

Telesphorus. A healing child god in Roman Dacia

Timea VARGA

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Abstract. The aim of this study is to map the repertoire of the cult of the healing child-god Telesphorus and to trace the spatial layout and the specific patterns of each of his distinct iconographical types. First of all this study will try to trace the itinerary of this child-god from Pergam to the Danubian area and implicitly to Dacia, based on the literary, epigraphic, or iconographic sources. Furthermore this study attempts to analyze and confirm the identity of an ithyphallic Telesphorus at Ampelum, proving that its earlier interpretations as Priapus or *genius cucullatus* are not sufficient theories, and correlating the few analogies that can be attributed to Telesphorus with other literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources. Lastly it identifies some rare associations (i.e. the Hygieia – Telesphorus statuette from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, the presence of Hypnos or Epione next to the healing triad), some unusual archaeological contexts (i.e. the presence of ten terracotta figurines representing Telesphorus in the *favissae* of the Liber Pater sanctuary of Apulum) and some distinct iconographical types (i.e. an ithyphallic Telesphorus, votive reliefs with *pseudo-aedicula* framework portraying the healing triad, typical for the Thracian area, and votive reliefs with the healing quartet, typical only for the Eastern part of the Roman Empire.)

Keywords: Telesphorus, healing triad, iconography, cult, Roman Dacia.

Rezumat. Telesphorus. Un zeu-copil salutar în Dacia romană.

Scopul acestui studiu este de a repertoria cultul zeului-copil salutar, Telesphorus și de a urmări difuziunea sa spațială și modelele specifice fiecărui tip iconografic în parte. În primul rând, se va încerca reconstituirea itinerariului acestui zeu-copil de la Pergam în zona dunăreană, și implicit în Dacia, pornind de la sursele literare, epigrafice sau iconografice cunoscute. În continuare studiul urmărește să analizeze și să confirme identitatea unui Telesphorus ithyphallic la Ampelum, dovedind că interpretările anterioare ale acestuia ca Priapus sau *genius cucullatus* nu pot fi considerate satisfăcătoare și corelând puținele piese de acest tip care pot fi atribuite lui Telesphorus, cu alte surse literare, epigrafice și numismatice. În cele din urmă, articolul identifică câteva asocieri rare (i. e. statueta care îl

reprezintă pe Telesphorus alături de Hygia, de la Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, prezența lui Hypnos sau Epione alături de triada salutară), unele contexte arheologice aparte (i. e. zece figurine de teracotă reprezentându-l pe Telesphorus în *favissae*-le sanctuarului lui Liber Pater de la Apulum) și câteva tipuri iconografice distincte (i. e. un Telesphorus itifalic, reliefuri votive cu cadru în formă de *pseudo-aedicula*, înfățișând triada salutară, tipice pentru zona tracică și reliefuri votive cu cei patru zei salutarți, tipice pentru partea estică a Imperiului Roman).

Cuvinte cheie: Telesphorus, triada salutară, iconografie, cult, Dacia romană.

From Telesphoros Pergamēnos to the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. The itinerary of a god

For some the genius of convalescence, for others the divinity that perfects health, Telesphorus appears as a secondary deity in the entourage of Aesculapius and Hygieia, far later than the beginning of the cult of his alleged father, barely in the first century AD.

The earliest literary sources regarding this god go back to the second century AD, Pausanias and Aelius Aristides both agreeing on his Pergamēnian origin¹. In fact this theory seems to be the most plausible one, since the first dedication ever made to Telesphorus, dated 98-99 AD, comes from the same place².

Besides mentioning his Pergamēnian origin, Pausanias' testimony is otherwise more important for equating Telesphorus with Euamerion (*Accomplisher*) of Titane and Akesis (*Cure*) of Epidaurus³. It seems that the three are in fact the same deity worshipped under different names in various *asklepieia*, names that Telesphorus will eventually completely overlap under his name. He is in fact the only one among the three that is epigraphically attested as son of Aesculapius in an Attican inscription dated at the end of the second century AD⁴.

The rhetorician Aelius Aristides calls him *Περγαμηνός* and feels grateful to him for a healing balsam that Telesphorus gave him as a treatment during alternative cold-hot baths⁵. After learning in a dream that he will die in two days, he manages to cheat death with the help of

¹ Pausanias, *Descriptio Graeciae*, II.11.7; Aelius Aristides, *Orationes*, II, 10.

² DA, V, 1892, s.v. *Telesphorus*, 70.

³ Pausanias, *Descriptio Graeciae*, II.11.7.

⁴ IG III, 1, 1159, *apud*, Edelstein 1945, T. 287.

⁵ Aelius Aristides, *Orationes*, II, 10.

Telesphorus, by offering the child-god a ring inscribed with the words «O, son of Cronus», which is in fact a substitution for the sacrifice of one of his body parts for the sake of the whole as Aesculapius has demanded⁶. He also tells us that Telesphorus had a temple and a statue in the *asklepieion* of Pergam and that in the temple of Zeus Asclepius a silver tripod was placed, wearing the golden statues of Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphorus⁷.

