

## Cernunnos in Slovenia?

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### Izvilleček

Na nagrobniku s sedmimi doprsji iz 2. ali 3. stoletja po Kr., ki je bil najden zelo verjetno v Črnomlju v Beli Krajini, so na obeh stranskih ploskvah ohranjene slabo vidne reliefne upodobitve. Na desni strani je prikazan moški z rogovi in kopiti ter pes, ki ga grize v stegno. Na levi zgoraj je upodobljen konjenik s kopjem v roki, spodaj pa tri osebe; srednja je ženska, pred katero stoji moški s kopjem.

Peter Petru je zelo poškodovane reliefe razložil kot prizore, povezane s kultom keltskega boga Cernuna in žrtvovanjem človeka, vendar podrobnosti, ki jih je mogoče razločiti, ne ustrezajo njegovi interpretaciji. Gre za upodobitev mita o Aktajonu, ki ga je Artemida/Diana spremenila v jelena in so ga raztrgali lastni psi.

**Ključne besede:** rimska doba, Slovenija, Črnomelj, Panonija, Cernunos, Aktajon

### Abstract

A tombstone with seven busts (second or early third century AD), which was most probably discovered at Črnomelj in Bela Krajina, displays poorly visible side reliefs. On the right side a human figure with horns and hooves and a dog trying to bite his thigh are depicted. On the left a horseman holding a spear is represented in the upper field, while in the lower part three figures are depicted, of whom the middle one is a woman; a man with a spear is standing in front of her.

Peter Petru explained the badly preserved figures as scenes referring to the Celtic god Cernunnos and to human sacrifice performed in his honour. However, these depictions would better correspond to the episodes from the myth of Actaeon.

**Keywords:** Roman period, Slovenia, Črnomelj, Panonija, Cernunnos, Actaeon

### THE TOMBSTONE FROM BELA KRAJINA WITH PORTRAITS AND SIDE RELIEFS

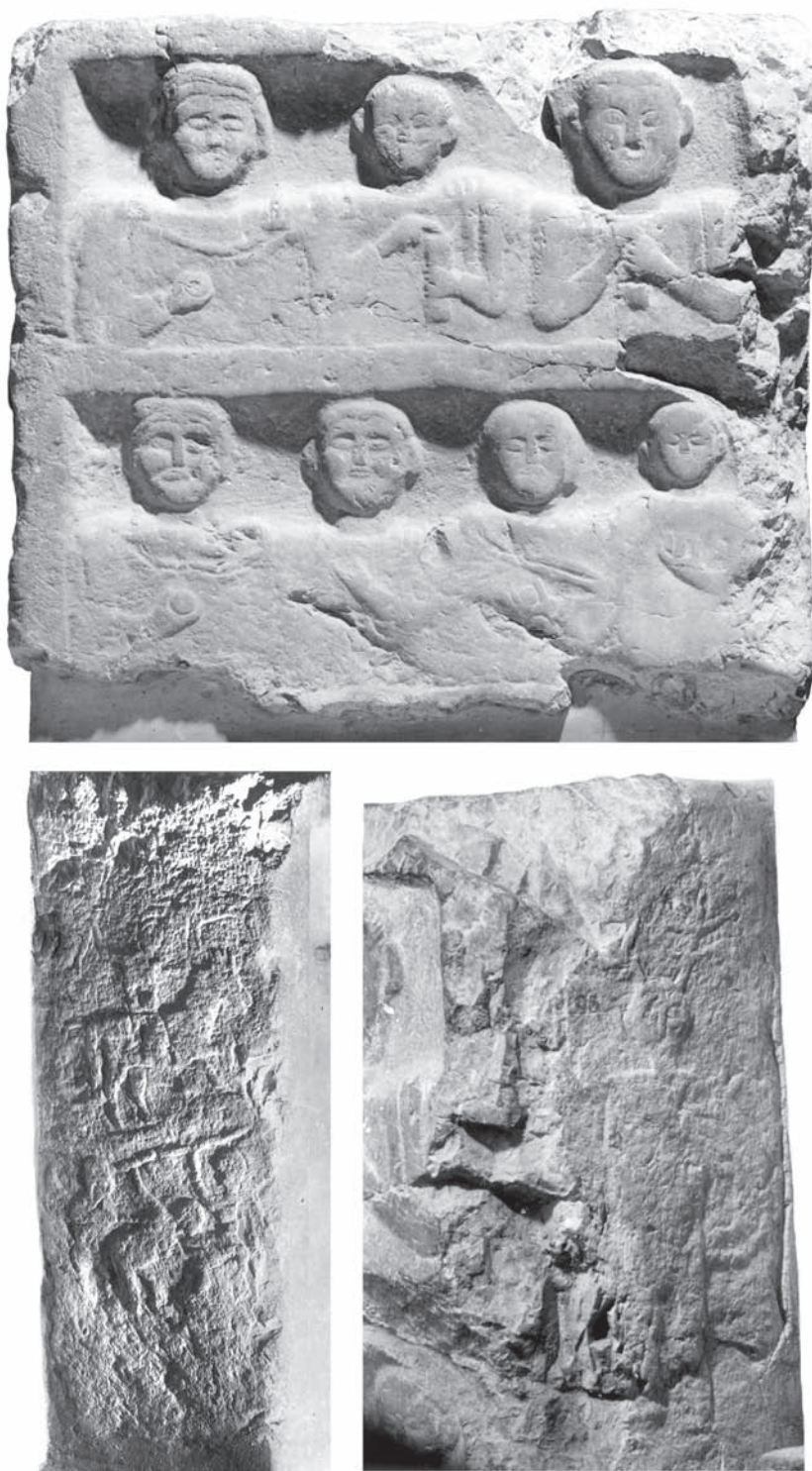
In the Roman *lapidarium* of the National Museum of Slovenia an interesting tombstone with seven busts is on display, of local grey limestone and of rustic workmanship, probably from the second century AD. Although its exact provenance has long been regarded as unknown, recently evaluated archival data, as well as similar stelae with portraits, make it almost certain that it originates from Črnomelj in Bela Krajina.<sup>1</sup> The upper part of the tombstone terminates in a rectangular frame,

