, cf. D. Sergejevski, *Rimski spomenici iz Bosne*. *Spomenik* 77 (60), 1934, 10 no. 9. – idem (note 15) 125 fig. 9

¹⁹ The greatest similarity is shown by rosettes from Hispania that come from present-day León, cf. F. D. Santos, *Inscripciones romanas de la provincia de Leon* (Leon 1986) fig. 2; 7; 8; 70; 100; 101; 112; 113; 135; 138; 147; 149; 150 and particularly fig. 147, where a great similarity can be seen to the example from Smirna.

²⁰ A. J. Brutaile, *Stèles Espagnoles*. *Rév. Etudes Anciennes* 12, 1910, 189 ff. – A. Schober, *Die römischen Grabsteine von Noricum und Pannonien* (Wien 1923) 218.



FIG. 1

FIG. 2

Europe these motifs should be connected to the Celts, where they had previously existed in earlier religions tied to a belief in the afterlife.²¹ B. Gabričević, while not denying this, nonetheless started from the fact that these motifs also appear in the territory of the Iapodes (in western Bosnia), and in the territory of the Delmatae (in the coastal hinterland of Sinj), and even in the Duvno and Livno plains, meaning Illyria *par excellence*. He rightfully emphasized that this represents a strong indication in the sense that such astral-eschatological contents were neither foreign nor unknown to the Illyrian population, meaning that such beliefs were widespread among the epichoric population of the Roman province of Dalmatia.²² To this should be added the Dardanian

region, as is supported by the neo-Platonist Jamblique, who has shown that similar beliefs about the immortality of the soul were held by the Thracians and many other barbarians;²³ this naturally including Dardania, given the territorial closeness. This is also indicated by the anthroponyms, which are mostly autochthonic.²⁴

Astral-eschatological beliefs among the Illyrians are also indicated by the importance and wide distribution of the cult of the Sun among the Illyrian tribes from the earliest times.²⁵ This is attested by objects from the prehistoric period where solar and lunar symbols are present,²⁶ which can also be found in this context in Dardania.²⁷ As such, they were used on the sepulchral monuments of the pre-Roman period (on Iapodian

²¹ Cumont (note 12) 227; 235; 431–440. – Čremošnik (note 11) 217; 220; 221 ff., who considered them a Celtic „survival“.

²² Gabričević (note 10) 75.

²³ Cf. Gabričević (note 10) 77 n. 165.

²⁴ Z. Mirdita, *Antroponimia e Dardanisë në kohën romake* (Prishtinë 1981) 39 ff.

²⁵ For the cult of the sun among the Illyrians cf. Stipčević (note 10) 19; 16–47. About the cult of the sun only among the Dardanians cf. E. Shukriu, *Kulti i diellit te Dradanët*. Colloque scientifique: L'étude ethnographique des transformations contemporaines dans la culture populaire Albanaise (further Colloque scientifique) 7–8/12/1989 (Prishtina 1990) 103 ff.

²⁶ A. Benac/B. Čović, *Glasi nac 1–2*, 1956–1957. – Stipčević (note 10) 16 ff.

²⁷ R. Galović, *Halštatski depoko od Janjeva*. Bull. Mus. Kosovo et Metohie 4–5, 1959–1960, 256 ff. Pl. 1 fig. 1–4; Pl. 2 figs 5–6. – Shukriu (note 25) 104–108 Pl. 1 fig. 1–5.

urns), and later in the Roman period (on urns and on stelae). In the mentioned areas, they even continued into the period of late Antiquity.²⁸ This indicates, as was emphasized by the above mentioned scientist, that in our Illyrian regions (and this certainly includes the Dardanian region) the prehistoric Illyrian symbols were also used later, in which they retained their cultural-religious content even in the centuries of antiquity, which points to an uninterrupted continuity of the autochthonic tradition.²⁹ In this case it is important to mention that the same motifs, with identical religious symbolism, continued to be utilized on various structures of the early medieval culture of the Albanians.³⁰ Even more interesting, they can be found on later funerary monuments throughout the broad area once inhabited by Illyrians; on the medieval stećci tombstones of Herzegovina,³¹ tombstones used until recently in northern Albania,³² and particularly on the territory of ancient Dardania (in the region of Leskovac in southern Serbia and the regions of Kumanovo and Gostivar in northern Macedonia).³³ M. Durham, who studied such motifs from northern Albania, related them to ancient beliefs in the Sun and Moon.³⁴

Floral motifs appear in a far greater number. They are present in two types: grapevines with grape bunches or ivy leaves and pine cones.

