

NOVENSIA 32

NOVENSIA 32

Studia i materiały
pod redakcją naukową

Piotra Dyczka

NOVENSIA 32



Ośrodek Badań nad Antykiem
Europy Południowo-Wschodniej

Projekt okładki / Cover design
Anna Adamczyk & Janusz Reclaw
Opracowanie graficzne / Graphic design
Anna Adamczyk

Redaktor naczelny / Chief editor
Piotr Dyczek

Komitet redakcyjny / Editorial board
Tat'ána Egorova
Evgeniâ Genčeva
Rebecca Jones
Florian Matei-Popescu
Oliva Menozzi
Ewdoksja Papuci-Władyka
Luan Përzhita
Joaquín Ruiz de Arbulo Bayona
Andreas Thiel

Niniejszy numer zawiera artykuły w wersji pierwotnej / Volume contains original articles.

© Publication under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL (CC BY 3.0 PL) license (full text available at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/legalcode>).

Numer finansowany z programu „Inicjatywa Doskonałości — Uczelnia Badawcza” Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego oraz programu „Rozwój Czasopism Naukowych” Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego.

Ośrodek Badań nad Antykiem Europy
Południowo-Wschodniej
00–927 Warszawa
ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 32
novae@uw.edu.pl

Warszawa 2023

ISSN: 0860-5777
e-ISSN: 2720-2941

Wydanie I
Druk: Hussar Books

SPIS TREŚCI / CONTENTS

SEBASTIAN LELKO

The political emancipation of the plebs in 366 BCE 7

SZYMON CZERSKI

Supply of war horses to the Roman military in the last days of the Republic and the Principate 31

ANDRIJ KORČAK

The cult of Sabazius in the northern Black Sea littoral: monuments and their interpretation 37

EMZAR KAKHIDZE, KAKHABER KAMADADZE, SHOTA MAMULADZE

The Pontus-Caucasian frontier: the Roman and Byzantine fortification system in the southeastern Black Sea littoral 51

URSZULA IWASZCZUK, MARCIN MATERA

Man's best friend on the borders of the Greek *oikumene*: the so-called dog burials and the role of dogs in Tanais 75

PAWEŁ GOŁYŹNIAK, ALFRED TWARDECKI

Athlete, Hymen or Meleager? An intaglio from Olbia 109

JAN NIEMYSKI

The *gladius Hispaniensis* revisited — a small sword with great implications 125

DOMINIK MIKOŁAJ STACHOWIAK

The Christian funeral rite in Late Antiquity — an overview 139

MATEUSZ ŻMUDZIŃSKI

| | |
|---|-----|
| Ludwika Press in the light of documents from the archives of the University of Wrocław | 163 |
| Oświadczenie o etyce wydawniczej i niewłaściwych praktykach | 173 |
| Informacje i wskazówki dla autorów | 175 |
| Publication ethics and malpractice statement | 181 |
| Guidelines for authors | 183 |

Andrij Korčak

THE CULT OF SABAZIUS IN THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA LITTORAL: MONUMENTS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Abstract: A number of finds from the northern Black Sea littoral, dating from the first three centuries of the common era, have been attributed to the cult of the Thracian-Phrygian deity Sabazius, but hardly ever with complete certainty. The hypotheses put forward regarding the identification of these artifacts are interesting and substantiated in original ways. The article examines this assemblage, which includes hands in bronze and bone, rods of bone, tomb paintings, clay stamps, terracotta statuettes of followers of the cult, a fragment of a figure of a naked bearded man in a Phrygian cap, and an image of dancing men on an ancient Greek pelike. The geographical distribution of these discoveries is also analyzed. Based on this research it can be concluded that there is direct evidence for the spread of the Sabazius cult in the region in question, while some pieces, like a bronze hand from the Ukrainian steppe, bone hands and rods from Chersonesos, and a fragment of a statuette of a man in a Phrygian cap from Phanagoria, can cautiously be interpreted as indirect evidence of minor manifestations of the Sabazius cult in the northern Black Sea region, brought there by Roman soldiers from the Danube.

Keywords: cult of the god Sabazius, northern Black Sea littoral, Ukrainian steppe, Roman period, 1st–4th centuries CE

1. Introduction

The cult of the god Sabazius (Σαβάζιος, Σαβάδιος, Σαβάσιος, Σαβάνδος, Σεβάζιος, Σεβάδιος) appeared in ancient Greece in the fifth century BC. Aristophanes, for example, mentioned it in his comedies (*Ar. Av.* 874, *Lys.* 387, *Vesp.* 9, *Thesm.* 49 [578]). The Thracian-Phrygian origin of this deity is commonly accepted, but its origins — whether Thrace, Phrygia or Hellas — have aroused controversy ever since Roman times.¹ One hypothesis calls for Sabazius to be a Thracian version of Dionysus.²

The cult had an orgiastic character. In the fourth century BC, the orator Demosthenes referred to how Sabazius was worshipped: “at night, he [the orator Aeschines in his youth] dressed those who were to be initiated in deer skins, poured them wine from craters, cleaned and wiped them with dirt and bran, and, lifting them up after cleaning, made them say: ‘I fled from evil, I found the best’... and during the day he led these beautiful groups of people through the streets,

¹ MAMRAJ 2012, p. 1; MILČEV 1977, pp. 58–59.

² MILČEV 1977, p. 59; PERDRIZET 1910, pp. 53–54.

crowned with fennel and white poplar, clutching the snakes in his hands, waving them above his head, exclaiming: ‘εὐοῖ σαβοῖ’ and dancing at the same time: “Υἷς Ἄττης Ἄττης Ὑἷς” (Dem. *De cor.* 259–260). The ancient Greek thinker Theophrastus living in the fourth century noted the following with regard to a superstitious man: “having seen a snake in his home, he calls Sabazius” (Theophr. *Char.* 16.4).