After overlapping Akesis of Epidaurus, the itinerary of Telesphorus probably follows Athens, Attica and Thessaly, and the precise motive of his rapid diffusion can be found in a third century AD eulogy, that thanks Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphorus for their efficient intervention during an epidemic⁸.

However from Epidaurus the cult of the healing child-god Telesphorus follows another route as well, penetrating the Thracian area, as it seems suggested by an inscription found at Epidaurus⁹. Dedicated by a *sacerdos*, the inscription calls Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphorus with the toponymic epithet *Παυταλιωται*, suggesting thus that from Epidaurus the cult reaches Thracia and becomes assimilated locally under this epithet. We can imagine that the dedicator was either an epidaurian *sacerdos* native of Pautalia, or more probably that he went on a pilgrimage at Epidaurus and offered as *ex voto* this monument for the healing gods, attaching to their name the epithet *Παυταλιωται*, probably out of faithfulness for the *asklepieion* he was serving.

Indeed this association of Telesphorus with the healing divine couple will form in the Thracian area a particular iconography, numerous votive reliefs or coins representing the healing triad Hygieia, Aesculapius and Telesphorus, in the mentioned order or with Telesphorus in the central part being discovered solely in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, mostly at Pautalia, Batkun and Glava Panega in Thracia¹⁰ and at Tomis, Odessos and Nicopolis ad Istrum in Moesia Inferior¹¹.

⁶ Aelius Aristides, *Orationes*, II, 27.

⁷ Aelius Aristides, *Orationes*, III, 21; IV, 16; IV, 45-46.

⁸ EG, no. 1027.

⁹ IG IV², 1, 477, apud, Alfieri Tonini 2012, 225.

¹⁰ LIMC, II, 1984, s.v. *Asklepios (in Thracia)*, 898-899, no. 15-20; LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hygieia (in Thracia)*, 572-573, no. 3-5; LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, 874, no. 56-59; Sirano 1994, fig. 17; Alfieri Tonini 2012, fig. 1.

¹¹ Aparaschivei 2012, 164-165, 169-170.

The reliefs show a particular iconography, portraying the healing triad in a *pseudo-aedicula* frame. Aesculapius is represented almost always with long and richly curled hair and beard, and wearing a long *chiton* that covers completely his left arm and almost entirely his abdomen, this draping being characteristic for some of the variants of the *Chiaramonti* type statues¹². He also holds the snake entwined rod under his right armpit, typical for the *Giustini* type¹³, and seems to hold an egg in the same hand, an attribute characteristic for the Nea Paphos versions¹⁴.

Hygieia wears a *himation* that covers her shoulders, passes under the right arm and forms a ridge under her belly before falling back on her left forearm, a draping characteristic for the Broadlands type¹⁵. In her left hand she holds the *patera* from which she feeds the snake that coils around her right arm, while Telesphorus holds his hands clasped to his chest, under the usual *bardocucullus*.

One similar relief was found in Pannonia¹⁶, while 2 variants of this particular iconography can be found in Dacia as well¹⁷, suggesting that the presence of the healing triad in Dacia and Pannonia is in fact the end of a long itinerary, that culminates with a new iconographical type that radiates outwards the adjacent areas of the Thracian space as well.

Curative tasks and the association with the healing gods. From the protector of children to the god of convalescence

It is very likely that, before extending his curative tasks to the more general façade of a convalescence god, Telesphorus would have had a more specific role among the healing gods, that of the protector of children. He must have inherited these attributes from his father Aesculapius, as it is suggested by the numerous *ex vota* representing children figurines that were discovered in several *asklepieia* of the Greek world¹⁸.

In this quality he accompanied children from birth to adolescence, and even beyond death, portraying thus his strong

¹² LIMC, II, 1984, s.v. *Asklepios*, 878.

¹³ LIMC, II, 1984, s.v. *Asklepios*, 879-881.

¹⁴ Sirano 1994, 199-232.

¹⁵ LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hygieia*, 560-562.

¹⁶ Fitz 1998, 80, no. 89.

¹⁷ See Catalogue no. 14, 15.

¹⁸ Deonna 1955, 54-55.

association with infants, besides his obvious iconographical features that exclusively show him as a boy at young age. Some hymns honoring him thank the god for favoring the birth of healthy children¹⁹, while two attic lists mentioning *ephebes* from the 3rd century BC show Telephorus as the protective divinity of one of the fraternities²⁰.

More interesting however remains the fact that in this quality he even accompanied children beyond death, perhaps as a final gesture of protection, as suggested by some statuettes depicting the small cloaked god together with a child, that were discovered in two children's graves in the necropolis of Stobi, dated in the 2nd century B.C.²¹. One of them is an inhumation grave containing besides the skeleton of an infant a rich funerary inventory, including bronze objects, a terracotta «baby-feeder» and 4 terracotta figurines, a bull with a winged rider, a rooster and two statuettes portraying Telephorus with a child²². In another grave, this time a cremation burial, another 15 identical figurines of Telephorus with a child were found together with another «baby feeder», suggesting thus that we have to do with another infant burial²³.