The design most numerous is that of grapevines, which, except in two cases, decorate all stelae in the form of ornamental borders composed of two vines growing from a vase with two handles (*amphora* or *kantharos*) on the base of the monument (on the skirting), which makes this characteristic (figs. 1-4). This manner of decorating

stelae is not characteristic merely for this part of Dardania, but also the entire Dardanian region where this motif is most numerous among all decorative-symbolic motifs, except in the southern section where it appears more rarely.³⁵ In addition to stelae, this motif is also present in the central region of Dardania in the form of a decorative border on two cippi from the village of Budisalc near Klina and Gjakova (Serb. Djakovica).³⁶ Such borders can also be found in other sections of Dardania.³⁷ Considering that on the funerary monuments of all Roman provinces this motif was most often utilized in the region of Dardania, the possibility exists that it independently originated in an original form in this area. Probably basing his opinion on this fact, E. Čerškov noted that the source of such a motif in the province of Upper Moesia should most probably be sought in the gravitational center of its territory, i.e. in Kosovo.³⁸

The religious significance of grapevines and ivy are closely tied to the cult of Dionysus, representing his main attributes.³⁹ They are also the attributes of Sabazios, which corresponds to his nature, as he is identified with Dionysus.⁴⁰ Hence, even in the Greek world wide use was of them made in art for symbolic or decorative purposes, leading to their use in pagan and Christian art of the Roman Empire. In the East, where they can be traced to the period of Hellenism, they were frequently used in architecture,⁴¹ and in the West they found great application on funerary monuments, particularly in the Danubian provinces and in Dalmatia.⁴² According to F. Cumonta, the continuation of life in evergreen leaved plants, resistant to the effects of the seasons, was the main reason for depicting ivy on fu-

²⁸ Sergejevski (note 10) 45 ff. Pl. 1 fig. 2; Pl. 3 fig. 1 (a Iapodian urn from the prehistoric period). – cf. Gabričević (note 15) 29 ff. fig. 3 (Roman period monuments).

²⁹ Gabričević (note 15) 297.

³⁰ S. Anamali/F. Prendi, *Vazhdimësia e kulturës ilire në kulturën e hershme mesjetare shqiptare*. Konferenca e pare e studimeve albanologjike, 15–21/11/1962 (Tiranë 1965) 468–475.

³¹ Gabričević (note 10) 89–96, 22–24.

³² M. Tirtja, *Elemente të kulturës ilire të shqiptarët*. Kuvendi i parë i studimeve ilire, Tiranë 15–20/9/1972, Studime ilire 2, Prishtinë 1978, 270 n. 20 Pl. 1.

³³ N. Dudić, *Simboličke predstave na nadgrobnim spomenicima u dolini Južne Morave*. Leskovački zbornik 29, 1989, 29–38 (in the Leskovac and Kumanovo regions); For the Gostivar region, autopsy.

³⁴ Cf. Tirtja (note 32) 270.

³⁵ Cf. F. Papazoglu, *Srednjobalkanska plemena u predrimsko doba*. Djela Akademije Nauka i Umjetnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini 30, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 1, Sarajevo 1969, 156–158, who on the basis of these characteristics and the tectonic composition called the stelae of this region the „Dardanian“ type. – Dobruna-Salih (note 1) 194; 198 fig. 1–11.

³⁶ Dobruna-Salih (note 4) 377 no. 276 fig. 237.

³⁷ Dragojević-Josifovska (note 2) 80, no. 50; 126, no. 127 (from Scupi); P. Petrović (note 7) 95, no. 46 (from Timacum minus). – Dobruna-Salih (note 4) 377 nos. 274; 275; 277 fig. 235; 236; 238.