with two simply hollowed fields of portraits preserved, while the lower, inscribed, part is broken off (75 × 85 × 31.5 cm). Its surface is badly damaged. The three portraits in the upper field represent a mother, father, and their son in the middle, while the four busts in the lower field may represent their other children, of whom the first might be their grown-up daughter, the second a son, the third a daughter, and the last a small boy (*fig. 1*).

The main point of interest is represented by very badly preserved reliefs on both side panels; those on the left are divided into an upper and a lower field. Above, a rider is depicted, brandishing

<sup>1</sup> *AIJ* 492 = *RINMS* 149 = *ILSI* 167; Lovenjak 2008, 90–91. Cf. Ferri 1933, 105, fig. 109 on p. 121, who erro-

neously considered all stelae in the National Museum as originating from Emona.



*Fig. 1: Tombstone from Bela Krajina, probably Črnomelj: AIJ 492 = RINMS 149 = ILSI 167.  
Sl. 1: Nagrobnik iz Bele Krajine, verjetno iz Črnomlja: AIJ 492 = RINMS 149 = ILSI 167.*

a spear in his right hand. Below him three figures are represented: the middle one is a woman bending down towards something at her feet, while in front of her a figure holding something (perhaps

a spear?) in his raised hand is depicted. Behind the woman there is an unidentifiable figure, not only badly carved but also much eroded. On the right side panel a human figure with antlers and

hooves is depicted, and a dog trying to bite his thigh (fig. 2).

Peter Petru devoted an article specifically to the badly preserved side scenes, which had not



Fig. 2: Drawing of the side reliefs.  
Sl. 2: Risba reliefov na stranskih ploskvah.

been noticed by the scholars who had published the tombstone earlier.<sup>2</sup> He explained the reliefs as depicting human sacrifice, performed by the central female figure on the left, below the horseman. This rite should in his opinion be related to the cult of Cernunnos, the Celtic god with antlers (allegedly represented on the right side panel), which would have still survived into the Roman period.<sup>3</sup> His thesis found general acceptance not only among Slovenian, but also among foreign scholars.<sup>4</sup>

Recently Mitja Guštin in an important article analyzed remains of figural art among the Taurisci, the Celtic people living south of the Karavanke Mts., particularly in Dolenjska (Lower Carniola). He accepted Petru's identification of the main figure with antlers as Cernunnos (similar to some of the depictions on the rocks in Val Cammonica), quoting, like Petru, as the best analogy the depiction of the god on the Gundestrup cauldron (fig. 3).<sup>5</sup> Both scholars seem to see details in these reliefs that can no longer be discerned and could at best be declared ambiguous. Somehow differently, Marina Miličević Bradač, also citing Petru, refers to the figure as an antlered man, a man-deer, who may have been able to communicate with a god such as Cernunnos, a "Master of animals", in a

<sup>2</sup> Saria in *AJ* 492, and Ferri 1933, *cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Petru 1961.

<sup>4</sup> Euskirchen 1997; Hachmann 1990, 831.

<sup>5</sup> Guštin 2006, 125–127.