In the times of the Roman Republic and then Empire, Sabazius was identified with Jupiter and gained considerable popularity in Italy, the Podunavlje region in Serbia and Asia Minor as attested by multiple references to this cult found in the writings of ancient authors,³ dozens of epigraphic inscriptions and a multitude of sacred objects.⁴ In the northern Black Sea littoral, however, artifacts that could be associated with the cult of Sabazius in this region are few and almost all of them date to the Roman period. In some of the cases, the association with the deity is far from certain. The article examines a number of finds in the context of their tentative attribution to Sabazius in an effort to provide a new perspective on the issue of the possible spread of the cult of this god in the northern Black Sea littoral during the Roman period.

2. Bronze hand from the Ukrainian steppe

The object was purchased in 1900 by the Imperial Hermitage through the mediation of the Imperial Archaeological Commission from the otherwise unknown E. Migunova who declared that the statuette was found in the Katerynoslav governorate (Russ. “gubernia”) of that time.⁵

It is the right hand of a statuette made of bronze, 17 cm high. The fingers are folded in the *benedictio Latina* gesture: the index and middle fingers raised, the other two bent, the thumb set aside. A pinecone grows from the tip of the thumb. The hand is decorated with relief images. A woman is depicted lying down with a baby by her left breast and an eagle standing behind her. This image appears in a semicircle below the palm of the hand. Above it but under the thumb is a small table with three objects: a large vase (amphora), a branch of a tree (probably an oak) and a frog. A lizard is depicted above the branch. On the left, some unidentified objects can be seen on the finger and above the frog. Depicted on the back of the hand are scales under the index and middle fingers, a *kerikeion* (caduceus) and a snake, which twists its head over the two fingers bent to the palm. Then there is a turtle above the snake and below it, a number of objects that are difficult to identify. The surface of the artifact is pitted and stained brown in places. The hand has been dated to the third century CE. It is kept in the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg⁶ [Fig. 1].

Boris Farmakovskij, who first published this artifact, suggested an association of objects of this kind with childbirth. The image of the woman lying on the ground holding a small child was an indication of the object being offered to the deity by a woman giving birth.⁷ The apotropaic function of the hand is borne out by the various images of a lizard, a turtle, a frog, and a snake that are supposed to ward off the evil eye; hence their popularity on amulets.⁸ The same can be said of the images of a bird, a pinecone, an amphora, a branch, a *kerikeion* and scales,⁹ as well as the gesture of the hand itself.¹⁰ As for the other images, the ones near the little finger Farmakovskij

³ MAMRAJ 2012, p. 1.

⁴ VERMASEREN 1983; LANE 1985; LANE 1989.

⁵ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, p. 118.

⁶ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, p. 118; KOBYLINA 1978, no. 36; VERMASEREN 1983, no. 59; bronze hands of this type have long been known and some of the first published representations are found in catalogs from the turn of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth; see, e.g., MOLINET

1692, p. 16, pl. 9, no. IX; BEGERO 1701, p. 404; *Recueil* 1762, pp. 176–177, pl. XLIII, nos I, II

⁷ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, pp. 119–120.

⁸ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, pp. 119–120; JAHN 1855, pp. 97–100, pl. III; LAFAYE 1896, p. 987, figs. 2887–2888.

⁹ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, pp. 119–120; JAHN 1855, pp. 97–100, pl. III.

¹⁰ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, p. 121.



Fig. 1. Bronze “hand of Sabazius”, Ukrainian steppe
(after Farmakovskij 1902, pl. XVI)

believed to be objects of the eastern orgiastic cults: the two sticks may be flutes, the object to the left of them is a syrinx (an ancient Greek longitudinal flute), below them are cymbals,¹¹ while the shape on the other side of the syrinx is a *lagobolon* (a throwing stick for hunting hares).¹² Three small cists placed below the images of musical instruments also have a cult function. The reliefs on the thumb above the vase and behind the oak branch above the frog are too poorly preserved to be easily recognized, but they are most likely images of perhaps a scorpion and a beetle, both of which also appear on amulets against the evil eye.¹³

Karl Dilthey and Christian Blinkenberg, writing in 1904, favored a direct association with the cult of Sabazius in view of the apotropaic character of these objects.¹⁴ Their opinion is supported by several examples of hand statues of this type. Busts of Sabazius are quite often found on the index and middle fingers from the palm side, as exemplified by the hand from the National Library in Paris¹⁵ or the finds first published by Karl Schumacher.¹⁶ The bust on the hand in the Antikensammlung in Berlin¹⁷ may have originally been confused with Serapis due to the inadequate quality of the reproduction of the hand in the first drawing.¹⁸ A hand from the Archaeological Museum in Avenches (Aventicum) in Switzerland presents, in addition to a bust of Sabazius on the index and middle fingers from the back side (touching his head with his right hand), two other busts of Greek deities: Hermes in a *petasos* cap on the last two fingers bent to the palm and a goddess in a turret crown on the side, just below the thumb.¹⁹

While accepting the common opinion that hands with various additions are characteristic of the cults of various eastern deities, like Sabazius, Mithra, and Serapis, Don Lusthaus argued for a separate symbolism in their case,²⁰ Regarding the find from Katerynoslav, the absence of an image of the god above the offering table led Farmakovskij to say that “there can be no doubt that,

¹¹ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, pp. 120–121.