³⁸ E. Čerškov, *Rimljani na Kosovu i Metohiji* (Beograd 1969) 74.

³⁹ P. D. Dimitrov, *Nadgrobne ploči ot rimsko vreme v severna Blgarija* (Sofija 1942) 67. – G. Bordenache, *Temi e motivi della plastica funeraria di eta Romana nella Moesia Inferior*. Dacia 9, 1965, 264.

⁴⁰ T. Eisele, s. v. *Sabazios*, Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie 4, Leipzig 1909–1915, 232–264.

⁴¹ Dimitrov (note 39) 67–68

⁴² S. Ferri, *Motivi ornamentali nell'arte romana dell Medio basso Danubio* (Roma 1935).

FIG. 3

FIG. 4



nerary monuments, as in this manner it symbolizes immortality. The grapevine has a similar meaning as a symbol of hope in life after death.⁴³ P. D. Dimitrov emphasized that the hopes of the masses were symbolically presented through the use of the grapevine, which was later borrowed by the Christian religion, and its symbolism from monuments related to the circle of the Dionysian religion.⁴⁴ The *kantharos* and *amphora*, from which the grapevines grow, are also symbols belonging to the cult of Dionysus. Reliable evidence for this can be found on the coins of the city of Pharos, with the image of the god Dionysus on the obverse, and his symbols, a grape-bunch and a *kantharos*, on the reverse, as well as on the coinage of the islands of Issa and Chios, where a *kantharos* with a grape bunch and an *amphora* are shown as symbols of Dionysus.⁴⁵

The great amount of use of images of grapevines and ivy on the stelae of Dardania, depicted most often of all floral and other motifs, leads to the hypothesis that a cult of a local and autochthonous deity of life and death, fertility and vegetation, similar to Dionysus, had been widespread in this region, and because of the contacts with Greece, and later Roman, became identified with the Greek Dionysus and the Roman Liber. A simi-

lar situation can be hypothesized for the entire region inhabited by the Illyrians.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the cult of this deity in the Roman period arose from a much older tradition from the prehistoric period. The grapevine itself, as was written about by M. Zaninović (its origin, cultivation, and distribution), was known from ancient times equally to the Illyrians and the Greeks.⁴⁷

From the above, it appears that along with belief in this deity, there was in fact a belief in the afterlife – a belief in a happy and valuable life after death was promised by the Dionysian mysteries, which particularly began to spread after the 2nd century BC. Thus, in the Roman period, the cult of Dionysus very often held the very character of a cult of the dead.⁴⁸ Further, it is considered that the distribution and penetration of the Dionysian representation of the other world is confirmed by the very image of the *krater* with grapevines and ivy that surround funerary monuments.⁴⁹ This is supported by the depiction of two birds on both sides of a *kantharos* pecking at grapes on a stele from Klinja near Peja⁵⁰, which is considered a symbol of the cult of Dionysus.⁵¹ In general, compositions with the depictions of birds interwoven with grape leaves are tied to the Dionysian mysteries; given that the aim is to show an ideal milieu.⁵² On this basis,

⁴³ Cumont (note 12) 220 n. 2; 236 n. 4; 373; 491.

⁴⁴ Dimitrov (note 39) 70.

⁴⁵ M. Zaninović, *Iliri i vinova loza*. Godišnjak Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 13/11, 1976, 267 fig. 1, 2.

⁴⁶ This hypothesis was first presented by C. Patsch, cf. M. Zaninović, *Tri antička reljefa sa Hvara*. *Opuscula Arch.* (Zagreb) 16, 1966, 19 n. 19, and it was accepted by other scientists later.

⁴⁷ Zaninović (note 45) 261 ff.

⁴⁸ A. Bruhl, *Liber Pater* (Paris 1953) 268–271; 309.

⁴⁹ Bruhl (note 48) 318.