Fig. 3: Cernunnos on the Gundestrup cauldron. From: Hachmann 1990, Insert 10. 2.  
Sl. 3: Cernunos s kotla iz Gundestrupa. Iz: Hachmann 1990, priloga 10, 2.



similar way as shamans did. Regenerative power of antlers could be perceived as symbolizing the eternal regeneration cycle.<sup>6</sup>

In the course of the revision of all Roman stone monuments in the Museum *lapidarium* for publication, my attention was also drawn to this stele with portraits. Clearly, it would have been entirely incongruous that a human sacrifice, as a currently performed rite, could be depicted on a tombstone from Roman Pannonia, or, indeed, from anywhere in the Roman Empire. Stanko Kokole kindly suggested that the scenes be interpreted as three episodes from the myth of Actaeon.<sup>7</sup> However, it would not be impossible that some time in the future a dedication or an image of Cernunnos will also appear in Slovenia, perhaps on a Roman period altar or depicted on a Celtic artefact.<sup>8</sup>

### CELTIC GODS, HUMAN SACRIFICE, AND CERNUNNOS

The peoples known by the classical writers as the Celts worshipped many gods and goddesses, and so did the Celtic Taurisci, which is well confirmed by the numerous Celtic deities epigraphically attested in the regions of Celeia and Poetovio.<sup>9</sup> Some are noted or described by Greek and Latin authors, and these testimonies have been published by Ioannes Zwicker<sup>10</sup> and recently, in two excellent monographs, by Andreas Hofeneder.<sup>11</sup> Caesar, who fought against the Celts in free Gaul for eight years during his proconsulship in both Galliae (Cisalpine and Transalpine) and Illyricum, and eventually subdued most of them, is often cited as an important authority on Celtic gods, cults and rituals. He described their religion in the sixth book of his *Gallic War*, where he also mentioned the importance of human sacrifice among the Celts, who had practised it before they

were conquered by the Romans.<sup>12</sup> Reports of the ritual killing of war prisoners, for example, were also recorded for the Celtic Scordisci, who allegedly “sacrificed human blood to their gods, and drank from human skulls”.<sup>13</sup>

To sacrifice a human being was believed to be most important when human life had been gravely endangered, as in the case of wars, natural catastrophes, or diseases and epidemics. The divinity responsible for having saved a human life could only be appeased by another man’s life. Caesar called the gods of the Celts by Roman names, and it can legitimately be asked to what extent such a Roman interpretation was at all adequate. He claimed that Mercury was the most popular god among them, since the Celts regarded him as the inventor of all the crafts, a divine guide on their travels, and a patron of commerce. According to Caesar, they further worshipped Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva, and he added that the concepts they had of these gods did not differ much from the ideas of other peoples about them.<sup>14</sup> Tacitus made a similar statement concerning the religion of the Germans, who would also have worshipped above all Mercury, and next to him Hercules and Mars. On certain occasions they would sacrifice a human being to Mercury.<sup>15</sup>

Caesar’s narrative can be supplemented by the data in Lucan, who described the three main gods of the Celts with their Celtic names: Esus, Taranis, and Teutates, claiming that all three of them demanded human sacrifice.<sup>16</sup> This passage is accompanied by *scholia* containing a short commentary, in which Esus is equated both with Mars and with Mercury. Taranis, who was regarded as being the supreme god of the Celts, was made equal to Jupiter.<sup>17</sup> He is often represented with a wheel and may have been the same as Caesar’s Dis Pater. Caesar mentioned that, according to the teachings of the Druids, Dis Pater would have been the father

<sup>6</sup> Miličević Bradač 2002, 23; cf. p. 13. See also Lajoye 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Mentioned by Kastelic 1998, 532–533; I owe the reference to Prof. Bojan Djurić. It may be interesting to add, that according to Miličević Bradač, *ibid.*, 26, it would be quite possible that some ritual reminiscence was preserved in the Actaeon story.

<sup>8</sup> The identification of a head on a vessel from the third century BC from Novo mesto with Cernunnos does not seem to be correct, see Križ 2009, 157–159.

<sup>9</sup> See several relevant chapters in Šašel Kos 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Zwicker 1934.

<sup>11</sup> Hofeneder 2005; Hofeneder 2008.

<sup>12</sup> He dedicated ch. 16 to this topic.

<sup>13</sup> Florus 1. 39; cf. Amm. Marcel. 27. 4. 4; Papazoglu 1978, 507 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Bell. Gal.* 6. 17.1. See, for an exhaustive commentary, Hofeneder 2005, 198 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Germ.* 9.