Even though in Roman period he is generally seen as the symbol of recovery from illness and plays an important role in the health triad Aesculapius – Hygieia – Telephorus, his special role as the protector of children never seems to disappear, as it seems suggested by the figurines representing Telephorus that were discovered in children's graves in various Roman necropolises from Sardinia²⁴.

The cult of Telephorus in Roman Dacia. Iconographical types - spatial layouts and specific patterns.

In Dacia it is hard to outline whether Telephorus played the specific role of protector of children, since there are no votive terracottas found in funerary contexts attributed to infants or ones that show him together with a child, neither any specific inscriptions that mention him healing children. However we might presume that the plastic lamps portraying

¹⁹ LexMyth, V, 1916-1924, s.v. *Telesphoros*, 312; Deonna 1955, 54.

²⁰ DA, V, 1892, s.v. *Telesphorus*, 70.

²¹ Wiseman/Mano Zissi 1976, 278-279; LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no. 35; Similar terracotta statuettes can be found at Thessaloniki and Würzburg: LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no. 34, 36.

²² Wiseman/Mano Zissi 1976, 278-279.

²³ Wiseman/Mano Zissi 1976, 278, note 18.

²⁴ La Fragola 2015, 60.

an ithyphallic Telesphorus found at Ampelum (Pl. I /1-2) could have played this role²⁵ and Grandjouan offers us as a pertinent explanation, saying that the lamps used to watch through night children's rooms or sickrooms could have used a specific imagery, either apotropaic grotesques or the images of Telesphorus and Hygieia, imagery used in order to avert the evil eye or any kind of sickness²⁶.

Having no dedicatory inscription, these pieces are highly contradictory, being published in the specialty literature initially as Priapus, than as *genius cucullatus* or Telesphorus. This study inclines towards the latter, bringing forward some arguments in favor of this identification, showing us that an ithyphallic Telesphorus at Ampelum wouldn't be an odd finding at all.

First of all we should try to outline why the identification of our pieces with either Priapus or *genius cucullatus* is not a sufficient theory, and if we take a look at the various lamps depicting ithyphallic *cucullati* found in the Roman Empire²⁷ we will easily observe that they don't show a whatsoever standardized uniform image, some of them depicting bearded figurines with grotesque or silenic features or just having the expression of an old man, while others are beardless, portraying younger men or having distingue childish features.

Also iconographically speaking we should note that the bearded figurines are usually draped in a bell shaped mantle, that runs above or till the knee, having a pointed conical hood, made separately from the mantle²⁸, while the *cucullati* with infantile features wear a mantle that follows closely the body line, usually covering the knees and having their head protected by the *bardocucullus* realized in one piece²⁹.

Another important characteristic may be that of the confection material, the lamps portraying *cucullati* with childish features known so far being all terracotta lamps, while the bearded ones are made solely out of bronze.

For the bearded figurines the interpretations vary from Priapus, mime or actor in theatrical costume or *genius cucullatus*³⁰, while the

²⁵ Popa/Moga/Ciobanu 1986, 112, fig. 8/3; Lipovan 1992, 63, no. 1, 2, fig. 1, 2; Anghel et al. 2011, no. 66-67.

²⁶ Grandjouan 1961, 32.

²⁷ Grandjouan 1961, no. 904, 943, 954, 1062; Bolla 2010, no. 1 - 22, fig. 1-27.

²⁸ Bolla 2010, no. 1-15, fig. 1- 21.

²⁹ Grandjouan 1961, no. 943; Lipovan 1992, 63, fig. 1, 1 a-b; Anghel et al. 2010, no. 67; LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, 871, no. 8-9; Bolla 2010, fig. 26, fn. 13.

³⁰ Singular or tripled divinity whose cult is diffused especially in Britannia and Gallia.

beardless ones were considered to be depictions of Telesphorus or generically included in the aforementioned category of *genii cucullati*³¹.

Bolla concludes that the identification of these particular plastic lamps with the Celtic *genius cucullatus* cannot be considered a sufficient explanation since numerous bronze lamps portraying ithyphallic *cucullati* appear in areas where this cult is not even attested³². Also the absence of this kind of representation from Britannia and the presence of the beard and the phallus, which are absent in other certain representations of the *genius cucullatus*, seems to confirm that the interpretations must vary according with the different iconographies.

Neither the identification with Priapus seems to be sufficient, because he rarely appears with the *bardocucullus* closed at the sides and sharpened on the head³³. Some of the lamps also show a prominent stomach or grotesque features and should perhaps be generically included among the apotropaic imagery³⁴, while others show the prominent ears and the snub nose characteristic for Silenus³⁵.

Second of all, the presence of Telesphorus at Ampelum, even in the form of a lamp, can easily be explained by the existence here of an epigraphically attested temple dedicated to Aesculapius and Hygieia by a certain Eutyches, *Augusti libertus* and *adiutor tabularii*³⁶. Whether it would have been used in the temple or for the night watch of a sickroom or a child room, it still proves us that people were well aware of the significant role that Telesphorus played in the healing triad, thing otherwise well attested by the 7 sculptural monuments found in Dacia that portray him next to Aesculapius and Hygieia, and sometimes even in the presence of Hypnos³⁷.