⁵⁰ Vulić (note 3) 89 no. 205

⁵¹ V. Jurkič, *Portreti na nadgrobnim stelama zbirke antičkog odjela Arheološkog muzeja Istre u Puli*. *Jadranski zbornik* 8, 1973, 369 n. 23. – G. Bauchenss, *Germania Inferior. Bonn und Umgebung. Corpus signorum Imperii Romani* (further CSIR), *Deutschland* 3/2, Bonn, 1979, 22

⁵² Dimitrov (note 39) 69–70 n. 1; 77. – Bauchenss (note 51) 22.

it must be concluded that the Dionysian beliefs in life after death were strongly held in the region of Dardania.

Pine-cones appear in smaller numbers and only at certain sites, both in shallow and full relief. As such, they usually decorated stelae, such as those found at Peja (Serb. Peć) and Prizren, where they were located in various places (most often as the central acroteria of a hemispherical or straight pediment) (figs. 1, 3), and in two cases within the niche between two busts and at the base of the stele (skirting) above a kantharos with a grapevine with grape bunches. In two cases, this motif was located on other types of monuments; on the previously mentioned altar from Prishtina, where it decorated the central section of the gable in the crown on the lateral sides of the monument, and as the terminal section of the cippus from Peja, where it was of large dimensions and had been carved independently in full relief together with the base.⁵³ While the use of this motif was limited in the central part of Dardania, where it appeared together with a grapevine motif on all stele examples, it was the most common decorative-symbolic motif of stelae from the southern part of this region, where it was located as a part of the central acroteria. Four examples of large pine-cones carved in full relief as the top of cippi were also present at *Scupi*.⁵⁴ Out of all the Roman provinces, this motif was most frequently used in this part of Dardania, and it thus became a characteristic motif of this area, just as was the grapevine for the central and northern sections. In contrast to this, not a single example of a pinecone decoration is known from northern Dardania.

This motif, like many other motifs of Roman sepulchral sculpture had, along with its decorative features, a symbolic meaning that became lost with time. The pine and pine-cones are related to the cult of the dead,⁵⁵ and as is cited by F. Cumont, they symbolized immortality and resurrection in funerary art.⁵⁶ As such, they

are tied to several Phrygian deities from Asia Minor. Pine-cones, like the fruit of all conifers, were dedicated to Attis,⁵⁷ while the tree was related to the goddess Cybele⁵⁸. Thus the pine tree and pine-cones played an important role in this cult, representing one of the main attributes of this pair of deities. Similarly, the pine-cone was the most important attribute of the deities Sabazius and Mene (the latter holding a cone), meaning that it held a significant place in the Sabazian cult.⁵⁹ As can be seen, the pine tree and pine-cone were symbols related to the cults of Cybele, Attis and Sabazius, which cultivated a belief in the afterlife among their faithful.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the pine tree and pine-cone also played a certain role in the cult of Dionysus, this being one of his attributes.⁶¹

Basing his argument on this, F. Cumont noted that areas with large numbers of sepulchral monuments with depictions of pine cones represented the spread of Anatolian religions, meaning that the deceased to whom the monument referred had belonged in their lifetimes to the mentioned Phrygian cults, particularly that of the divine pair Cybele-Attis.⁶² In our case, this should refer to the southern part of Dardania, where this motif is more numerous and where Oriental influences from Asia Minor are apparent. It is possible that through the veterans and soldiers of the legion *VII Claudia pia fidelis*, which had units stationed in *Scupi*,⁶³ as well as an immigrant civil population from Asia Minor, deities had been introduced from this area, the province of Phrygia, although to the present date not a single figural depiction of these deities has been found other than Mithras. In the central section these would primarily be worshippers of the cult of Dionysus, as is shown by the epigraphic data from these monuments, which did not exhibit the traits of emigrants from the Orient.⁶⁴ This cult attribute in fact indicates the widespread distribution of this deity in Dardania and the eschatology of his believers.

⁵³ Vulić (note 3) 89 no. 205; 106 n. 254. – Dobruna-Salih (note 1). – E. Dobruna-Salih, *Borova šišarka kao dekorativni motiv sepulkralne plastike rimskog doba i njezina simbolička tradicija u području Dardanije*. Sašlov zbornik. Arh. Vestnik 41, 1990, 235–237 fig. 3; 4; 5. – Dobruna-Salih (note 4) 155 fig. 120 (stele with pine-cone from Peja).

