

**Illyrian exhibit found in Mugilla village,
Municipality of Kllokot**



Archaeology

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Abstract

The feature of Illyrian underground symbols are somehow enlightened but not to the desired extent since archaeological evidences are quite fragmented and not sufficient and this, in our opinion, not that they do not exist, but for the fact that Illyrian localities are still little explored, for various, objective and subjective reasons. Fortunately, our discovery is rich with such Illyrian symbols. Normally our research marks the start of a debate on the symbols displayed on this exhibit, since this is a very rare source material and very significant, which, we think, requires a very professional approach to a group of experts in the field of archeology, ancient religion, history etc. In this case we will offer our opinion on the above-mentioned exhibit symbols, but without any intention to put a period of our decoding towards this view, and because the number of symbols mentioned is much larger than the number of symbols which we will try to decode, and the fact that our goal is to try to interpret just easier distinct symbols, because of the difficulty of deciphering all symbols, which, in the case of a detailed analysis, put forward quite difficult questions. Among the symbols that can be distinguished easily on the exhibit are: the figure of the snake, the figure of fish, shell fish specifically; four concentric circle, but in my opinion, a more controversial figure is the figure of a horse or rather there are present four horses in the queue.

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Figure 1. Illyrian exhibit found in Mugillë village, Municipality of Kllokot

The exhibit is found in Mugillë²⁰⁰ village Anamorava region, unprocessed, which contains some engraved symbols that talks of Illyrian origin. The dimensions of this exhibit are about 90x70x12 cm.

On the right, the exponent seems to have suffered a fracture throughout its width, but it should be noted that all the symbols can be beautifully observed and the broken part has not damaged the sense of it. Exhibit in question is a kennel quite rare and very special, which, in our opinion, is parromake or better is typically Illyrian! There are some scientific rationales which we speak in favor of such conclusion.

First arguments about its Illyrian origin are symbols carved on it, which reflect two most prevalent cults to the Illyrians, the cult of the Sun and the Snake cult and in the same exhibit, which is a very rare case, who supports the opinion Illyrian studies who see Illyrian culture and the exact same part of the torso, with their specifications²⁰¹.

The other reason, which speaks in favor of a typical Illyrian exponent, lies in the fact that this monument has no Latin inscription of the Roman period²⁰².

By symbols itself on it, we can conclude that this kennel belongs to ancient Illyrian culture or period of transition from pagan beliefs in the polytheistic, a period that corresponds to the centuries VI - V, p. l. K.

Also locality and mikrotoponym where it²⁰³ was found talks in favor of this typical Illyrian character. Exhibit is found in a place called Hill of the Church (Kodra e Kishës) in Mugillë, a mikrotoponym for which people have many legends²⁰⁴. These legends are about a church of the village as a very old church. For some time now, known Kosovar archaeologists such as Edi Shukriu, search for a dardan temple on the outskirts of Viti.

Even though the professor in question searches the potential temple between the villages of Vërban and Smirë, respectively Gushicë village, a hill called Agradina, latest discovery in this known archaeological locality as Mugillë village is, in our opinion, imposes as one of the potential runways research of this temple.

The stone on which the artist has carved all pagan Illyrian cult figures, apparently did not come from elsewhere, since this type of stones can be found throughout the locality, ie near the hill called Cërnel, according to Slavic it has the meaning as black hill.

Given the dark color of the stones of the hill, as well as the stone to which we are talking, the name of this hill appears as the Slavic toponym version of the Black Hill. As is known, most of Illyrian toponyms during the middle ages, but also in modern times, especially after the Balkan Wars, became Slavic because of certain political goals.

It is very important that in the village where it was found this exhibit, not far from mikrotoponymy called Church Hill, for which we assume that there, in that place, there are traces and archaeological material of an Illyrian shrine, which with time could have been turned into a Catholic church rite and Orthodox later, there is a very interesting toponym to noted, as the toponym is since Illyrian and is maintained even today, meaning that has endured the time for two thousand years. An example here is a toponym called Bread (Buke), which is located in the flat part of arable land, about one kilometer east of the village Mugillë, respectively, between the village and another nearby village Gjylekar²⁰⁵.

²⁰⁰ Mugillë village is located 5 km to the northeast of the city of Viti. This village belonged to the municipality of Viti, but after the Decentralization process and the creation of new municipalities, has become part of the new municipality of Kllokot.

²⁰¹ For some time now in scientific circles is supported a conclusion that the cult of the Sun has been spread to northern Illyrians, and he Serpent/Snake to southern Illyrians. (This view also protects Croatian scholar Alexander Stipcevic, in his famous work "The Illyrians - history, life, culture, symbols of worship"). Although ancient Dardania stretched central Illyria is well known that their social relationships were associated with southern Illyria and Macedonia antiques. The presence of the cult of the Sun to Dardans speaks unique habits and customs among the Illyrians.