The best analogy for our pieces is the terracotta lamp discovered at Athens (Pl. 1/4), showing a very similar Telesphorus standing on a round base and wearing a hood on his head that leaves a small portion of his neck visible³⁸. In fact these kinds of pieces, terracotta lamps

³¹ Bolla 2010, 61-63.

³² Bolla 2010, 62.

³³ Bolla 2010, fn. 51.

³⁴ Grandjouan 1961, no. 1062; Bolla 2010, fig. 22.

³⁵ Bolla 2010, fig. 12, 27.

³⁶ Igna 1935, 92; AE 1959, 306; Popa 1961, 271; IDR III/3, 280; Rusu-Pescaru/Alicu 2000, 123; Fenechiu 2008, 214, no. 5, p. 219; Bărbulescu 2009, 132.

³⁷ See Catalogue no. 3, 14-19.

³⁸ Grandjouan 1961, no. 943; LIMC, VII, an. s.v. *Telesphoros*, 871, no. 8.

portraying *cucullati* with distinguishable childish features and with a phallic nozzle, can only be found so far in Greece, and especially in Athens (Pl. 1/4-5)³⁹, a well-known centre of the Aesculapius cult.

Now that we established that an ithyphallic *cucullatus* is not necessarily Priapus or the Celtic *genius cucullatus*, and that finding him at Ampelum inclines the balance in favor of a third interpretation, that of Telesphorus, we will further try to solve the contradictions that arouse from this unlikely iconography, ultimately aiming to respond to two main questions, why would Telesphorus be represented on a lamp and why in an ithyphallic posture.

As for the first question, the key lies in the strong connection of the healing gods with the *incubatio* ritual and thus with the need of light, Telesphorus himself being called in various hymns dedicated to him as «bringer of light».

The opening of a hymn dedicated to the healing child-god at Athens calls Telesphorus «blessed one, light-giver, giver of necessities / image of Paeon, illustrious and expert»⁴⁰, while at Pergamum he bears both the epithets ζωοφόρος, «life bringing, generating», perhaps an allusion to his fertile nature and φαεινβροτος, «bringing light to mortal men», a large number of votive tablets showing him standing beside Aesculapius at a sickbed⁴¹. Indeed Damascius says that, though inferior to his father, Telesphorus supplies a missing element in the Paeonian wholeness of Aesculapius, perfecting the health of one who invokes him properly next to the later⁴². Perhaps that's why sometimes he even substitutes his father in the *incubatio* ritual, offering the right treatments for the sick ones during their dream, this duplication being attested both by epigraphic⁴³ and literary sources⁴⁴.

Beside the epithet ζωοφόρος, «life bringing, generating» and his association with Terra Mater - Demeter⁴⁵, his phallic nature was also

³⁹ Bolla 2010, fig. 26, fn. 13.

⁴⁰ Furley/Bremer 2001, Hymn 7.7.2.

⁴¹ Deonna 1955, 53; Meier 2003, 39.

⁴² Damascius, *Dubitationes et solutiones*, 245, *apud*, Edelstein 1945, T 313.

⁴³ IG IV² 1, 561: A certain Phaboullos erects a temple and a statue for Telesphorus at Epidaurus after a dream, naming him *Savior*, suggesting that his actions follow his healing.

⁴⁴ Aelius Aristides, *Orationes*, 3. 23; Marinus, *Vita Procli*, 7.

⁴⁵ Numerous clay figurines representing *cucullati* and Magna Mater, dated late 3rd-2nd century B.C. were discovered among the votive deposits found in the Temple of

noticed by Mionnet on a coin found at Samos, that wears the effigy of Decius and on the reverse the two healing gods Aesculapius - Hygieia and between them a small figure with a Phrygian bonnet and a mantle that leaves his phallus visible, a figure that most likely is in fact the same ithyphallic Telephorus that we see on our lamps (Pl. I/1-5)⁴⁶.

Besides these two lamps there are another ten unpublished terracotta figurines portraying Telephorus alone, found in the cult pits discovered within the perimeter of the Liber Pater sanctuary from Apulum⁴⁷.

Haynes says that among the 77 votive terracotta figurines discovered in the Liber Pater sanctuary 40 represent Venus, 10 Telephorus, 8 Aesculapius and Hygieia and 6 Liber Pater, mentioning as well that the first two categories were the only ones found among the inventory of the cult pits⁴⁸.

He also suggests as a possible explanation that this discard pattern could be associated with «visiting deities» over the site's divine patron or a distinct cultic allegiance amongst diverse income groups⁴⁹, however I think that the explanation might be a simpler one and that the key lies in the well-known motto «*balnea, vina, Venus*»⁵⁰.

A statistic analysis of the sculptures found in the *thermae* of Italy, North Africa and Asia Minor shows us that statues of Aesculapius and Hygieia prevail as share of representation together with those of Venus and Liber Pater⁵¹. Perhaps this particular association can be summed up in the aforementioned motto that lies on the epitaph of one named Tiberius Claudius Secundus, showing us that in some cases these gods portray the symbols of some of the things that corrupt the human life, but also paradoxically make life better: Aesculapius and Hygieia for the curative baths, Liber Pater for the wine and Venus for love.