⁵⁴ Dragojević-Josifovska (note 2) passim. – Dobruna-Salih (note 53) 235–237 fig. 1, 2 (stele); 237–238 fig. 6–8 (pine cones). – D. Kamedevska-Mihajlova/V. Lilčić, *Nadgrobniot cippus ot Karpoš i osvrt na slični naodi vo Makedonija*. Živa Ant. 43, 1993, 152 fig. 1 (pine cone).

⁵⁵ M. Suić, *Liburnijski nadgrobnni spomenik ("Liburnski cipus")*. Vjesnik Arh. i Hist. Dalmatinsku 53, 1950–51 (1952) 65.

⁵⁶ Cumont (note 12) 219.

⁵⁷ Cumont (note 12) 219.

⁵⁸ R. Marić, *Antički kultovi naše zemlje* (Beograd 1937) 76.

⁵⁹ Cumont (note 12) 221. – J. Medini, *Sabazijev kult u rimskoj provinciji Dalmaciji*. Vjesnik Arh. i Hist. Dalmatinsku 74, 1980, 68; 70; 73.

⁶⁰ M. Suić, *Orijentalni kultovi u antičkom Zadru*. Diadora 3, 1965, 50; 51. – Medini (note 59) 84.

⁶¹ B. Schröder, *Studien zu den Grabdenkmälern der römischen Kaiserzeit*. Bonner Jahrb. 108/109, 1902, 74.

⁶² Cumont (note 12) 22.

⁶³ S. Kojić, *Jedan prilog proučavanju religije Ilira u rimsko doba*. Starinar n. s. 13/14, 1962/63 (1965) 226.

⁶⁴ Mirdita (note 24) passim.

In terms of the symbolism of both of these floral motifs, it is interesting that even in today's folk tradition the pine and the grapevine have preserved their symbolic meaning in the cult of the dead, which had changed over time. Thus, love ballads among the Balkan peoples mention how the young man after death was transformed into an evergreen plant (the symbol of pride and heroism), and the young woman into a grapevine (the symbol of fertility).⁶⁵

Figural motifs are represented only on two stelae from two separate locations. One was an image of a rider in a composition of the so-called "Thracian horseman" on a stele found in the village of Uglar near Prishtina (on the base). The other was in the main relief field of a stele found at the site of Margegaj near Tropoja (in Albania) near Gjakova (Kosovo), which represents the westernmost yet discovered funerary monument in this part of Dardania (fig. 4).⁶⁶ In both cases the monument was framed by the usual motif of grapevines growing from a vase depicted at the bottom of the monument. Such a depiction of a rider is more common in the southern part of Dardania.⁶⁷ However, in this example the rider is depicted alone, without the remaining elements or accompanying images, such as are found on all depictions of riders on square cippi with a pyramidal top from the eastern and southeastern parts of the province of Dalmatia, around the present-day region of the central course of the Drina River, the Užice area, and Pljevlja.⁶⁸

The religious significance of this rider, who belongs among the divine horsemen⁶⁹, is clear; he represents the *heros*, meaning heroified or divinified ancestor or ancestors, because of which the name *Heros* is used exclusively on many icons.⁷⁰ He also represented the heroified deceased on funerary monuments: the deceased indi-

vidual himself, where the dedication to a *heros* (*heroi*) can also be found, or a family *heros*.⁷¹ Accordingly, this was a cult of ancestors and heroes, which indicates that it had an autochthonic character.