²⁰² It is well known that Illyrian exhibits and other people of the Roman period are full of Latin writings, eg at the time of the consuls, to whom belonged monument etc. Such is the next stele (**Dea Dardanica**) was discovered in the district of Viti, Smirë village, which belongs to the Roman period (c. II es), published by kosovar archaeologist Dr. Edi Shukriu (See: Further investigation Albanological Researches, series of historical sciences, no. 20, Pristina, 1991).

²⁰³ It should be remembered that Mugillë village, while working the land were found early archaeological traces, as for example old pottery bases, etc. Also, the village in question is another location nearby archaeological Kllokotit spa, which were conducted archaeological excavations and discoveries very important to Illyrian material culture, such as the Bust of Woman from Kllokoti. The importance of this ancient settlement, among others, has added the healing thermal waters of Banja Kllokotit, making this locality important throughout history.

²⁰⁴ In his book *Kosovo settlements - Viti*, Kosovar scholar Yusuf Osman, cites two elderly villagers of Mugillë Dzemail train - Lah and Faik Rexhepi, interviewed in 2000, respectively in 2002, which shows, according to legend, the Orthodox church has been an old Catholic church, adopted by the Serbs during the Middle Ages.

²⁰⁵ Land that holds this toponym is an agricultural land first class and, as such, it has had a decisive role in welfare and food security of the residents of this locality. Perhaps this is the main factor that has contributed to the preservation of the original name of the toponym in question. Moreover the presence of such a toponym, the original: Bread (bread), which is derived from the Illyrian language, because the same word is used even today in Albanian (bread), in a locality with many archeological traces, as is village in question, speaks in favor of the existence of ancient Illyrian settlement.

It belongs to experts in the field, archaeologists, who, through professional studies, even those technological and scientific (physical and chemical methods), to throw light on the age of the exhibit in question, namely to establish time limits his appearance.

Although this Illyrian spiritual culture monument is not yet sufficiently studied, because as we have noted, is found few weeks ago, we reserve the right to throw some light on it since it is the first time of its scientific treatment.

From the first sight of this exhibit with the eye of an expert in the field of history, archeology and art history, it can be seen its htonic character²⁰⁶

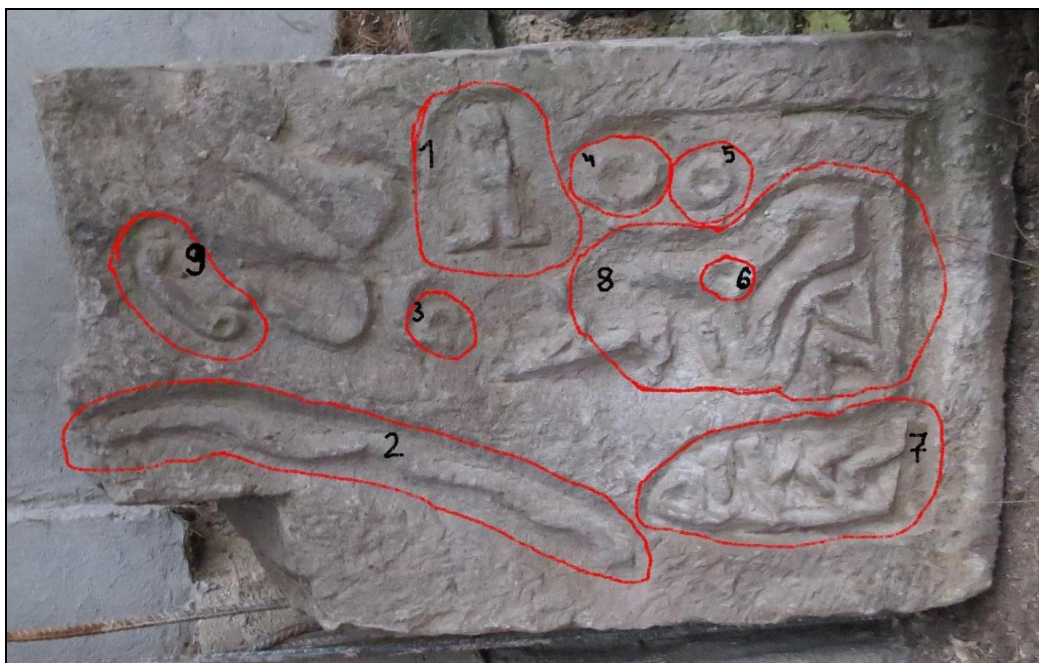


Figure 2. Main symbols on exhibit found in Mugillë village.