¹² For images of these ancient Greek instruments, see LENORMANT 1877, p. 627, fig. 708.

¹³ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, p. 121.

¹⁴ BLINKENBERG 1904, pp. 100–109; DILTHEY 1878, pp. 45–46.

¹⁵ BABELON, BLANCHET 1895, p. 460, no. 1064; *Recueil* 1762, pp. 176–177, pl. LXIII, nos. I, II; VERMASEREN 1983, no. 10.

¹⁶ SCHUMACHER 1890, pl. XV; VERMASEREN 1983, no. 71.

¹⁷ Antikensammlung 2022.

¹⁸ BEGERO 1701, p. 404; BLÜMNER 1889, p. 75, figs. 75a–76b; LAFAYE 1896, p. 985, fig. 2886; VERMASEREN 1983, no. 8.

¹⁹ BLINKENBERG 1904, pls III–IV; BURSIA 1867–1870, pl. XVIII; MEYER 1856, p. 49; VERMASEREN 1983, no. 47.

²⁰ LUSTHAUS 1947, p. 172.

in general, all hands represent consecration to various gods²¹. However, the bronze hand from the Ukrainian steppe is the only object from the territory of Ukraine to be included in the *Corpus of the Cult of Jupiter Sabazios (CCIS)*.²²

3. Three artifacts from Chersonesus

In her study of objects hypothetically connected with a syncretic cult of Dionysus Sabazius from Chersonesus, dated from the fourth century BC to the third century AD, Tetâna Ševčenko singled out three artifacts that could be attributed with a high degree of probability to the Sabazius cult.²³

First is a bone pommel in the form of a right hand,²⁴ found in 1937 at the bottom of a water cistern.²⁵ It bears no symbolic images and is decorated with a bracelet carved around the wrist and a ring on the finger. Here the fingers are straight and only the thumb is opposed to take perhaps a pinecone on its tip²⁶ [Fig. 2]. Ševčenko concluded that the object could be related to other hands of Sabazius because of its similar size and the fact that it is hollow inside, hence could have been mounted on a processional staff.²⁷ Citing parallels from the Danube,²⁸ she associates the find with a *vexillatio* of the Roman army from Lower Moesia and Thrace staying in Chersonesus in the second half of the second century AD or first half of the third. She also suggests that this object was made in the first half of the third century AD for supporters of the Sabazius cult originating from the Danube area.²⁹

Two bone rods with ends in the form of a hand holding a pinecone by the tips of the fingers were discovered in 1892³⁰ and 1908, respectively,³¹ during excavations of burials from the first centuries AD in Chersonesus³² [Fig. 3]. The fingers of these hands take on the same position as in the hand described above but with a pinecone held between the tips.³³

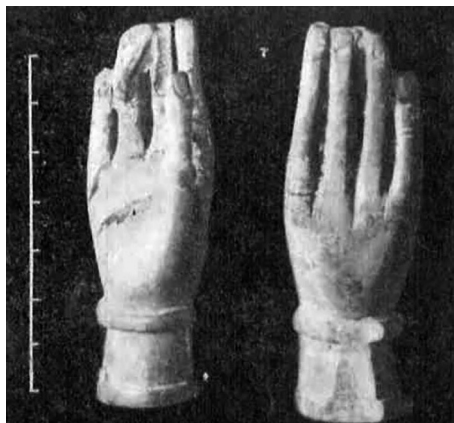


Fig. 2. Bone hand, Chersonesus
(after Belov, Strželeckij 1953, fig. 46)



Fig. 3. Bone rods, Chersonesus
(after Ševčenko 2011, fig. 36)

²¹ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902, p. 119.

²² VERMASEREN 1983, no. 59.

²³ ŠEVČENKO 2011, pp. 257–264.

²⁴ ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 260.

²⁵ BELOV, STRŽELECKIJ 1953, p. 80, fig. 46.

²⁶ ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 261.

²⁷ ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 262.

²⁸ ŠEVČENKO 2011, pp. 260–262; TAČEVA-HITOVA 1982, pp.

286–289, fig. III.7.

²⁹ ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 263.

³⁰ *Otčet* 1894, p. 21, no. 13; ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 260, fig. 36, b.

³¹ REPNIKOV 1927, p. 158, no. 2582, fig. 13; ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 260, fig. 36, a.

³² ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 261.

³³ ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 261.

Considering the place of the cult of Sabazius in the religious life of Chersonesus, Ševčenko notes: “Bone pommels and rods with images of a hand are... isolated finds that could be an echo of the holding of mysteries in honor of Dionysus Sabazios by a part of the population, apparently also limited by territorial origin. Sabazios fans of the cult... were natives from the Danube, who... could not be citizens and not play a role in the cults of the polis”.³⁴

4. “Crypts of Sabazians” from Panticapaeum

Analyzing wall paintings from the Panticapaeian burials, Mikhail Rostovcev singled out nine tombs forming a separate group, which he referred to tentatively as “crypts of Sabazians” (identified by the year of excavation: 1873, 1874, 1890 (1), 1890 (2), 1894, 1897, 1901, 1905, 1912).³⁵ The images that drew his attention are painted on the unplastered clay walls of the burial chambers, in one of two colors, either red or black (rarely both), and in one case blue. The drawing of the figures and ornaments is in most cases linear. Ornamental motifs are very simple and are regularly repeated in all of the crypts.³⁶ The careless and barbaric nature of these images, and the almost complete lack of any details or attributes make the interpretation of these figures much more difficult.