Magna Mater on the Palatine and are currently exhibited at the Palatine Museum in Rome. In Roman period he is sometimes seen depicted on coins next to Demeter: LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no. 80 or accompanying a local Dea Mater, Mater Malene, on a phrygian votive stela: LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no. 81.

⁴⁶ Mionnet 1908, no. 267, *apud*, Deonna 1955, 53.

⁴⁷ The pieces were mentioned in several articles: Haynes 2013, 16-17; Schäfer 2014, 42-43, but are yet to be published by Mariana Egri.

⁴⁸ Haynes 2013, 16-17.

⁴⁹ Haynes 2013, 17.

⁵⁰ CIL VI 15258 = ILS 8157.

⁵¹ Manderscheid 1988, 120, *apud*, Fagan 2002, 89.

In our case, the apparition of Telesphorus in the cult pits has to do most definitely with the presence of Aesculapius and Hygieia in the Liber Pater sanctuary, and if we look at the similar number of their findings we could even assume that they were meant to be placed inside together. Probably we have to do with some *favissae* that contain among their intentional deposits the discarded terracottas once used as votive offerings in the Liber Pater temple.

Besides the ithyphallic Telesphorus discussed at the beginning, there is another rare representation type found in Dacia, which shows us the small cloaked god together with his alleged sister Hygieia (Pl. II/2), this particular iconography being rather rare in statuary art⁵², where Hygieia either appears single or next to her father Aesculapius or at most accompanies another child-god, Hypnos⁵³, while Aesculapius is the one accompanying Telesphorus.

The statuette was found at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa⁵⁴, and shows Hygieia standing on a base, dressed in a double *chiton*, feeding the snake that she holds in her right hand from a *paterna* held in the left. Telesphorus is dressed in a *bardocucullus* that covers his knees and head and seems to hold an opened *volumen* in his hands, one of the well known attributes of his father, Aesculapius⁵⁵.

Besides the atypical association this piece is also remarkable for its attention for anatomical details and for the natural molding of the clothing folds, suggesting the careful study of the artisan. The distinguish childish features of Telesphorus were well evidenced by the artisan who chose to depict him with chubby cheeks and rich curls that cover his forehead, an iconography rather rare in general⁵⁶, perhaps due to the god's reduced size that only allows a schematic representation usually.

The same display of chubby features and curls that frame his face line, this time through a pearly strip, is represented on a votive relief found at Apulum that shows Telesphorus together with Hygieia,

⁵² LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no. 78. However this association has been recorded on the reverse of several coins found at Hierapolis as well, where Telesphorus accompanies a seated Hygieia: LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hygieia*, nr. 16-17; LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, nr. 79.

⁵³ For the association Hygieia - Hypnos, see Varga 2015.

⁵⁴ Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, no. 13, pl. II.

⁵⁵ For the representations of Aesculapius with a *volumen* in his hands in Dacia, see Catalogue no. 3, 18, 19.

⁵⁶ LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no. 2, 7, 10, 14, 77.

Aesculapius and Epione (Pl. II/1)⁵⁷. This time however he holds his hands clasped at his chest under the mantle, while his father Aesculapius holds a *volumen* in his left hand. Another distinctive feature is his *bardocucullus* that goes till his knees as usually, but this time shows an opening in the front that lets us foresee the clothing he wears underneath, this type of mantle being rather rare among his representations⁵⁸.

Another *ex voto* showing the healing triad Hygieia, Aesculapius and Telesphorus, in the mentioned order, was recorded in the collection of the photographer Botár Imre from Turda (Pl. III/1)⁵⁹ and shows a typical iconography for the Thracian area, that we have already mentioned at the beginning of our study.

We can easily spot the same architectural framework in form of a *pseudo-aedicula*, but this time the iconography has slightly changed, suggesting that we have to do with a local variant of the Thracian type.

We see the same Aesculapius with facial traits that rather resembles Jupiter, wearing this time however a *chiton* with a different draping, that still covers completely his left arm but lets his abdomen at full sight, this type of very low draping characteristic to the Chiaramonti type being in fact almost a constant in the iconography of Aesculapius in Dacia⁶⁰.

Even though the artisan respected the organic structure of Aesculapius' anatomical forms, he fails to do likewise in the case of Hygieia, where we can easily observe the sloppy depiction of her hands and the rigidity of her clothing's folds, as well as the strong schematization of the snake, that instead of coiling around her right arm takes the form of a crooked cane. The typical ridge formed under her belly, going up to her left shoulder and covering it up, is depicted this time simplistically through 4 lines, while Telesphorus seems to wear a Phrygian bonnet and a *chiton* that leaves his arms uncovered, instead of his well-known *bardocucullus*.

Interesting is however that the artisan kept the same *pseudo-aedicula* framework and that he even respected the characteristic Nea

⁵⁷ See no. 3 in the catalogue.

⁵⁸ LIMC, VII, 1994, s.v. *Telesphoros*, no.10, 77.