If we want to give a logical or scientific explanation of this headstone monument, as symbols that are presented there, I think we should start from illustration number 1 (see illustration no. 1, the above fig. no. 2). Symbol which is located in the district with the number 1 appears to be human figure lying, so even with extended legs in a horizontal position, which coincides with the position of dead human body!

We think that this monument is dedicated to the deceased presented on the kennel, which could have been the key figure for the time he lived and all other Illyrian spiritual world symbols are carved to accompany him to the world after life. This reconfirmed fact again on this monument, reinforces the view that even with the Illyrians was very strong the belief in life after death. This thing is proved by many archaeological objects found throughout the Illyrian territory, as, for example, objects of pottery, fibulae, necklaces etc.

Among the symbols that distinguish easily on above-mentioned Exhibit are: the figure of the serpent (see circle illustrated with no. 2), which is seen quite easily on stele, although the damage to headstone lacks head, but, as is evident, his whole body is there and you can quite easily see that it is the serpent; pictures of fish, namely fish skeleton, which also is noticed quite easily (see illustration no. 7); four figures of concentric circles (see illustrations with no. 3, 4, 5 and 6); coil (see illustration no. 9), and other more controversial figure, but that, in my opinion, is the figure of a horse or rather there are present four horses in the queue (see illustration no. 8).

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As stated above, these symbols is not that they are not known for the Illyrian cult but the specificity of the exhibit in question is that the symbols are displayed all on a monument, and in my opinion, even in shape much thought and not random, which excel particularly concentric circles, here are presented in the form of unique and very precise. We will specify our opinion in this paper in the following.

Snake

Snake Cult undoubtedly has been more widespread cult to Illyrians! This reptile, as historical sources say, has associated the Illyrians, even from the beginnings of their existence. We recall the story of the legend of Kadmi and Harmony by Apollodorus. According to this legend, Kadmi, son of Phoenician king Agenor and his wife Harmony came in territory the Illyrians lived. There was born their son, whom baptized with the name Illyrios and that immediately after birth snake wrapped, transferring to child his magical powers. Legend finally goes on turning Kadmi and Harmony into snakes in old age²⁰⁷.

Although the figure of the snake as an Illyrian cult figure, is treated many times in various works and in relation to this symbol are given so far many important data from various scholars, and considering the fact that with regard to this we can not bring any scientific innovation, we will not stop so much in general interpretation of his image. Instead, we will try to address the Illyrian cult figure in conjunction with other figures presented in this monument.

Although many researchers believe that the cult has been spread only in southern Illyrians, especially in culture of Trebenishtit, every day is realized that the two Illyrian known cults, he Snake and the Sun have coexisted along the entire Illyria.

Presentation of the figures of the two cults, on the monument which we are treating, perhaps speaks in favor of this hypothesis, since ancient Dardania even though very influenced by the culture of Trebenishtit, it nevertheless is not part of southern Illyria. In the case of the snake figure, it seems that it has several meanings! Except as guardians of the tomb, it also symbolizes the resurrection in the afterlife, since, as mentioned earlier, its simultaneous appearance with the cult of the Sun, not only strengthens this view, but is also a very rare presentation.

Fish

Presentation of fish on this monument is also very interesting! Fish is a very old symbol of worship to different people, but it is not often encountered in Illyrian material resources. There are two-three cases of fish fragments in urns found in Bosnia and none of them offers the clarity of its presentation²⁰⁸.

The snake may have the role as defender of human rights in the underground world, and fish in underwater world. Normally, this hypothesis is raised by us remains as such until other discoveries, because now it is too early to reach such a conclusion.

Croatian scholar Alexander Stipčević fish presentation on objects or urn funeral stele or urna connects to Great Mother, which is a symbol of fertility and resurrection²⁰⁹. Starting from this principle we think that even on the exponent, the fish has this meaning, the meaning of resurrection after death. When we talk about fish, in our specific case, a very intrigue and interesting fact is that it appears with the image of the serpent, which allows us to consider the role of these two Illyrian cult figures, as a protector of man in the afterlife.

It is interesting that although the fish figure is not mush present on the Illyrian discovered objects, Croatian scholar Illyrianolog Stipčević, based on his scientific intuition believes that the fish must have been one of the important figures of Illyrian worship²¹⁰. Our exhibit proves as accurate his intuition and this fact certainly makes us happy too.