<sup>16</sup> *De bello civili (Pharsalia)* 1. 444–446: ... *et quibus immitis placatur sanguine diro Teutates, horrensque feris altaribus Esus (var. Hesus, Aesus) et Taranis Scythicae non mitior ara Dianae.* Cf. Hofeneder 2005, 295 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Commenta Lucani*, p. 32 ed. Usener (cited after Zwicker 1934, LI 18, LII 19); for problems concerning this identification, see Wissowa 1916–1919, 40–45.



Fig. 4: Human sacrifice depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron. From: Hachmann 1990, Insert 9. 1.  
Sl. 4: Upodobitev žrtvovanja človeka na kotlu iz Gundestrupa. Iz: Hachmann 1990, priloga 9, 1.

of the Celtic nation.<sup>18</sup> Teutates protected people in war and in peace, and was equated with Mars.<sup>19</sup> A human sacrifice in honour of Esus has been described in the following way by the scholiast: a victim would be hung on a tree and wounded in order to bleed to death, the tree perhaps symbolizing the tree of life. Teutates demanded that the victim be thrown head first into a cauldron full of water, to die from suffocation.<sup>20</sup> Such a scene is also represented on the Gundestrup cauldron (fig. 4). These were pan-Celtic divinities, and all three of them are also attested in Noricum and/or the Celtic regions of Pannonia.<sup>21</sup> Celtic gods are in general represented only rarely in reliefs or in sculpture.<sup>22</sup> It is unusual that Cernunnos is not included among these important Celtic divinities; however, he may be concealed either under Caesar's Mercury or Apollo, or both.

Although Cernunnos is not mentioned in any of the cited passages, he is known from several altars found in Celtic provinces.<sup>23</sup> Several depictions of

Cernunnos exist and his identification has never been disputed on the basis of the Paris and Reims altars.<sup>24</sup> He is usually portrayed as sitting on the ground with crossed legs, accompanied by snakes, a deer and a bull. This specific way of sitting on the ground was characteristic of the Celts during their meals, for example, and was noted by several Greek writers as something unknown in the Mediterranean world, where chairs, low stools, banks and beds were in use.<sup>25</sup> Cernunnos is sometimes represented also with a purse or a bag of money, from which gold coins are pouring out, which is reminiscent of Mercury. Mercury's traits were recognized in Esus, but could obviously be partly identified also in Cernunnos, and Cernunnos is indeed represented seated between Mercury and Apollo on the Reims monument (fig. 5).<sup>26</sup> One aspect of his worship may have concerned fertility,<sup>27</sup> while possibly he was also a healing divinity, if the presence of a serpent and Apollo could have any significance

<sup>18</sup> *Bell. Gall.* 6. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Duval 1958 (1989), 275–287, especially 282–284.

<sup>20</sup> See n. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Scherrer 2004; Piccottini 1996; Šašel Kos 1999, 42–43; Hainzmann, Pochmarski 1994, 268–269 no. 101.

<sup>22</sup> Frey 2007a.

<sup>23</sup> Representations of Cernunnos have been collected by Hachmann 1990, 827–832. They are mainly limited to Galliae; cf., e.g., a recently published new discovery of his statuette from Côte-d'Or: Deyts, Venault 2004. The sup-

posed depiction of Cernunnos on an altar from Sucidava in Dacia (Sanie 1987), remains in my opinion doubtful.

<sup>24</sup> Espérandieu 1911, no. 3133; see now Altjohann 2003.

<sup>25</sup> By Posidonius, preserved in Athenaeus 4. 36; by Diodorus from Sicily 5. 28. 4, and by Strabo 4. 4. 3 C 197.

<sup>26</sup> Blázquez 1988, IV 2, 562, fig. 13 (= Espérandieu 1913, no. 3653); De Vries 1961, 104–107; Bauchhens 1984.

<sup>27</sup> De Vries 1961, 106; Hatt 1989; Blázquez 1988. See also Frey 2007b, p. 15; fig. 16 on p. 22.



Fig. 5: Cernunnos seated between Mercury and Apollo on the Reims monument. From: Blázquez 1988, IV 2, 562, fig. 13.  
Sl. 5: Cernunos med Merkurjem in Apolonom na oltarju iz Reimsa. Iz: Blázquez 1988, IV 2, 562, sl. 13.

in this sense.<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that the god is most often represented as seated. As is clear from the Gundestrup cauldron, his cult, too, was not unfamiliar with the human sacrifice that seems to have been characteristic of many Celtic divinities.