In his interpretation, which is hypothetical, Rostovcev³⁷ considers the clear distinction between a single human figure and similar but much smaller figures in crypts 1874, 1890 (1) and 1905, to be a rendering of a god and his worshippers, the latter shown in an ecstatic dance to the accompaniment of a tambourine or a shield. The birds drawn nearby could be symbolic of their souls in a state of ecstasy.³⁸ Rostovcev took this to be the god Sabazius, citing a drawing from the tomb excavated in 1901, where the figure is shown with what Rostovcev describes as a sharp beard, wearing a Phrygian cap, surrounded by vine branches and, perhaps, a cedar tree. The figure is drawn twice, on either side of a huge eagle.³⁹ A relief on a bronze breastplate⁴⁰ from Ampuria⁴¹ appears to be a parallel for this painting [Fig. 4]. Characteristic attributes, such as the mystical dance,



Fig. 4. Painting from the “crypt of the Sabazians” in 1901, Panticapaeum (after Rostovcev 1913, pl. XCVII)

³⁴ ŠEVČENKO 2011, p. 264.

³⁵ ROSTOVCEV 1914, pp. 424–434.

³⁶ ROSTOVCEV 1914, p. 424.

³⁷ ROSTOVCEV 1914, p. 426.

³⁸ ROSTOVCEV 1914, pp. 427–428.

³⁹ ROSTOVCEV 1913, pl. XCVII; ROSTOVCEV 1914, pp. 427–428.

⁴⁰ PARIS 1912, p. 456, fig. 50; LANE 1985, no. 85.

⁴¹ Ampuria (Latin), originally a Greek colony, later a Roman city near the mouth of the Fluvia River in Spain. Empuriabrava is now located approximately in the same location.

an eagle, the sun and the moon (double image of the deity from the crypt of 1901), vine branches (crypts of 1873, 1897, 1901), and birds (perhaps, pigeons), testify in favor of this interpretation.⁴² For an explanation of the drawing of a bow in one of the tombs of 1890 and a deer from the burial of 1901 Rostovcev referred to Nikolaj Marr, according to whom the Svans (a sub-ethnic group of Georgians) called their god of hunting by the name of Sabazius.⁴³

The image of an eagle in the crypt of 1901 suggested to Rostovcev a connection with images of a similar bird on funerary stelae from Tanais. These monuments were dedicated to an unknown deity with the epithet “God Almighty” (θεὸς ὑψίστος), whom researchers have identified with Sabazius. The dedicants were members of a religious brotherhood, a synod (*thiasos*), which had the support of the authorities, hence Rostovcev considered the cult to be of an official nature.⁴⁴

According to Lev El’nickij, the crypts date from the third–beginning of the fourth century AD.⁴⁵ As for the association of these burials with the Sabazius cult, he was more moderate in his opinion: “they are ritual paintings, very closely related to those religious ideas that were cultivated by sects belonging to the mystical cults of ‘eastern’ deities”.⁴⁶ Other possible identifications, in his view, included Cybele and Attis.⁴⁷ The sect itself could represent “something similar to the synods of bucoles, dendrophores or doryphores very common in Asia Minor in the era of the late empire”.⁴⁸ He was skeptical about the identification of Sabazius with God Almighty, citing Nikolaj Novosadskij, who argued that the epithet “θεὸς ὑψίστος” was bestowed rather on the Judean Sebaoth, the Greek Zeus or the Phrygian Men. He also pointed out that the Tanaic or Gorgippian dedications to God Almighty make no mention of colleges of cistophores, kanephores, dendrophores, hierobacches, etc., which are typical of the cults of Cybele, Dionysus, and accordingly, Sabazius. Nevertheless, he does not completely reject the possibility of a relationship between the “crypts of Sabazians” and the dedications to God Almighty.⁴⁹

Irina Levinskaâ was even more critical in this matter. She considers the cult of God Almighty, which was the most widespread in Tanais and Gorgippia, to have been formed under the influence of Judaism and in no way related to Sabazius.⁵⁰

The main argument in favor of the identification of God Almighty with Sabazius was an inscription from the Serbian city of Pirot,⁵¹ published by Alfred von Domaszewski. Its text begins with the dedication: “ΘΕΩΣΕΠΗΚΟΩΨΙΣΤΩ...” (“To the God Who Listens, the Most High”), followed by a list of members of the association (“...ΤΟΚΟΙΝΟΝ...”). It ends as follows: “...ΘΙΑ[...]ΣΕΒΑΖΙΑΝΟΣΘΗ[...]ΤΟΥΤΑΣ”. However, Domaszewski supplemented the fragment “...ΘΙΑ[...]” with the syllable “σος”, giving the word θία[σος?]. This was then taken as the basis of a hypothesis, picked up later by other researchers,⁵² presenting synods of Sabazius, θίασος Σεβαξτιανός, who worshipped the God Almighty.⁵³ Levinskaâ suggested that the word Σεβαξτιανός could actually have been a personal name denoting one of the members of the association.⁵⁴

Levinskaâ also criticized Franz Cumont’s assumption, based on the evidence of some ancient authors, that the worshippers of θεὸς ὑψίστος engaged in a mixed Judeo-pagan cult of Sabazius Sebaoth that was active in Asia Minor in Roman times.⁵⁵ Analyzing Valerius Maximus’s account of the praetor Gnaeus Cornelius Hispanus (*ca.* 179–176 BC) expelling the Jews from Rome

⁴² ROSTOVCEV 1913, tabs. XCVII–XCVIII; ROSTOVCEV 1914, pp. 429–430.

⁴³ MARR 1911, pp. 759–774; MARR 1912, pp. 827–830; ROSTOVCEV 1914, pp. 430–431.

⁴⁴ ROSTOVCEV 1914, pp. 430–431; ROSTOVCEV 1918, pp. 179–180.