Horse

The figure of the horse and his role in the Illyrian cult is sparsely enlightened, despite the fact that it is presented, although not much. We recall the image of the horse shown in Nesactium (Croatia). This image to other nations meant the resurrection of the dead in the next world, as other symbols that we spoke during the study.

²⁰⁷ A. Stipčević, cit., p. 326.

²⁰⁸ A. Stipčević, cit., p. 379.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

When considering the fact that the image of the horse in the Mugillë stele is located near other htonic figures, then we can say that even for the Illyrians this figure had such meaning.

Croatian scholar A. Stipcevic, as far as the figure of the horse in Illyrian cult, insists on thinking that the cult has spread to more northern Illyrians, from the impact of nomadic horsemen, or the cult was known to the Illyrians, before the invasions of barbarian people, the VI-V century p. l. K211.

An interesting element of the horse, the monument of the village Mugillë, in my opinion, is its relations with a non-random write source of the ancient period, which quotes the Croatian A. Stipcevic! Lexicographer of the II p. l. century K., Festus, writes that "the Illyrians, in honor of Neptune, every nine years sacrifice to sea four horses"! Presentation of the four horses, on the monument in question, makes us believe that the Illyrian cult mentioned by ancient sources could have been a cult spread throughout Illyria or most of it, although the Croat, Stipcevic, that we quoted many times, connects this source with the possibility of the existence of a local cult in rural Illyrian coast. The presentation of horse cult in dardan region, for the first time on this Illyrian monument makes us think that the cult was widespread even in Dardans, since in this kennel are clearly seen four horses in the queue (see figure illustrated with no. 8)

This hypothesis stated above is based on the fact that ancient Dardania, laying back Illyrian tribes: the taulants, the pirust, the albens, was not far from where the coast which could have adopted this cult.

In conclusion, we advocate the opinion that the figure of the horse in Illyrian cult is not just a figure associated with the horse, as protector of ships and seafarers, as some scholars think, it also has the meaning of htonic symbol associated with the Great Mother, a symbol of fertility, birth and rebirth (resurrection) of the dead in the hereafter, a function which plays precisely on this monument. However the appearance of four horses in the queue, here, makes us suspect for a deity Kali, in the Illyrian area, but this is hard to be lightened since it is difficult to argue only with this fragment.

The Cult of Sun presented through concentric circles

On Exhibit found in the Mugillë village also is noticed a symbolic of the cult of the Sun, filed by four concentric circles (see circles illustrate the no. 3, 4, 5, 6) and that, in my opinion, very precisely and unique!

Concentric circles on this monument appear above the body of a snake (first circle with no. 3), exactly where it leads the logical explanation of Illyrian religious symbols! The snake, which we spoke earlier, has been the leading figure in the world of underground in the respective concrete case.²¹²

Presentation of the cult of the Sun on the exhibit has other half meaning of Illyrian faith for the resurrection of the person in the world after life. It is very interesting how they are these four concentric circles presented. If we look to the four together, they present a one-day cycle of the sun: its birth, peak time and sunset! Also interesting is the size of the circles shown! If we look carefully to four, we note that the second circle (one in the picture no. 4), which corresponds to the peak time (noon), is greater than the three other circles, an element that makes us think there is east and sunset shown.

It is also unique the appearance of the fourth concentric circle (see illustration no. 6), which is presented on the body of the horse. According to the logical flow of presentation of the circles on the monument, the fourth circle, about whom I speak, should be presented slightly below, for several centimeters. Its appearance exactly on the body of the horse and not a few centimeters below where it should be applied under logical rationality brings us to two conclusions: first, the Illyrian artist may have presented in that place, since he had more free space to carve on horse's body, because below, the legs create a problem and feared losing his temper appearance of the image.

The second reason that comes to our mind is the possibility of coherence between the cult of the Sun and the cult of Horse, as well as the connection of the two presentations in the context of the complete cycle of the significance of the resurrection in the hereafter life. Finally, we can say that the monument found in the village Mugillë deserves a detailed study by experts of the field, because, as we have mentioned several times, is a very rare significant exhibit, which, surely, will help to enlighten the Illyrian spiritual world. Once I had the chance to be the first scientific interpreter of this, I kindly expect even greater additional thoughts regarding it.

²¹¹ Researcher A. Stipcevic, is not convinced that the Illyrians had their cult of horse, with the exception of some coastal areas, which also could have had any local deity of the horse, since in the central and southern Illyria its appearance is quite rare. See: A. Stipcevic, *Acts. cit.*, p. 334-340.

²¹² It is known that the image of the snake, except the figure of the underground world, it had also other attributes. It was the protector of hearth appliances, symbol of fertility, resurrection etc., all these attributes that we discussed above.