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EDITORS

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KABALCI

P H I L I A

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An Inscribed Stele Depicting a Horseman Now in the Bodrum Museum

Abstract: This note provides a new edition of a small stele depicting a horseman riding towards an altar, to be identified as a «Thracian horseman» or «Thracian rider». Previously only partially deciphered, the inscription below the relief is a posthumous dedication by a certain Tryphon to his son Bassos, who died as a pre-adolescent child (νήπιος). Assigned to Halikarnassos by its first editors, Laflı and Bru, the stone is argued to be a pierre errante which travelled to the Museum of Bodrum. On the basis of its iconography, it is most likely that it originally came from north or north-western Anatolia (e.g. the Hellespont).

Keywords: Bodrum; Thracian horseman; Thracian rider; Tryphon; Bassos; hero; νήπιος.

A recent publication of some inscriptions from Asia Minor by H. Bru and E. Laflı includes a small, inscribed stele, with a relief depicting the figure of a rider facing right towards a diminutive altar; its provenance is assigned by the editors to ancient Halikarnassos.¹ The stele is currently located in the Bodrum Museum (no inv. no.), but otherwise its provenance remains uncertain. Following an effort to revise it by T. Corsten in this journal,² the text of the inscription below the relief remains only partially deciphered. The text is almost completely preserved on the stone (cf. fig. 1) and we propose to establish it as follows:

2 Τρύφων Βάσσου ἰδ[ίω]
τέκνον νηπίω ἥρω.

«Tryphon to Bassos, his own prepubescent son, hero.»



1–2. Τρύφων Βάσσου | τέκνον Bru and Laflı, Τρύφων Βάσσου [μετὰ τῶν] | τέκνων Corsten.

Accompanying this revised edition, we aim to provide some complements to the description of the stele currently available, as well as a brief commentary on its provenance and its inscription.

Description

The small stele, made of white marble, has the following measurements: H. 30.2 cm, W. 29 cm, T. ca. 8 cm at the bottom, ca. 6.5 cm at the top. The height of the letters is 1.6–1.7 cm, except for the smaller omegas in line 2. On the basis of the letterforms, the approximative date of the 1st or the 2nd century AD proposed by Bru and Laflı seems plausible, perhaps favouring especially the latter date.

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¹ Laflı – Bru 2014, 275 no. 11.

² Corsten 2015, 140.

The object is generally in good condition: remains of all the sides are preserved but the upper right corner of the stele is missing and the edge between the front and the right side is entirely broken away, thereby damaging both the relief and (only slightly) the inscription. The front of the stele has a representation of a horseman in a square sunken into the surface of the stone (fig. 1). The upper part of the frame surrounding the relief is ca. 3.5 cm in width. The left side is somewhat narrower and the right part of the frame is almost entirely broken away. The part below the relief has been enlarged to a field ca. 8 cm in height, in which the inscription is incised (fig. 1). The back of the stele (fig. 2) shows some original marks from a pointed chisel, but is apparently damaged by recent work, presumably from an electric grinder.



Figure 1. Overview of the stele (P. Pedersen).

The surface of the relief is somewhat worn making the interpretation of some of the details insecure. The background of the relief has some marks presumably from a drove, but otherwise shows no tool marks. The relief shows a horseman riding towards an altar to the right. His head is turned towards the spectator, but his facial features are worn away. In his right hand, he seems to be holding the reins of the horse (rather than any sort of implement). He wears a cloak billowing in the air, but all traces of other clothes on his person have now disappeared. The details of the head of the horse have also faded away. On the small rectangular altar, which seems to be a horned altar, a fire is burning. Although the right side of the stele is damaged, enough is preserved to show that no other object (such as a tree) was represented to the right of the altar.

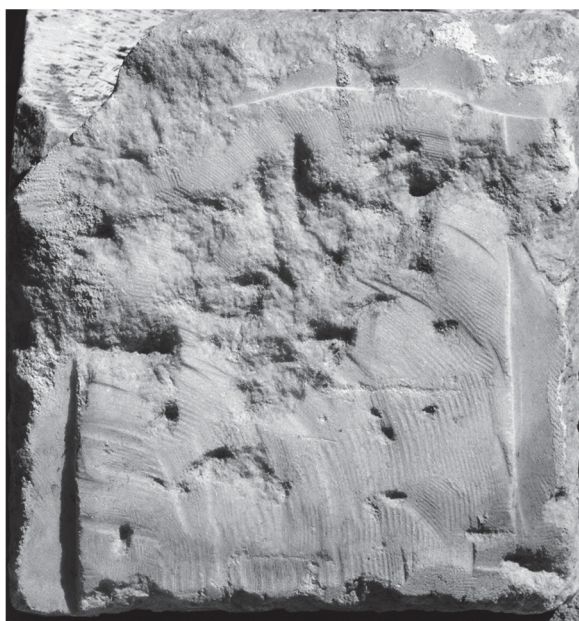


Figure 2. Back of the stele (P. Pedersen).

