

= The Exaltation of the Flower =

The Exaltation of the Flower (L 'Exaltation de la Fleur) is the modern title given to an early Classical Greek marble fragment of a funerary stele from the 5th century BC . It was discovered in 1863 by Léon Heuzey and Henri Daumet at a church in Farsala , Thessaly , Greece . Carved in bas @-@ relief in the Severe style , the extant upper fragment of the marble relief stele depicts two women holding what appear to be flowers or fungi and another object in their hands . The work is held by the Louvre museum in the Department of Greek , Etruscan , and Roman Antiquities .

= = Background = =

French archaeologist and historian Léon Heuzey began working with the French School at Athens in Greece at the age of 20 in 1851 . He made his most famous discovery of that period in the town of Farsala , a city in southern Thessaly . In antiquity , the area was named Pharsalos , and became known for the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BCE , where Julius Caesar defeated Pompey during the Great Roman Civil War .

Heuzey and the architect Henri Daumet were involved in an official mission to collect objects related to Caesar 's campaigns ; they also were interested in other artifacts unrelated to their work . In 1863 , they found this marble bas @-@ relief embedded in the walls of a church in the neighborhood of Paleo @-@ Loutro in Farsala and named it The Exaltation of the Flower . Heuzey was informed that the stone was originally discovered in a garden , close to another stone that was not recovered . Heuzey purchased the stone and had it sent to the Louvre in Paris . Back in France , Heuzey would become curator of the Louvre , where he would retire in 1908 .

= = Description = =

A precise description and interpretation of the work has remained elusive since its initial discovery in the 19th century . Scholars agree on some aspects and disagree on others . British Greek art scholar Martin Robertson notes that both women can be seen wearing the tubular peplos garment common to the Classical period . According to the descriptive text found in the Atlas database of the exhibited works of art at the Louvre , the women also are wearing a kekryphalos , a hairnet in the Greco @-@ Roman hairstyle , and appear to hold a type of flower , perhaps poppy or pomegranate . One of the women in the stele carries what resembles a bag , presumed to be carrying seeds in the interpretation .

= = Analysis = =

In his 1868 paper , Heuzey argued that the images in the stele suggested the goddesses Persephone (Kore) and Demeter , referring to the cult of Kore and the legend of Demeter found in the Homeric Hymns . French archaeologist and art historian Maxime Collignon explained , " Heuzey believes that this monument refers to the cultus of Core , daughter of Demeter , a divinity suggesting in Greek legend the ephemeral but incessantly recurring bloom of nature . " French archaeologist Olivier Rayet (1847 ? 1887) disagreed with the interpretation Heuzey offered . While Heuzey 's perspective still has adherents , it has largely fallen out of favor among art historians . According to the Perseus Project at Tufts University , " It is now generally agreed ... that the figures represented are mortals rather than goddesses . "

German archaeologist Heinrich Brunn believed the decorative qualities of the Pharsalos stele originated in Asia Minor . Following this line of reasoning , Scottish archaeologist Alexander Stuart Murray compared the facial features of the stele , such as the eyes , lips , and nose , to similar facial features found in the Harpy Tomb relief from Xanthos in Lycia . American curator Edward Robinson notes the influence of the Ionic schools on this and other artwork from ancient Aeolia , now known as Thessaly : " It is now a question whether these works were done by local artists under this influence , or by Ionic artists who may have established themselves in Thessaly , as they did in other

parts of Greece . " The Ionian style 's influence also may be seen in the depiction of the hair @-@ net worn by the women in the relief .

French scholar Charles Picard (1883 ? 1965) argued that if the stele fragments were reconstructed , the bottom missing fragment would have showed the figure on the left standing and the one on the right seated :

Neither can the oblique trend of the drapery , belt @-@ high in the silhouette (in profile) of the elder , be explained ? without accepting that she was seated , her left forearm resting on her thigh . Only thus could the dice be handled . Only thus , moreover , can so extreme a slope in the pleats coming away from the shoulder , pleats that would have to fall vertically in a non @-@ seated figure , become understandable . On the right , let it not be readily forgotten that all the pleats turn strongly forward , so that they pass the centerline of the stele , marked by the high , triumphant flower and the mingled group of hands . For the maiden on the left , although the cascade of pleats is generally much more direct ? as appropriate to a standing posture ? some of them , curiously arched , turn forward as well , for example at the left armhole . They can scarcely be understood without again invoking the supporting effect produced by the leg of the seated woman . The folds of Kore ' s sleeve , which in 1939 I drew a little too short in the descent , carry on to Demeter ' s lap , where they spread out .

German classical archaeologist Roland Hampe (1908 ? 1981) disagreed with Picard 's hypothesis , saying that the size of the stele should demonstrate that both women were standing , not sitting .

= = Flowers , fungi , or bones = =

It is generally agreed that the plants depicted in the stele fragment are either poppies or pomegranate flowers , however , classical archaeologists and historians of ancient Greek art discuss different species in the literature : German scholar Ernst Langlotz (1895 ? 1978) thought that the women were holding a type of rose ; Picard recognizes the symbolism of Demeter and Kore and identifies the flowers as a species of poppy , possibly the opium poppy , the Oriental poppy , or the Iranian poppy . Careful examination of the thick ' stems ' fails to resemble that of the flowers . German scholar Eugen Petersen (1837 ? 1919) proposed that the figures were holding knucklebones (talus bones from goats or sheep used to play the game of jacks) in their left hand and roses in the right hand ; Hampe argues that the stele depicts only knucklebones , not flowers .

In 1911 , Greek scholar and archaeologist Rufus B. Richardson , formerly of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens , observed that what was being described as flowers in the relief , looked similar to mushrooms . English classicist Robert Graves and Italian ethnobotanist Giorgio Samorini both have referred to the fragment as evidence for the entheogen hypothesis , speculating that the significant items depicted in the work are a type of psychoactive mushroom that was used in the Eleusinian Mysteries . Graves even featured the image as the cover of one edition of *The Greek Myths* , noting that although it might be depicted in artwork , it would remain unnamed in texts because of its sacredness . American classicist Carl A. P. Ruck has made similar arguments . Although the entheogen hypothesis is controversial and generally rejected by mainstream scholarship , in a review of Hampe 's *Die Stele aus Pharsalos im Louvre* (1951) , Picard notes that " one may be increasingly reminded that Pharsalos was indeed an Eleusinian center " .

= = Alternate titles = =

The work is referred to by many different titles in contemporary literature . These include :