⁴⁵ EL’NICKIJ 1946, p. 107.

⁴⁶ EL’NICKIJ 1946, p. 107.

⁴⁷ EL’NICKIJ 1946, p. 108.

⁴⁸ EL’NICKIJ 1946, p. 109.

⁴⁹ EL’NICKIJ 1946, p. 109.

⁵⁰ LEVINSKAÂ 1987, pp. 67–73.

⁵¹ The territory was once part of Roman Upper Moesia.

⁵² EL’NICKIJ 1946, pp. 105, 109–110; MILČEV 1977, p. 61.

⁵³ DOMASZEWSKI 1886, pp. 238–239.

⁵⁴ LEVINSKAÂ 1987, pp. 68–69.

⁵⁵ CUMONT 1906, pp. 63–79; KÚMON 2002, pp. 18–19, 95–98.

because of “an attempt to corrupt Roman customs by worshiping Jupiter Sabazius” (Val. Max. 1.3.2), she noted: “The message... is built on the one hand on the pareymology caused by the consonance of Σαβάζιος with Σαβαώθ and σάββατον, and on the other hand, the fact that the Jewish missionaries probably emphasized the supreme position of their God in every possible way, which naturally caused associations with Jupiter among the Romans”.⁵⁶ The identification of the Jewish God with Dionysus in Plutarch (Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 4.6), which could have been quite possibly borrowed from an earlier source,⁵⁷ also seems unconvincing. Levinskaâ also quotes Roman authors, namely Tacitus (Tac. *Hist.* 5.5) and John the Lydian (Lydus, *Mens.* 4.53), who already in antiquity indicated the fallacy of such approaches.⁵⁸

The question of the identification of Sabazius with God Almighty, who was popular in Tanais and Gorgippia, remains open despite the fact that several researchers, among them El’nickij, Novosadskij and Levinskaâ, have now rejected it, seeing in the latter a Hellenized image of the Jewish God.

5. Clay stamps from the northern Black Sea littoral

Clay stamps for use on ritual bread or sometimes clay medallions are known from the territory of the northern Black Sea. One such stamp comes from Olbia, the rest were found in the Bosporan Kingdom. Irina Kruglikova dated these items to the third–fourth centuries AD and suggested that they may have had a connection with the Sabazian cult.⁵⁹

The Olbia stamp, which was found in 1874 and has a diameter of 11 cm, bears the image of a peacock with head raised and turned back towards a bunch of grapes. Above the bird are a number of sacred plants, such as bunches of grapes, pinecones, pomegranate fruit, etc., all in enlarged scale. Closely spaced impressed dots run along the edge of the stamp, surrounding the composition.⁶⁰ Another stamp with a similar image, half of which has been preserved, was discovered during excavations in 1902–1903. The back side with traces of a handle, attached in two places, resembles a loaf of bread in shape.⁶¹ A running deer with antlers in the shape of tree branches is shown on a stamp from Mt Mithridates in Kerch, found by Vladislav Škorpil in 1898; the diameter in this case was 9.5 cm. The animal holds a snake in its teeth, a sacred tree is depicted next to it, and below it there is a swan drinking from a kantharos. The background is filled with a scrolling ivy branch and an inscription of which only one letter, “A”, remains. A row of rounded notches runs around the circumference of the stamp⁶² [Fig. 5: 3]. The images of a goddess with spread hands, their ends transformed into branches, accompanied by a bird in flight and two winged creatures, is carved on a stamp discovered in 1948 in Ilurat.⁶³ A fragmented clay stamp was found in a layer from the third century AD at the excavation in Kimmerik in 1948. The object was not completely preserved, but it was established to have an oval shape, close to a circle. Its height is about 11 cm, width about 10 cm. A somewhat schematic image of a bird holding a snake in its beak appears on the flat side. Feathers are presented in the form of deeply impressed triangles. The long legs end in three spread toes with deep round holes where the claws are. The head is not preserved. The downward zigzag line is probably a schematic representation of a writhing snake. Traces of the knob replacing the handle were preserved on the poorly smoothed and

⁵⁶ LEVINSKAÂ 1987, p. 69.

⁵⁷ LEVINSKAÂ 1987, pp. 69–70.

⁵⁸ LEVINSKAÂ 1987, p. 70.

⁵⁹ KRUGLIKOVA 1952, pp. 119–125.

⁶⁰ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1906, p. 185, n. 7; KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 120; TOLSTOJ, KONDAKOV 1889, p. 101, fig. 140.

⁶¹ FARMAKOVSKIJ 1906, p. 186, figs. 139–140; KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 120.

⁶² KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 120, fig. 41, 3; *Otčet* 1901, p. 16, fig. 11.

⁶³ GAJDUKEVIČ 1951, pp. 209–210; KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 120.



Fig. 5. Clay stamps and their impressions.

1, 2 – Phanogoria,

3 – Panticapaeum

(after Kruglikova 1952, fig. 41)

uneven reverse of the object.⁶⁴ The location of the find, a room where grain was stored and flour was produced,⁶⁵ confirms the possibility of these stamps being used for decorating ritual cakes. Finally, two almost round stamps were found in 1872 at Phanogoria. One of them, with a diameter of 10–11 cm, depicts two fantastic creatures standing opposite each other: a bird-headed winged griffin and a horse (or panther) whose front legs turn into branches. Below the figures there is a vine growing out of a kantharos and a garland with ribbons at the ends, and above them a peacock drinking from a similar vessel. On the side is the fuzzy outline of a lizard. Traces of the broken handle are visible on the reverse side of the stamp. The second stamp, 8–9 cm in diameter, depicts a four-legged creature with a bird's head and a coiling snake near its beak⁶⁶ [Fig. 5: 1–2].