Identification and Provenance

Beginning in the Classical period and becoming extremely common in the Roman Imperial period, especially in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, stelai with representations of horsemen are known from across the ancient Mediterranean.³ Occasionally identified by inscriptions, they were used as grave stelai and as votive reliefs to gods and heroes.

³ The iconographic motif of the horseman is very widespread and often defies overarching categorisation. See esp. Mackintosh 1995; Delemen 1999, 79–87; Pfuhl – Möbius 1979, I 310–348 (and pl. 190–212); LIMC vols. VI.1 and VI.2 Addendum (1992), «Heros Equitans». Reliefs of this sort are found as far as e.g. Cyrenaica: Dobias-Lalou 2016, 163–176 (compare e.g. her no. 6, fig. 5, or no. 15, fig. 6). Other groups include the so-called «Danubian Riders» and «Syrian Riders».

For geographical reasons, two large groups, the «Anatolian Rider-Gods» and the so-called «Thracian Horsemen» or «Thracian Riders» are particularly relevant to the present stele. The Anatolian Rider-Gods belong for the most part to Phrygia, Pisidia, and northern Lykia.⁴ In these reliefs, the horseman may represent a number of local gods, such as Herakles, Apollo, Ares, Kakasbos, Sozon, Hosios kai Dikaios, etc. The relief most often shows the rider advancing at a slow pace from left to right, brandishing a club or holding a double axe or a phiale in his right hand. There is normally no representation of an altar. Interestingly, the Archaeological Museum of Izmir possesses two stelai of the Kakasbos type for which Bodrum is the stated provenance.⁵ However, since they are otherwise absent from the region of Karia, their editor – rightly, in our view – does not hold that these reliefs were found at ancient Halikarnassos and suggests instead that they more probably originated in northern Lykia, where examples of similar workmanship are known.⁶

The present stele does not share the iconographic characteristics of the two examples of Anatolian Rider-Gods purportedly from Bodrum and is stylistically closer to the group generally termed «Thracian Horsemen» or «Thracian Riders». These reliefs are distributed over a large geographical area and span a long chronological period from Hellenistic to late Roman times.⁷ They were particularly popular in Macedonia, Thrace, the eastern Balkans and north-western Anatolia.⁸ The «Thracian Horseman» can be depicted as (A) advancing at a slow pace, (B) galloping from left to right, or (C) returning from a hunt.⁹ The present stele belongs to the first group (A). Within this category, there may be a number of variations in accessories, but the basic pattern shows the rider advancing slowly to the right towards an altar and a tree with a snake intertwined in its branches. The rider may hold a phiale in his right hand or he may be holding the reins with both hands, as is probably the case in the present relief. The stele now in Bodrum, however, represents a simplified version of the motif: there was no tree to the right of the altar on the relief. Contemporaneous parallels for this kind of simplification can in fact be found in northern and western Anatolia.¹⁰

The occurrence of a relief of this type in the area of Halikarnassos is currently unparalleled. Taking this fact in combination with the modern reworking of the back of the stele, as well as with the observation that two Kakasbos reliefs were almost certainly brought from other regions to the Bodrum Museum, it can be reasonably suspected that the stele was not found in the area but was brought to the Museum from another context, perhaps from a private collection or donor, with no other indication of origin now preserved. In other words, the stele is almost certainly not Halikarnassian, having probably come from north or north-western Anatolia (e.g. the Hellespont), and eventually ending up in the Bodrum Museum.

⁴ Detailed study in Delemen 1999 (distribution map at 204).

⁵ Izmir Museum (inv. nos. 5128 and 5127): ed.pr. Delemen 1999, 131–132 no. 140 (pl. 11b) and 140 no. 170 (pl. 12e) respectively. No. 140 (inv. no. 5128) preserves the following inscription: [---]ηνος Οσαει | Κακα(σ)βφ εὐχ[ήν]; cf. SEG 49, 1935 no. 10, which accepts the probable identification of the provenance as the «Seki plateau» («or Nebiler area» is also given in Delemen).

⁶ Delemen 1999, 29, 35–36. Moreover, the name Οσαεις found on one of the reliefs (see n. 5 above) is particularly common in northern Lykia and in Pisidia (see LGPN V.C).

⁷ Dimitrova 2002, 209–229.

⁸ But far from exclusively: for e.g. a case from Boulis in Phokis (Imperial period), see SEG 62, 314 (Εὐάμερος | ἦρος). For evidence identified as coming from Ephesos, see below nn. 10 and 14.

⁹ These three types (A-C) were first proposed by Kazarow 1938, 5. The reliefs are often organized according to different systems, such as in Pfuhl – Möbius 1979 and in LIMC.

¹⁰ For two examples similarly showing only the horseman and the altar, cf. Pfuhl – Möbius 1979, 230 no. 218 (ph. pl. 193; sarcophagus in Istanbul, 1st–2nd c. AD) and 320 no. 1315 (ph. pl. 193; grave stele now in the Selçuk Museum [inv. no. 241], «wohl aus Ephesos»; 2nd c. AD).