Two types of monuments document that a cult of a hero-rider, conceptualized in the same form as the "Thracian heros", existed in the region of Illyria. One type consisted of two dedicatory inscriptions from the temple of Aesculapius in the city of Lambaesis in northern Africa, which was dedicated by a legate (later consul), originally from the city of Risinium in the province of Dalmatia, to the rider *Medaus*, the Lares of Risinium. His character was determined by M. Garašanin, who established that this was a common ancestor, a hero to the inhabitants of the city⁷². The other monument was a votive slab with the depiction of a rider in the iconography of the "Thracian heros" hunting, from the region of Dardania, discovered in the village of Buljesovac near Vranje. On the basis of the inscription below this depiction of a divinified hero-rider: *Deo Tatoni pa(trio)...*, M. Suić, who correctly deciphered it, noted that "... the heroified figure in the "Thracian rider" composition represents, in addition to the other cases, one and the same deity, which is closely connected to the ancestor cult in the territory of the Balkan Illyrians, and particularly to the specific region where the monument was found",⁷³ meaning in Dardania. Thus in the cases of *Medaus* and *Tato*, this was a hero of the broader community.⁷⁴ On the basis of this, noted Garašanin, it could be concluded that among the Illyrians in the broadest sense there had existed a deity of the ancestors conceived of and shown as a horseman, iconographically very close to the "Thracian rider", and probably also in content; this deity, however, bore various names, such as *Tato*

⁶⁵ Mbledhës të hershëm të folklorit shqiptar 1, Tiranë 1961, 33.

⁶⁶ Vulić (note 1, 1931) 159 no. 520. – Dobruna-Salih (note 1) 200 fig. 11 (stele from Uglar). – B. Jubani, *Rrethi Tropojës*. Buletini arkeologjik 4, Tiranë 1974, 205 Pl. 1. – Dobruna-Salih (note 4) 330 No. 133 fig. 125 (stele from Margegaj).

⁶⁷ Dragojević-Josifovska (note 2) 38, nos. 81, 88, 236; Dobruna-Salih (note 4) 329, no. 74, fig. 66, no. 195, fig. 175.

⁶⁸ C. Patsch, *Arheološko-epigrafska istraživanja povijesti rimske pokrajine Dalmacije*. Glasnik Zemaljskog Muz. Sarajevo 19, 1907, 452–453 fig. 6; 463–464 fig. 86. – Vulić (note 1, 1947–48) 283, 303–305, nos. 60, 61–64, 66–67. – D. Sergejevski, *Rimska groblja na Drini*. Glasnik Zemaljskog Muz. Bosna i Hercegovina 46, 1934, 17 no. 12 Pls. 5–6 figs. 24–26. – R. Zotović, *Rimski nadgrobni spomenici istočnog dela provincije Dalmacije* (Užice 1995) 72–73 nos. 129; 130; 133; 135; 143; 147; 152; 153; 155; 156.

⁶⁹ E. Will, *Le relief culturel Greco-romain* (Paris 1955) with cited literature.

⁷⁰ N. Vulić, *Trčki konjanik i druge ikone iz antičkog doba*. Spomenik 98 (77), 1941–48, 285. – M. Garašanin, *O problemu starobalkanskog konjanika*. Godišnjak Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 13/11, 1976, 280.

⁷¹ G. I. Kazarow, s.v. *Heros*, Pauly's Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Supplement 3, 1918, 1132–1148, who distinguished two types of monuments with depictions of *heros*: on votive monuments an autochthonic Thracian deity was represented, and on the sepulchral monuments, a heroified deceased; the same opinion was held by A. Cermanović-Kuzmanović, *Die Denkmäler der thrakischen Heros in Jugoslawien und das Problem des thrakischen Reitergottes*. Arch. Jugoslavica 4, 1963, 31 ff. – A. Buday, *Das problem des sog. thrakischen Reiters*. Dolgozatok 2, 1926, 56 ff., who considered this type of rider to be a pan-Balkan phenomenon, exclusively identified with the deceased or the dedicant; Garašanin (note 70) 281.

⁷² Garašanin (note 70) 273–274.

⁷³ M. Suić, *Tato – ilirski deus Patrius*. Starinar n. s. 11, 1960, 93–96.