⁵⁹ See Catalogue no. 15.

⁶⁰ See Catalogue no. 14-15, 17-19. For other reliefs and statues with the same draping see Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, no. 8-9, 11.

Paphos⁶¹ attribute, the egg that Aesculapius feeds to the snake that climbs up the staff that looks rather like a tree trunk, suggesting that he used a Thracian model as inspiration.

In this context we also have to mention another piece representing the healing triad that was found at Porolissum, this time with Telesphorus in the central part (Pl. IV/1). Unfortunately however due to its poor condition we can't imagine the original form of the relief, so we can't tell for sure if it's the same *pseudo-aedicula* framework typical to the Thracian area.

The piece is of a very coarse execution, the volumes and the organic structures of the anatomical forms being virtually not at all respected. The limbs are disproportionately large while the clothing's folds are depicted through a rich network of oblique lines.

Telesphorus is shown in his usual *bardocucullus*, holding his hands clasped to his chest, while the other two healing gods are placed symmetrically on each side, each one holding a *patera* in his left hand. No snake or snake entwined staff is visible, so we could almost say that without these essential attributes Telesphorus is the deciding element in establishing the identity of this divine triad.

A votive relief with uncertain place of origin, deposited at the National Museum of History⁶², shows us a rather unique iconography, portraying the healing couple Aesculapius – Hygieia flanked symmetrically on each side by two child gods, Hypnos⁶³ and Telesphorus (Pl. V/1). Besides the presence of Telesphorus, the association of Hygieia with Hypnos in an iconographic scheme close to that of Aphrodite – Tyche accompanied by Amor⁶⁴ is typical only for the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, being so far registered only in Asia Minor⁶⁵ and some of the Greek islands in the nearby i.e. Kos⁶⁶ and

⁶¹ See no. 14.

⁶² See Catalogue no. 19.

⁶³ For the identification of this god with the Sleep God Hypnos/Somnus, see Varga 2015. In the previous literature he was misinterpreted as Eros-Thanatos without any further explanations.

⁶⁴ LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hypnos/Somnus*, 609.

⁶⁵ LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hygeia*, no. 127 = LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hypnos/Somnus*, no. 149; LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hypnos/Somnus*, no. 150, 150bis; LIMC, VIII, 1997, s.v. *Hypnos*, no. 9: The piece is found at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston with the access number 1974.131 and can be consulted on the museum's official site.

⁶⁶ LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hygeia*, no. 71 = LIMC, V, 1990, s.v. *Hypnos/Somnus*, no. 147; Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, fig. 10.

Crete⁶⁷ and more recently in Dacia⁶⁸ and it seems to confirm Gil Renberg's theory on how the *incubatio* ritual was the apanage of the Eastern *asklepieia*, so far being no evidence whatsoever for its practice in the Latin West as well⁶⁹.

Besides a relief portraying the healing divine couple next to Hypnos, there are no votive reliefs whatsoever that could supply us a close analogy for our reliefs by including Telesphorus in their iconographical schemes as well, however his apparent absence can easily be explained by the existence of both Aesculapius-Telesphorus and Hygieia-Hypnos statues that were meant to form a greater unitary statuary group when placed next to each other, as it seems suggested by some statues portraying the aforementioned gods that were found in the richly decorated House of Abduction of Europa from Kos (Pl. V/4)⁷⁰.

Another fragmentary relief found in the square shaped fountain of the *asklepieion* of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Pl. V/2)⁷¹ seems to show the same iconographical scheme like our previous piece, and we can assume for sure that the right side held the image of Telesphorus as well based on the strong similarities between the two pieces : the same architectural framework, the presence of the same Hypnos in attitude of Eros-Thanatos, the serpent-entwined rod that looks rather like a tree trunk and the same style of clothing worn by the gods, i.e. Hygieia's *himation* that falls diagonally above her right knee and has a V shaped crease on her chest, and the low draping of Aesculapius' clothing that forms a crease on his lower abdomen.

A third piece discovered at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa⁷² as well might be typologically incorporated amongst the other two, since the preserved fragment shows us the same Aesculapius with a *volumen* in his left hand next to a Telesphorus portrayed with his hands clasped to his chest under his usual *bardocucullus* (Pl. V/3). More importantly, the inscription [*Aesculapio et Hygiae* / [---- e] x voto preserved on the last third of the piece, correlated with the inscription *Num(ini) Aesc(ulapii) [et Hyg(iae)] / U[l]pia Ianu[aria] v[otum] l[ibens]* found on the first two thirds preserved from the other votive relief found at Ulpia Traiana

⁶⁷ Frontori 2011, fig. 13.

⁶⁸ See no. 63.

⁶⁹ Renberg 2006, 105-147.

⁷⁰ See no. 66; Petsalis-Diomidis 2010, fig. 9.

⁷¹ See Catalogue no. 17.

⁷² See Catalogue no. 18.

Sarmizegetusa, seems to confirm that there would have been sufficient space for depicting Hypnos and Hygieia as well.