According to Kruglikova, the images of a bird, a pinecone, a grapevine, a deer, a snake, a kantharos, which resemble the images from the “crypts of Sabazians”, could speak in favor of a connection of these stamps with the cult of Sabazius.⁶⁷ She also cites Demosthenes who speaks of cakes being presented to Sabazius (Demosth. *De corona*, 259–260).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 119, fig. 40, 1; ZEEST 1950, p. 101, fig. 45.

⁶⁵ KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 125.

⁶⁶ KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 120, fig. 41, 1–2.

⁶⁷ KRUGLIKOVA 1952, pp. 122–123.

⁶⁸ KRUGLIKOVA 1952, p. 124.

6. Evidence from the Bosporan Kingdom

Vladimir Blavatskij and Mariâ Kobylina associated with the cult of Sabazius whole and fragmentary terracotta figurines from the territory of Panticapaeum,⁶⁹ showing either grotesque figures or worshippers with hanging legs and phalluses.⁷⁰ One of them is depicted playing a double flute,⁷¹ another one holding a wreath in his right hand and a branch in his left one⁷² [Fig. 6]. Škorpil and later Kobylina also assigned to this cult a poorly preserved relief with a seated deity placed in the center, flanked by two figures. They both believed this to be an image of Sabazius surrounded by Hermes and an unknown goddess⁷³ [Fig. 7]. However, Maarten Vermaseren rightly interprets the central deity in the sculptural composition as the Mother of the Gods, because the iconographic theme presented on the plate is very similar to the reliefs depicting Cybele in the company of Hermes and Cora or Hekate.⁷⁴ In addition, Škorpil notes that three more artifacts representing the cult of the Mother of the Gods were found on Predtečenska Square in Kerch, which also yielded the described relief.⁷⁵

In 1937 a fragment of a small terracotta statuette from the second century AD was discovered in the territory of Phanagoria; it represents a naked bearded man in a Phrygian cap with a toothed lower edge. The appearance, not entirely characteristic of Sabazius, prompted El'nickij to interpret the figurine “as an intermediate link between the Thracian and Asia Minor images of Dionysus Sabasios”⁷⁶ [Fig. 8].



Fig. 6. Terracotta statuette of the followers of the cult, Panticapaeum (after Kobylina 1978, no. 39)



Fig. 7. Limestone slab with relief, Panticapaeum (after Kobylina 1978, no. 40)



Fig. 8. Fragment of a terracotta statuette of Dionysus Sabazius, Phanagoria (after Kobylina 1978, no. 41)

⁶⁹ ŠKORPIL 1911, p. 63.

⁷⁰ BLAVATSKIJ 1964, p. 199; KOBYLINA 1978, no. 39.

⁷¹ *Otčet* 1914, p. 27, fig. 44; ŠKORPIL 1914, p. 14, fig. 5.

⁷² KOBYLINA 1978, no. 39.

⁷³ *Otčet* 1914, p. 30, fig. 52; ŠKORPIL 1914, pp. 16–18, fig.

6; KOBYLINA 1978, no. 40.

⁷⁴ VERMASEREN 1989, no. 566.

⁷⁵ ŠKORPIL 1914, pp. 17–18, fig. 9.

⁷⁶ EL'NICKIJ 1946, pp. 97–98, 110–111, fig. 1; KOBYLINA 1961, pl. X.1; KOBYLINA 1978, no. 41.

The presence of the image of dancing men on a late Hellenistic pelike⁷⁷ from Gorgippia prompted Ekaterina Alekseeva to draw a parallel between this motif and the paintings of the “crypts of Sabazians”, and accordingly to associate the vessel with the cult of Dionysus Sabazius.⁷⁸

7. Conclusion

A review of the finds from the northern Black Sea region that are tentatively assigned to the cult of Sabazius indicates that their identification is hardly ever unquestioned. There is instead a number of interesting and originally substantiated hypotheses. As for the bronze hand that is very probably an attribute of this Thracian-Phrygian deity, it comes from the territory of the Ukrainian steppe, but the circumstances of its discovery are actually unknown. There is in fact no direct evidence of the spread of the Sabazius cult in the studied region. Nevertheless, some of the listed artifacts (for example, the bronze hand from the Ukrainian steppe, the bone hand and rods from Chersonesos, a fragment of a statuette from Phanagoria) can be tentatively interpreted as indirect evidence of minor manifestations of this cult in the northern Black Sea region, brought there by the Roman army from the region of the Danube.