Rites that included sacrificing humans have been archaeologically confirmed at several cult sites in the Celtic provinces, and they must have also been practised in Noricum and southwestern Pannonia. However, any such interpretation of archaeological remains can easily be overhasty and should be carefully pondered. There was a great diversity among various Celtic, or Gallic,<sup>29</sup> peoples in terms of culture; some were more and some were less “civilized”. Each had their own identity that was also reflected in their religion(s),<sup>30</sup> but in general it could be claimed that their comprehension of “sacred” was not unlike the attitudes to the divine of Greeks and Romans. However, the majority of

Celtic peoples originally had no sanctuaries but square enclosures, separated from the secular world by ditches and walls; they included a sacred wood, a sacred pit and an altar. There were sacred places at lakes, (thermal) springs, rivers, and caves. In a similar way as the Mediterranean peoples, the Celts sacrificed to the gods most of all domestic animals and ritually offered them weapons.<sup>31</sup> It is not at all easy to identify human sacrifices, since corpses discovered at a certain site or mass burials could be warriors killed in combats or a consequence of large-scale epidemics. Criminals could be executed either ritually, and sacrificed to a deity, or in a secular context.

Perhaps the shaft-like cave of Durezza, discovered near Warmbad Villach (in Slovenian Toplice), an Iron Age site close to Villach (Beljak), the ancient Santicum (later an important Roman settlement in the territory of Virunum), was possibly the scene of human sacrifices, as could be indicated by the remains of at least 138 human skeletons and sacrificed animals, particularly also over 45 dogs. A dog is also depicted in the scene of the

<sup>28</sup> De Vries 1961, 107, explained the snake in the usual way as a custodian of underground riches.

<sup>29</sup> They were called Celts by the Greek writers, and Galli by the Latin writing Romans.

<sup>30</sup> Maier 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Brunaux 2006.



human sacrifice on the Gundestrup cauldron. The latest analyses of the excavated skeletons, bones, and other material cannot confirm with certainty that the cave had indeed served as a site of ritual human sacrifice, rather than a place of burial. If it was a sacred site, the cave should be linked to the cult of fertility divinities, or else to the underground daemons from whom people wished to be protected.<sup>32</sup> Human sacrifice may have been practised elsewhere in the southeastern Alpine and southern Pannonian regions, as perhaps also at the late La Tène site at Frauenberg near Flavia Solva, where a large sacred area has been partly excavated. However, any interpretation of the complex site at Frauenberg must still be regarded as preliminary, and, for the time being, hypothetical. In the Roman period a sanctuary of Isis (Noreia?) was built there.<sup>33</sup>

The Romans, too, used to ritually perform human sacrifice – although exceptionally – even as late as the first century BC, when a Celtic and a Greek couple were buried alive.<sup>34</sup> A similar ritual had been carried out twice before that; it was mentioned or alluded to several times in classical literature,<sup>35</sup> and explained by Cassius Dio (Zonaras). He noted that it had once been prophesied that Rome would be conquered by the Celts or Greeks respectively.<sup>36</sup> However, sacrificing a human being was officially forbidden by the Roman state in 97 BC,<sup>37</sup> and cruel rites involving human sacrifice that were dictated by the Celtic religion – as it was taught by the Druids – were specifically forbidden by Augustus.<sup>38</sup> From that date onwards it is unthinkable that such a rite – as a possible reality – would have been depicted on a Roman tombstone. Tombstones, funerary stelae, cinerary urns, and sarcophagi were often richly decorated, very often also with scenes from Greek and Roman mythology; by then the reality of human sacrifice was long forgotten.

<sup>32</sup> Gleirscher 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Tiefengraber 1998. It is not at all easy to correctly assess archaeological remains of hypothesized Celtic cult places; see also Schrettle 2007, and other literature he cited.

<sup>34</sup> Várhelyi 2007.

<sup>35</sup> References collected by Várhelyi, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> 8. 19. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Under the consuls Cn. Cornelius Lentulus and P. Licinius Crassus: Pliny, *N. h.* 30. 12; cf. 28. 12, where he mentions the burial of a Greek man and a woman in the cattle market at Rome, in “our age”.

<sup>38</sup> Suet., *Vita Claudii* 25. 5; cf. Zwicker 1934, 58; cf. 63.

## ACTAEON

Actaeon was a mythical hero from Thebes in Boeotia, a son of the priestly herdsman Aristaeus and of Autonoe, the sister of Semele (who was the mother of the god Dionysus, begot by Zeus). Both were daughters of Cadmus, a mythical king of Thebes, hence Actaeon was a descendant of the Theban royal house. Like Achilles, he was brought up by the centaur Chiron, who taught him the art of hunting. Actaeon was an unsurpassable hunter, and according to the mythical story he was punished by Artemis for a grave offence, which is variously transmitted in various classical texts. On the basis of collected evidence, Lamar R. Lacy concluded that it is not possible to distinguish three chronologically defined versions, as was postulated by earlier commentators. It had been supposed that originally the archaic Actaeon would have aspired to his aunt Semele's hand, thus competing with Zeus, who eventually became the father of Dionysus.<sup>39</sup> In another, possibly classical, version Actaeon would have boasted of his hunting abilities and wanted to compete with Artemis, the divine hunter. This act expressed Actaeon's *hubris*, for which he had to be punished.<sup>40</sup> According to the most common story, perhaps Hellenistic, Actaeon, while hunting in the woods, was transformed into a stag for having unintentionally come across Artemis taking a bath.<sup>41</sup>