Catalogue of finds in Roman Dacia⁷³

Ampelum (Zlatna, Alba County)

1. Plastic lamp representing an ithyphallic Telesphorus; MUAI, inv. no. R 8344; donated by I. T. Lipovan in 1990; terracotta lamp with nozzle in form of a *phallus* and round base that bears the name of the owner of the *officina* that functioned at Ampelum inside of a *tabula ansata*: *G(aius) I(ulius) P(roculus)*; fragmentary, the upper part of the god's body is not preserved; h=77 mm, l=46 mm, d_{base}=41 mm; Pl. I/1; Popa/Moga/Ciobanu 1986, 112; Lipovan 1992, 63-65, fig. 1, 2 a-b; Anghel et al. 2010, no. 66.

2. Plastic lamp representing an ithyphallic Telesphorus; MUAI, inv. no. R 8343; terracotta lamp with nozzle in form of a *phallus*; fragmentary, the lower part of the body from the nozzle below is missing; h=91 mm; Pl. I/2; Lipovan 1992, 63, fig. 1, 1 a-b; Anghel et al. 2010, no. 67.

Apulum (Alba Iulia, Alba County)

3. Votive relief with the representation of Aesculapius, Hygieia, Epione and Telesphorus; MNIR – Bucharest; discovered in 1847 on the bank of the Mureş river, in the Partoş district, from where it entered the collection of the Reformed College and afterwards that of the Aiud Museum; marble votive relief with the following dedicatory inscription: *Deo Aescul(apio) et Hygiae Aur(elius) (A)etern<a>lis / v(otum) s(olvit)*; fully preserved; 29 x 36 x 5 cm; Pl. II/1; Igna 1935, 63 - 64, nr.2; RR 1969, 215, F 101; IDR III/5, 9; Mihăilă 2008, 14, no.1.

4-13. Lot of 10 unpublished terracotta figurines representing Telesphorus; MUAI (?); found in the cult pits discovered within the perimeter of the Liber Pater sanctuary, together with fragmented tableware, sherds from glass vessels, 36 fragmented lamps, 2 miniature money boxes, 5 miniature clay cartwheels

⁷³ The presentation order of the pieces in this catalogue is done alphabetically on their find spot (ancient name) and mentions after a brief description of the pieces the following information: storage location and inventory number; archaeological context; typology and production material; dimensions and preservation state; plate number of the corresponding illustration in the text; further references.

and other terracotta figurines representing cocks and Venus statuettes; votive terracotta figurines; Haynes 2013, 16-17; Schäfer 2014, 42-43.

Porolissum (Zalău, Sălaj County)

14. Votive relief with the representation of Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphorus; MIA – Zalău; discovered in the Jac village, where it was previously brought together with other stone materials from the Roman fort of Porolissum; votive limestone relief with the following fragmentary dedicatory inscription: *[Au]r(elius) Iustu[s]*; fragmentarily preserved, the upper part of the bodies and the heads are missing; 30 x 24 x 12 cm; Pl. IV/1; AE 1960, 220; Mihăilă 2008, 15-16, no. 3.

Potaissa (Turda, Cluj County)

15. Votive relief with the representation of Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphorus; MI – Turda; initially part of the Botár Imre collection of antiquities; votive sandstone relief; relatively fully preserved; 36 x 31 x 4 cm; Pl. III/1; Igna 1935, 62, fig. 24; Ardevan/Rusu 1979, 390, fig. 9; Mihăilă 2008, 21-22, no. 13.

Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Sarmizegetusa, Hunedoara County)

16. Fragmentary statuette representing Hygieia together with Telesphorus; MNB – Sibiu, inv. no. 6224; chance find; votive marble statuette; fragmentary, the head of the goddess is missing; the preserved height is of 21,4 cm; Pl. II/2; Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, no. 13, pl. II.

17. Votive relief with the representation of Aesculapius, Hygieia and Hypnos;⁷⁴ MA – Sarmizegetusa; recovered in 1973 from a square fountain found in the *asklepieion*, together with another two statues, representing Hygia and Telesphorus; votive marble relief with the following fragmentary dedicatory inscription: *Num(ini) Aescul(ape) [et Hyg(iae)] / Ulpia Ianu(aria) v(otum) l(ibens) p(osuit)*; fragmentary, the upper and the right part of the relief is missing; the surface of the relief is corroded due to extensive exposure to water; 36 x 27 x 4 cm; Pl. V/2, Piso 1974-75, 60-61, fig. 5 a-b; Rusu 1975, 698-702, fig. 3/8; Daicovicu 1976, 63; Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, no. 1, pl. I; IDR III/2, 166, fig. 136; Fenechiu 2008, 215, no. 12, p. 220; Schäfer 2007, 148-149, H I 1; Mihăilă 2008, 16-17, no. 5; Bărbulescu 2009, 132; Varga 2015.

18. Votive relief with the representation of Aesculapius, Hygieia and Telesphorus; nowadays lost; chance find during the agricultural works done in

⁷⁴ Although Telesphorus is not preserved, based on the analogies we can assume that the original piece would have included his representation as well. See explanation in text.