Bibliography

- ALEKSEEVA 1982 E. ALEKSEEVA, “Ūgo-vostočnaâ čast’ nekropolâ Gorgippii” [South-eastern part of the Gorgippia necropolis], [in:] *Gorgippiâ I. Materialy Anapskoj arheologičeskoj ekspedicii*, ed. I. KRUGLIKOVA, Krasnodar, pp. 5–116.
- ALEKSEEVA 1986 E. ALEKSEEVA, “Kulty Gorgippii” [Cults of Gorgippia], *Sovetskaâ Arheologîâ* 4, pp. 34–52.
- Antikensammlung 2022 Antikensammlung [Fr. 1333] Votivhand des Sabazios. Accessed August 22, 2022, URL: <https://smb.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=objekt&oges=9663&cacheLoaded=true>.
- BABELON, BLANCHET 1895 E. BABELON, J.-A. BLANCHET, *Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Paris.
- BEGERO 1701 L. BEGERO, *Thesauri regii et electoralis Brandenburgici volumen tertium*, Cologne.
- BELOV, STRŽELECKIJ 1953 D. BELOV, S. STRŽELECKIJ, “Kvartaly XV i XVI (Raskopki 1937 g.)” [Quarters XV and XVI (Excavations 1937)], *Materialy i issledovaniâ po arheologii SSSR* 34, pp. 32–108.
- BLAVATSKIJ 1964 V. BLAVATSKIJ, *Pantikapej. Očerki istorii Bospora* [Panticapaeum. Essays on the history of the Bosporus], Moscow.
- BLINKENBERG 1904 Ch. BLINKENBERG, “Darstellungen des Sabazios und Denkmäler seines Kultes”, [in:] IDEM, *Archäologischen Studien*, Copenhagen, pp. 66–128.
- BLÜMNER 1889 H. BLÜMNER, “Amulett”, [in:] *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums zur Erläuterung des Lebens der Griechen und Römer in Religion, Kunst und Sitte*, ed. A. BAUMEISTER, vol. I (*Abraxas – Ixion*), Munich – Leipzig, pp. 75–77.
- BURSIAN 1867–1870 C. BURSIAN, “Aventicum Helvetiorum”, *Mittheilungen der antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 16, pp. 41–52.

⁷⁷ A common form of amphora in Attica, which however, has a base that allows it to stand. Pelikes usually have two handles, but they do not have a lid.

⁷⁸ ALEKSEEVA 1982, pp. 103–104, fig. 59; ALEKSEEVA 1986, pp. 46–47, fig. 8.

- CUMONT 1906 F. CUMONT, “Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme”, *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 1, pp. 63–79.
- DILTHEY 1878 K. DILTHEY, “Drei Votivhände aus Bronze”, *Archäologisch-Epigraphischen Mittheilungen aus Oesterreich* 2, pp. 44–65.
- DOMASZEWSKI 1886 A. DOMASZEWSKI, “Griechische Inschriften aus Moesien und Thrakien”, *Archaeologisch-epigraphische Mittheilungen aus Oesterreich-Ungarn* 10, pp. 238–244.
- EL’NICKIJ 1946 L. EL’NICKIJ, “Iz istorii ellinističeskikh kultov (Dionisij-Sabazij)” [From the history of the Hellenistic cults (Dionysius-Sabazius)], *Sovetskaâ arheologičiâ* 8, pp. 97–112.
- FARMAKOVSKIJ 1902 B. FARMAKOVSKIJ, “Bronzovaâ votivnaâ ručka iz Ekaterinoslavskoj gubernii” [Bronze votive handle from Ekaterinoslav gubernia], *Izvestiâ Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj komisii* 3, pp. 118–121.
- FARMAKOVSKIJ 1906 B. FARMAKOVSKIJ, “Raskopki v Olvii v 1902–1903 godah” [Excavations in Olbia in 1902–1903], *Izvestiâ Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj komisii* 13, pp. 1–237.
- GAJDUKEVIČ 1951 V. GAJDUKEVIČ, “Novye issledovaniâ Ilurata” [New research on Iluraton], *Kratkie soobšeniâ o dokladah i polevyh issledovaniâh Instituta istorii materialnoj kultury* 37, pp. 196–211.
- JAHN 1855 O. JAHN, “Über den Aberglauben des bösen Blicks bei den Alten”, *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der königlich sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-historische Classe* 7, pp. 28–110.
- KOBYLINA 1961 M. KOBYLINA, *Terrakotovye statuetki Pantikapeâ i Fanagorii* [Terracotta figurines of Panticapaeum and Phanagoria], Moscow.
- KOBYLINA 1978 M. KOBYLINA, *Izobraženiâ vostočnyh božestv v Severnom Pričernomor’e v pervyh vekah n.è.* [Images of oriental deities in the northern Black Sea region in the first centuries AD], Moscow.
- KRUGLIKOVA 1952 I. KRUGLIKOVA, “Glinianyj štam iz Kimmerika” [Clay stamp from Kimmerikon], *Kratkie soobšeniâ o dokladah i polevyh issledovaniâh Instituta istorii materialnoj kultury* 43, pp. 119–125.
- KÛMON 2002 F. KÛMON, *Vostočnye religii v rimskom âzyčestve* [Eastern religions in Roman paganism], transl. from French A. SANINOJ, Saint Petersburg.
- LAFAYE 1896 G. LAFAYE, “Fascinum, fascinus”, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, vol. II/2 (F–G), Paris, pp. 983–987.
- LANE 1985 E. LANE, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii*, vol. II: *The Other Monuments and Literary Evidence (CCIS II)*, Leiden.
- LANE 1989 E. LANE, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii*, vol. III: *Conclusions (CCIS III)*, Leiden – New York – Copenhagen – Cologne.
- LENORMANT 1877 F. LENORMANT, “Bacchus”, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, vol. I/1 (A–B), Paris, pp. 591–639.
- LEVINSKAÂ 1987 I. LEVINSKAÂ, “Kult ΘΕΟΣ ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ na Bospore. I: K voprosu o vliânii kulta Sabaziâ” [The cult of ΘΕΟΣ ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ in the Bosporus. I: To the question of the influence of the cult of Sabazius], [in:] *Antičnaâ balkanistika*, ed. L. A. GINDIN, Moscow, pp. 67–73.
- LUSTHAUS 1947 D. LUSTHAUS, “Brażowa rączka wotywna z Myszkowa” [A bronze votive handle from Myszków], *Archeologia (Warsaw)* 1, pp. 169–184.
- MAMRAJ 2012 M. MAMRAJ, “Istočnikovedčeskie problemy istorii kul’ta boga Sabaziâ v antičnom Sredizemnomor’e” [Source study problems of the history of the cult of the god Sabazius in the ancient Mediterranean], [in:] *Materialy Meždunarodnogo molodežnogo naučnogo foruma LOMONO-SOV-2012*, ed. A. I. ANDREEV *et alii*, Moscow, pp. 1–3.
- MARR 1911 N. MARR, “Bog Σαβάζιος u armian” [God Σαβάζιος among Armenians], *Izvestiâ Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk* 5, pp. 759–774.