⁷⁴ Garašanin (note 70) 275, 281.

and *Medaus*.⁷⁵ Such a hypothesis is supported by the numerous funerary monuments from the eastern and southeastern parts of the province of Dalmatia, where Illyrian anthroponyms have particularly been noted, as well as examples of stelae from the Dardanian region where, for instance, at Uglar the name *Nanea* was mentioned, which was quite local and connected exclusively to Dardania. The appearance of such monuments with the depiction of a horseman in these regions, as well as in Pelagonia and in the central Danubian region can certainly not be related in any manner to some domination by Thracian settlers, which goes further to confirm the existence of a cult of hero-riders distributed throughout the Thracian territory and in those sections of the Balkan region that were primarily Illyrian.⁷⁶

A further indication that this cult existed among the Illyrians even before the Roman period is indicated by the depiction of horsemen on the “Iapodian urns” of the pre-Roman period, where those that were depicted nude should be related to the heroification of the deceased.⁷⁷ A. Stipčević noted that the same meaning must have been attached to the figurines of naked riders found at Nesactium and present-day Novo Mesto. A generalized cult of heroes, also from this period, was documented by this scientist, citing examples from “princely graves”, which have been uncovered throughout the entire Illyrian territory.⁷⁸ The founders of cities were celebrated at that time among the Illyrians as they were among the Greeks.⁷⁹ Accordingly, in areas inhabited by Illyrians, even early on in the pre-Roman period, a cult of the hero had existed; or rather a cult of a heroified ancestor had already been considerably developed.⁸⁰

From the above, it is apparent that, in general, on the Balkan Peninsula there existed a demiurge-horseman most closely related to the cult of ancestors and heroes.⁸¹ This cult was widely distributed in this area,

and in the future. As was noted by M. Garašanin, it must be considered from this broader, and not merely regional, aspect. Its appearance on funerary monuments should also be viewed in this context, where it represents the deification of the deceased, meaning the deceased individual is identified with a deity.⁸² This is illustrated very well by the example from Tropoja, where the childish portrait characteristics of the rider correspond to the age of the deceased to whom the monument was dedicated, a boy only 11 years of age. D. Sergejevski emphasized, for similar depictions on cinerary monuments (*cippi*) along the Drina, that although they are depicted according to a Greek model, their depiction also corresponded to an Illyrian belief. Clearly showing that belief in the afterlife was similar in many aspects among both the Greeks and the Illyrians, as well as in general among the autochthonic inhabitants of the Balkans.⁸³

In this case, although at present only a few monuments with depictions of riders are available (only two examples in fact), they are nonetheless very significant as they offer data about the existence of a cult of the hero-rider, which in fact represents a cult of the deceased in the central section of Dardania.

On the basis of the above, the following can be concluded:

- The noted motifs, as important symbols of sepulchral relief, do not merely allow us to uncover the religious affiliation of the deceased to a given cult, but also to define the eschatological beliefs in the region of Dardania throughout the Roman period (1st–4th cent.), which had previously existed in the prehistoric period.
- In the central section of Dardania, in the classical period, those cults were worshipped that promised their believers more about life after death, which was also present throughout all of Dardania.

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⁷⁵ M.-D. Garašanin, *Istorija Crne Gore 1* (Titograd 1967) 187.

⁷⁶ Garašanin (note 70) 277–278.

⁷⁷ Sergejevski (note 10) Pl. 3 fig. 1 – Stipčević (note 10) 63–64.

⁷⁸ A. Stipčević, *Kult heroiziranog pokojnika u ilirskoj religiji*. Simpozijum “Duhovna kultura Ilira” (Herceg Novi, 4–6/11/1982). Posebna izdanja Akademije Nauke i Umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine 67, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja 11, Sarajevo 1984, 216–218.

⁷⁹ D. Rendić-Miočević, “*Ionios-to genos Illyrios*” i novci grčko-ilirskih kovnica na Jadranu. *Adriatica praeistorica et antiqua. Miscellanea Gregorio Novak dicata* (Zagreb 1970) 367. – Stipčević (note 78) 218.

⁸⁰ Stipčević (note 78) 216; 220.

⁸¹ F. Benoit, *L'heroisation équestre* (Aix-en-Provence 1954) passim, especially p. 63.

⁸² Garašanin (note 70) 281. – Garašanin (note 75) 186.

⁸³ Sergejevski (note 10) 68.