1910, initially in the collection of the Reformed High School from Orăştie; votive marble relief with the following dedicatory inscription : [*Aesculapio e]t Hygiae / [----- e] x voto*; fragmentary condition, only the right part of the relief was preserved; 33x5x5 cm; Pl. V/3; Daicoviciu 1924, 253-254, fig. 16; Igna 1935, no. 4; Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, no. 5, Pl. CXLIII; IDR III/2, 170, fig. 138; Mihăilă 2008, 19, no. 8; Varga 2015.

Unknown find spots

19. Votive relief with the representation of Aesculapius, Hygieia, Telesphorus and Hypnos; MNIT – Cluj-Napoca; votive marble relief; fragmentary condition, the lower part of the relief that could have worn a dedicatory inscription is missing; 24 x 21 x 3,5 cm; Pl. V/1; Igna 1935, 64, fig. 25; Mihăilă 2008, 22-23, no. 14; Varga 2015.

20. Votive relief with the representation of Telesphorus; nowadays lost; probably from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa; fragmentary condition, h=10 cm; Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, no. 16; Mihăilă 2008, 23, no. 15.

Illustrations

Pl. I: Terracotta lamps representing an ithyphallic Telesphorus : 1-2 Ampelum (Photos from Anghel et al. 2010, no. 66-67) ; 3 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (Photo from Bolla 2010, fig. 26) ; 4-5 Athens (Photos from Grandjouan 1961, fig. 943, 954).

Pl. II: 1. Votive relief from Apulum representing Hygieia, Aesculapius, Telesphorus and Epione (photo from Mihăilă 2008, fig.1) 2. Statuette from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa representing Hygieia next to Telesphorus (photo from Alicu/Pop/Wollmann 1979, pl. II).

Pl. III: Votive reliefs representing the healing triad Hygieia – Aesculapius – Telesphorus : 1. Potaiassa (photo from Igna 1935, fig. 24) 2-3 Glava Panega (photos from LIMC, II, 2, 1984, s.v. *Asklepios (in Thracia)*, fig. 17, 19).

Pl. IV: Votive reliefs representing the healing triad Hygieia – Telesphorus – Aesculapius : 1. Porolissum (photo from Mihăilă 2008, fig. 3); 2. Kjustendil (photo from LIMC, V, 2, 1990, s.v. *Hygieia (in Thracia)*, fig. 4) 3. Pannonia (Photo from Fitz 1998, fig. 89).

Pl. V: 1. Votive relief from the National Museum of Transylvanian History (photo from Mihăilă 2008, nr. 14) ; 2, 3 Votive reliefs from the asklepion of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (photos from Mihăilă 2008, nr. 5, 8) ; 4. Statue of Aesculapius with Telesphorus and statue of Hygieia with Hypnos, from the house of Abduction of Europa, Kos (photo from Petsalis – Diomidis 2010, fig. 10).

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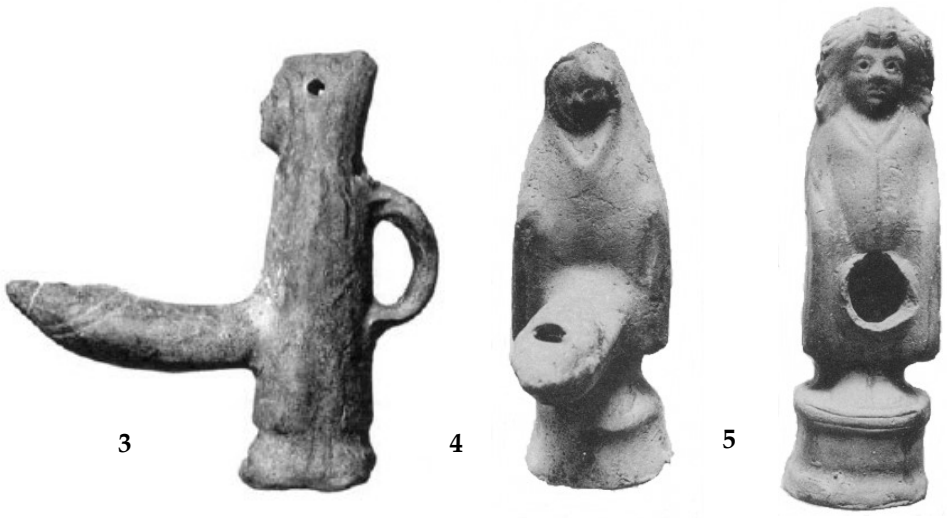


Plate I



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Plate II



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Plate III



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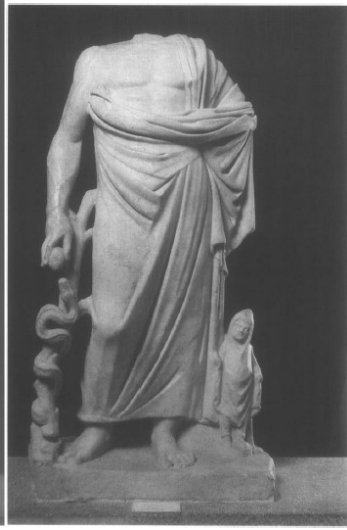
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Plate V