However, this scheme is disproved by Apollodorus in his *Library* of Greek mythology (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), whose narrative is based on early authors. He summarized two old versions of the myth, and his text reads as follows: “Actaeon, the son of Autonoe and Aristaeon, whom Chiron taught the art of hunting, was later devoured by his own dogs on Mt. Cithaeron. He died in this manner, as Acusilaus says, because Zeus cherished wrath against him for having courted Semele, or, as the majority says, because he saw Artemis bathing”.<sup>42</sup> Paraphrased, the story continues that Actaeon stared at Artemis, surprised by her beauty, but her virginity was thus offended and she changed him into a stag; his fifty hounds pursued him and tore him to pieces. “The majority” clearly refers to the current and the most widespread story, since Acusilaus is expressly cited as the author of

<sup>39</sup> Preserved in Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliothèque* 3. 30–32.

<sup>40</sup> Euripides, *Bacchae* 337–340; 1290–1292.

<sup>41</sup> Apollodorus, 3. 30 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*, 3. 30–31.



Fig. 6: Fragmentary depiction of Actaeon from the town tower at Ptuj, the so-called Povoden's Museum. From: Conze 1875, Pl. VII/2.

Sl. 6: Poškodovana upodobitev Aktajona, vzdana v Povodnov stolp na Ptuj. Iz: Conze 1875, t. VII/2.

a different version.<sup>43</sup> This version of the story is certainly pre-Hellenistic; it is also preserved in Callimachus (who only alluded to it), as well as in Latin by Ovid.<sup>44</sup>

Diodorus from Sicily mentions yet another version of the myth, according to which Actaeon, upon seeing Artemis bathing naked in a spring, wanted to become her consort.<sup>45</sup> Actaeon is also attested as one of the tutelary heroes of Plataea,<sup>46</sup> where a spring sacred to Artemis is located, the site of his offence. He should perhaps best be explained as a righteous hunter, who was tragically induced by the sight of the bathing goddess to try to make himself her consort. This and/or his boasting signify a sacrilegious transgression of the ritually imposed hunter's deference to Artemis that had to be severely punished.<sup>47</sup> In a society where hunting was an important activity, the cult of Artemis was of great significance, and all rites connected with it should be carried out according to ancestral customs. She played a significant role also among the (Noric?) Celts, as is described by Arrian.<sup>48</sup>

Like so many other Greek myths, the story of Actaeon, too, has been found represented several



Fig. 7: Actaeon from Pöchlarn (territory of Aelium Cetium). From: Ubl 1979: Pl. 24, no. 56.

Sl. 7: Aktajon iz kraja Pöchlarn (območje mesta Aelium Cetium). Iz: Ubl 1979: t. 24, št. 56.

times on Roman funerary monuments,<sup>49</sup> thus also in Noricum and Pannonia. Part of a decorated funerary monument with a fragmentary depiction of Actaeon is immured in the town tower (*fig. 6*), the so-called Povoden's Museum at Poetovio (present-day Ptuj).<sup>50</sup> An interesting marble slab with a relief is immured in the western wall of the parish church in Pöchlarn (Arelape); supposedly it was found at the nearby Harlanden (the area of Melk), a site belonging to the administrative territory of Aelium Cetium (present-day St. Pölten). Actaeon is represented frontally with antlers already growing out of his head and with three dogs attacking him (*fig. 7*). The high quality of the relief indicates the existence of a skilled workshop; the monument may be dated to the mid-second century AD.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately the decorated slab was found out of archaeological context, so it is not possible to know if other scenes from the Actaeon myth were also depicted. The same is true of another marble relief representing the unfortunate hero. It was originally immured in the cemetery wall of the church of St Martin near St. Michael im Lungau, in the broad area of Teurnia (St. Peter in Holz), and is presently kept in the Salzburg Museum Carolino Augusteum. Actaeon is depicted turned towards the right and kneeling, with small O-shaped horns growing out of his head. A dog is attacking him

<sup>43</sup> Lacy 1990, 32 ff.

<sup>44</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> hymn of Callimachus, vv. 107–115; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3. 138 ff.