- MARR 1912 N. MARR, "Frako-armânskij Saba'dios-aswa't i svanskoe božestvo ohoty" [Thraco-Armenian Saba'dios-aswa't and Svan deity of hunting], *Izvestiâ Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk* 6, pp. 827–830.
- MEYER 1856 H. MEYER, "Die Votivhand. Eine römische Bronze von Aventicum", *Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 11, pp. 33–49.
- MILČEV 1977 A. MILČEV, "O kulte Sabaziâ v Nižnej Mezii i Frakii" [About the cult of Sabazius in Lower Moesia and Thrace], *Vestnik drevnej istorii* 140, pp. 58–76.
- MOLINET 1692 C. MOLINET, *Le cabinet de la bibliothèque de Sainte*, Paris.
Otčet 1894 *Otčet Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj kommissii za 1892 god* [Report of the Imperial Archaeological Commission for 1892], Saint Petersburg.
Otčet 1901 *Otčet Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj kommissii za 1898 god* [Report of the Imperial Archaeological Commission for 1898], Saint Petersburg.
Otčet 1914 *Otčet Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj kommissii za 1911 god* [Report of the Imperial Archaeological Commission for 1911], Saint Petersburg.
- PARIS 1912 P. PARIS, "Archäologische Funde im Jahre 1911: Spanien und Portugal", *Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 27, pp. 403–469.
- PERDRIZET 1910 P. PERDRIZET, "Cultes et mythes du Pangée", *Les annales de l'Est* 24, pp. 9–103.
Recueil 1762 *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines et gauloises*, vol. V, Paris.
- REPNIKOV 1927 N. REPNIKOV, "Dnevnik raskopok kersonneskogo nekropolâ" [Diary of excavations of the Chersonesus necropolis], *Hersonesskij sbornik* 2, pp. 147–187.
- ROSTOVCEV 1913 M. ROSTOVCEV, *Antichnaâ dekorativnaâ živopis na ūge Rossii. Atlas. Tabl. I–CXII* [Antique decorative painting in the south of Russia. Atlas. Tab. I–CXII], Saint Petersburg.
- ROSTOVCEV 1914 M. ROSTOVCEV, *Antichnaâ dekorativnaâ živopis na ūge Rossii. Tekst* [Antique decorative painting in the south of Russia. Text], vol. I, Saint Petersburg.
- ROSTOVCEV 1918 M. ROSTOVCEV, *Ellinstvo i iranstvo na ūge Rossii. Obsij očerk* [Hellenism and Iranism in the south of Russia. General essay], Saint Petersburg.
- SCHUMACHER 1890 K. SCHUMACHER, *Großherzogliche Vereinigte Sammlungen zu Karlsruhe. Beschreibung der Sammlung antiker Bronzen*, Karlsruhe.
- ŠEVČENKO 2011 T. ŠEVČENKO, *Religijnij svitoglâd naseleonnâ antičnogo Hersonesa* [Religious outlook of the population of ancient Chersonesus], Kyiv.
- ŠKORPIL 1911 V. ŠKORPIL, "Otčet o raskopkah v g. Kerči v 1908 g." [Report on excavations in the city of Kerch and in 1908], *Izvestiâ Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj kommissii* 40, pp. 62–91.
- ŠKORPIL 1914 V. ŠKORPIL, "Otčet o raskopkah v g. Kerči i na Tamanskom poluostrove v 1911 g." [Report on excavations in the city of Kerch and on the Taman Peninsula in 1911], *Izvestiâ Imperatorskoj arheologičeskoj kommissii* 56, pp. 1–74.
- TAČEVA-HITOVA 1982 M. TAČEVA-HITOVA, *Istoriâ na iztočnite kultove v Dolna Miziâ i Trakiâ V v. pr. n.e. – IV v. ot. n.e.* [History of eastern cults in Lower Mysia and Thrace 5th century BC – 4th century AD], Sofia.
- TOLSTOJ, KONDAKOV 1889 I. TOLSTOJ, N. KONDAKOV, *Ruskiâ drevnosti v pamâtnikah iskusstva* [Russian antiquity in monuments of art], Saint Petersburg.
- VERMASEREN 1983 M. VERMASEREN, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii*, vol. I: *The Hands (CCIS1)*, Leiden.
- VERMASEREN 1989 M. VERMASEREN, *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque*, vol. VI: *Germania, Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Macedonia, Thracia, Moesia*,

ZEEST 1950

Dacia, Regnum Bospori, Colchis, Scythia et Sarmatia (CCCA VI),
Leiden – New York – Copenhagen – Cologne.

I. ZEEST, “Kimmeriskaâ mukomolnaâ masterskaâ i zernovoe hozâjstvo
Bospora” [Kimmerikon flour-grinding workshop and grain farming of
the Bosporus], *Kratkie soobšeniâ o dokladah i polevyh issledovaniâh
Instituta istorii materialnoj kultury* 33, pp. 96–102.

Andrij Korčak
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
Department of Archaeology
and Special Historical Studies
orcid.org/0000-0002-3895-9677
naum2109@ukr.net