

Votive plaque with depiction of the Thracian Horseman from the acropolis of Perperikon (Abstract)

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In 2011, during regular excavations of the ancient and medieval town of Perperikon, in the so-called Southern Slope Sector, a large rock-cut building was discovered. It was a temple, related to the cult of the Thracian Horseman. A beaten clay altar on the floor, grooves for draining away liquids, hooks for tying up animals, an Ionic capital, and niches for placing votive gifts that were deliberately carved in the northern wall: all evidence reveal the apparent cult functions of the complex.

During the investigations of the temple, a fragment was discovered of a votive plaque that was once placed in a niche. The relief is carved of white marble. The scene on the plaque is among the most popular on such monuments – the horseman and a woman standing in front of him. The figure of the horseman lacks the head and part of the body, but it can be seen that he wears high Thracian boots.

The woman is depicted wearing a long garment. There are numerous parallels of the newly-discovered votive relief. Following the existing typology of votive plaques, the one under consideration probably belongs to the so-called “image-narrative”. A votive relief from the sanctuary at Pchelarovo, at present in Kardzhali Regional Museum of History, has the same composition, but is made of gray marble.

The votive relief is an important element of a temple from the pagan period of Perperikon. On the grounds of the precise stratigraphic evidence, the numerous finds and the parallels, the building’s construction could be dated to the middle of the 3rd c. or slightly later. It functioned as a temple until the late 4th - early 5th c., after which the floor was raised and the building lost some of its sacred functions.