<sup>45</sup> 4. 81. 3–5.

<sup>46</sup> Plutarch, *Vita Aristid.* 11. 3–4.

<sup>47</sup> Lacy 1990; cited from p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> *Kyn.* 34. 1–3; Grassl 1982, especially 251.

<sup>49</sup> Guimond 1981; also on sarcophagi, see Koch 1993, 73–74; 92.

<sup>50</sup> Conze 1875, p. 11 and Pl. VII/2.

<sup>51</sup> Ubl 1979: Pl. 24, no. 56; p. 59, no. 56.



on each side. The relief is dated to the end of the second or the beginning of the third century AD.<sup>52</sup> Other representations of Actaeon are known from Pannonia, as, for example, one from Komárno and another from Székesfehérvár.<sup>53</sup> It should be added that ours was not a unique case of Actaeon having been erroneously interpreted as Cernunnos; a badly preserved relief of a male with antlers can indeed lead to the wrong conclusions.<sup>54</sup>

### CELTIC SURVIVALS: AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE ROMAN PROVINCIAL CULTURE IN NORICUM AND SOUTHWESTERN PANNONIA

The tombstone from Bela Krajina (White Carniola) was manufactured in a local workshop, where the stonemason may have been an indigenous artist, a descendant of the Romanized indigenous early Iron Age inhabitants mixed with the Celtic Taurisci, who settled in southern Slovenia, Styria, and northwestern Croatia, after having conquered the former. Or, more likely, he may have been a descendant of the Colapiani, who inhabited the broad region of the Kolpa Valley.<sup>55</sup> The Taurisci and their allies, the Celtic Boii, were later, in the first half of the first century BC, defeated by the Dacians. After the disintegration of the great Celtic coalition, the Latobici came to be attested in Dolenjska, both in literary sources and in Roman inscriptions, and partly also in Bela Krajina, in addition to the Colapiani. Many Iron Age survivals bear witness to the pre-Roman inhabitants in these regions, as for example the rich Roman period cemeteries of the first century AD at Mihovo, Novo mesto (Beletov vrt),<sup>56</sup> Šmarjeta (Strmec) near Bela Cerkev, and Verdun, where burial rituals remained Celtic, as is indicated by the deliberately broken Roman and Celtic weapons found in the graves.<sup>57</sup> Pre-Roman elements are further confirmed by Celtic forms of pottery and are partly also visible in funerary iconography, thus in the tombstone which is the object of this study, and also, for example, in a fragmentary tombstone



Fig. 8: Fragmentary tombstone with three portraits from Mrzlo Polje near Ivančna Gorica. From: *RINMS* 150. Sl. 8: Odlomek nagrobnika s tremi portreti iz Mrzlega Polja pri Ivančni Gorici. Iz: *RINMS* 150.

of local dark grey limestone with three portraits (the inscribed field is not preserved), from Mrzlo Polje near Ivančna Gorica. This monument, too, is kept in the National Museum of Slovenia (fig. 8).<sup>58</sup> The faces are depicted in an unusual manner, reminiscent of the famous Celtic *tête-coupée*, they are elongated, with proportionally far too long jaws, cut below the chin horizontally. The portraits are of rustic but high quality workmanship, showing distinctive traits of the indigenous population, not unlike some of the portraits on tombstones from the Ig area (the territory of Emona). Particularly characteristic is also the hairstyle of the two deceased men, which is similar to that of Cernunnos on the Gundestrup cauldron.<sup>59</sup>

The figure of Actaeon as it is represented on the right side panel of the tombstone from Bela Krajina is clear enough and leaves no doubt as to its attribution. The two scenes from his myth on the left side of the tombstone are much more difficult to interpret; indeed, if they were found on their own, it would most probably be impossible to explain them in a plausible way. In combination with the Actaeon figure on the right, however, the upper scene on the left could represent Actaeon while hunting, whereas in the lower scene Artemis/Diana could be identified in the central female figure, perhaps trying to pick up her dress. Of the other two figures the one on the left may be Actaeon who sees her, and the other perhaps a Nymph who tries to protect her. The scene is depicted clumsily and could allow for other interpretations. It is also

<sup>52</sup> Glaser 1997: Pl. 29 no. 37; p. 55 no. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Erdélyi 1974, 207–208, fig. 198 (Komárno), fig. 199 (Székesfehérvár).

<sup>54</sup> Altjohann 2003, 76.

<sup>55</sup> Božič 2001.

<sup>56</sup> Božič 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Guštin 2006, 127.

<sup>58</sup> *RINMS* 150 = *ILSI* 101.

<sup>59</sup> Djurić 2007.

possible that the scenes on the left have no relation to the depiction of the Actaeon on the right.

As mentioned above, Petru mistakenly saw in it a scene of human sacrifice and found an analogy for it in the scene on a tombstone from Rogatec in Slovenian Styria (fig. 9).<sup>60</sup> As for the Bela Krajina tombstone, the same is true of this depiction: human sacrifice that would reflect a real ritual act could by no means be represented on a Roman tombstone.<sup>61</sup> Consequently this explanation is *a priori* erroneous, and the scene must again be interpreted in terms of Graeco-Roman mythology. The Rogatec monument is now kept in the Joanneum in Graz and should be explained as a part of a tombstone, with a primitive depiction of Thetis holding her son Achilles by his heels and bathing him in the river Styx to make him immortal.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Petru 1961, 38, Pl. 4. 2; Saria 1939, 54; cf. ANSl 288. See now Hudeczek 2004, 26–27 no. 5.

<sup>61</sup> See also Schober 1930, 38.

<sup>62</sup> As was correctly recognized by Saria 1939, 54.

Fig. 9: Thetis bathing her son Achilles in the river Styx. From: Hudeczek 2004, 26–27 no. 5.

Sl. 9: Tetida namaka sina Ahila v reki Stiks. Iz: Hudeczek 2004, 26–27 št. 5.



### Abbreviations

AIJ = V. Hoffiller, B. Saria, *Antike Inschriften aus Jugoslawien*, Heft I: *Noricum und Pannonia Superior*, Zagreb 1938.

ANSl = *Arheološka najdišča Slovenije [Archaeological Sites of Slovenia]*, Ljubljana 1975.

CSIR = *Corpus signorum imperii romani*.

ILSl = M. Lovenjak, *Inscriptiones Latinae Sloveniae 1: Nevioudunum* (Situla 37), Ljubljana 1998.

LIMC = *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*.

RINMS = M. Šašel Kos, *The Roman Inscriptions in the National Museum of Slovenia / Lapidarij Narodnega muzeja Slovenije* (Situla 35), Ljubljana 1997.

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## Cernunos v Sloveniji?

### Povzetek

V lapidariju Narodnega muzeja Slovenije je na ogled rimskodobni nagrobnik s sedmimi portreti v dveh poljih, ki je bil zelo verjetno najden v Črnomlju v Beli Krajini, kot kažejo podobne stele s tega najdišča. Okvirno ga je mogoče datirati v 2. ali začetek 3. stoletja po Kr. Na obeh stranskih ploskvah so poškodovani in slabo vidni reliefi, na desni je upodobljena moška figura z rogovjem na glavi, ki jo napada pes, na levi pa v zgornjem polju jezdec s kopjem, spodaj pa tri figure, od katerih je srednja ženska. Pred njo stoji moški s kopjem v roki, za njo pa oseba, ki je ni mogoče поблиže opredeliti.

Peter Petru je reliefe razložil kot upodobitev keltskega boga Cernuna, ki so ga značilno upodabljali z rogovjem na glavi. Reliefe na levi strani pa je interpretiral kot kultno žrtvovanje človeka, ki je bilo značilno za keltsko religijo v predrimskem času, ohranilo pa naj bi se še v rimski čas. Če so v dobi republike v Rimu ob izjemnih prilikah in zgolj v času vojne žrtvovali človeka, pa je bilo od Avgusta dalje žrtvovanje človeka strogo prepovedano. Zato nikakor ni mogoče, da bi tak prizor na rimskem nagrobniku odražal ritual, ki bi ga tedaj dejansko izvajali. Na nagrobnikih so bile v tem času največkrat upodobljene različne epizode iz grške mitologije, od prizorov iz Iliade in trojanske vojne, do scen iz mitoloških zgodb o grško-rimskih bogovih in herojih.

Nekaj reliefov prikazuje tudi zgodbo o Aktajonu, ki je na lovu v gozdu ob jezeru zagledal boginjo Artemido/Diano golo pri kopeli. Boginja je to smatrala za svetoskrunstvo in ga kaznovala tako, da ga je spremenila v jelena, ki so ga napadli lastni psi in ga raztrgali. Obstaja več različic te mitološke zgodbe, v katerih je na različni način razloženo, zakaj se je to zgodilo, čeprav prevladuje mnenje, da naj bi Aktajon na boginjo naletel zgolj slučajno; gre torej za tragično usodo junaka in neizogibnost smrti. Prizor, kako Aktajona, ki mu že raste rogovje na glavi in ga napadeta en ali dva psa, je upodobljen na več nagrobnih spomenikih v Noriku in Panoniji, med drugim tudi v Petovionu, kar morda kaže, da je bil ta motiv v tem prostoru priljubljen.

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