Interpretation

On these reliefs, the horseman can be thought to represent either a god or the heroised dead,¹¹ an interpretation which is often clarified if an inscription is present, though the functions of a given stele as votive or as funerary could in many ways be interconnected. Particularly evocative of the beliefs underlying the close association of the deceased and the «Hero Horseman» is an inscription from the land of the Getae (now northeastern Bulgaria):

2 ἔνθα Δινίς ἀνέθετο Ρησκουπορεὸς Ἡρωί
 ὑπὲρ ζωῆς πελλόμενος τέκνοιο Νύμφης (*sic*) τε κούραις
 θεαῖς εὐξάμενος· ἐγένετο πολυλάατος ἥρωος
 4 ἀθάνατος.¹²

«Here Dinis son of Reskouporis dedicated (a monument) to the Hero – for he outlived his child – as well as to the maiden goddesses Nymphs, after having prayed (to them). He (his child) became a famous immortal hero.»

Dinis outlived his child and made a dedication to the Hero and the Nymphs; of his unnamed, deceased son, it is then explicitly said that «he became a famous immortal hero» himself.

In this way, the funerary and dedicatory aspects of these reliefs were often inextricably linked. This appears to be the case with our text too, which preserves a dedication by one Tryphon to his own son, who died as a young, pre-adolescent child (νήπιος),¹³ and who is explicitly called a «hero» (ἥρωος). Both anthroponyms, Tryphon and Bassos, are extremely widespread, from which no conclusions can be drawn. While the term ἥρωος might be viewed as a rather banal designation for a deceased person in the Imperial period, it nevertheless echoes the relief here, which depicts the heroic figure as a horseman.¹⁴ A more precise cultic reference was perhaps clear to Tryphon in his local context, while only the diffuse background of this hero on horseback now remains visible to us.

Abbreviated Literature

Corsten 2005	T. Corsten, <i>Prosopographische und onomastische Notizen IV</i> , <i>Philia</i> 1, 2015, 136–141.
Delemen 1999	I. Delemen, <i>Anatolian Rider-Gods</i> , Bonn 1999.
Dimitrova 2002	N. Dimitrova, <i>Inscriptions and Iconography in the Monuments of the Thracian Rider</i> , <i>Hesperia</i> 71.2, 2002, 209–229.
Dobias-Lalou 2016	C. Dobias-Lalou, <i>D'un prétendu Héros Dioscure aux défunts heroïses</i> , <i>Libya Antiqua</i> 9, 2016, 163–176.
Kazarow 1938	G. Kazarow, <i>Die Denkmäler des thrakischen Reitergottes in Bulgarien</i> , Budapest 1938.
Laflı – Bru 2014	E. Laflı – H. Bru, <i>Inscriptions gréco-romaines d'Anatolie III</i> , <i>DHA</i> 40.2, 2014, 268–282.

¹¹ Cf. Mackintosh 1995, 52–57.

¹² IGBulg II 796 («Roman period»), adduced by Dimitrova 2002, 225, who further comments (226): «The grave monuments function as dedicatory; the dead person has been immortalized and is therefore the recipient of the dedication, even though this is not explicitly reflected in the text of most inscriptions».

¹³ The term νήπιος (or even the diminutive νηπίαχος) does not necessarily denote a newborn infant. It can often qualify a child who has reached several years of age (e.g. 3 years: TAM V,1 135; 4: IScM II 1326; 6: SEG 35, 1165; 7: IG V,1 922; 8: IG XIV 1617; or even 11: TAM V,1 797) – in other words, one who has not yet attained ephebic puberty.

¹⁴ For other «Thracian Rider» reliefs with analogous inscriptions, cf. e.g. SEG 33, 541 (Pydna): Θεοδώρ[ω] | Μενάνδ[ρου] | *vacat* ἥρωι; and esp. SEG 43, 817 (Ephesos, probably Imperial period): Φαεῖνος | [κατεσκεύ]ασ[ε]ν τῷ γλυκυ|τάτῳ τέκνῳ ἥρῳ νέ[ω] κτλ.

- Mackintosh 1995 M. Mackintosh, *The Divine Rider in the Art of the Western Roman Empire*, Oxford 1995.
- Pfuhl – Möbius 1979 E Pfuhl – H. Möbius, *Die Ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, Mainz 1979.

Özet

Bodrum Müzesi'nde Korunan Süvari Betimli Bir Stel

Makalede bir sunağa doğru at süren ve «Thrak atlı» veya «Thrak binici» olarak tanımlanabilecek bir atlıyı tasvir eden küçük bir stel üzerindeki yazıtın yeni edisyonu sunulmaktadır. Kabartmanın altında yer alan ve daha önce sadece kısmen deşifre edilen yazıt, Tryphon adında birinin ergenlik çağına ulaşamadan (νήπιος) vefat eden oğlu Bassos için yaptığı adağı içermektedir. Yazarlar yazıtın ilk editörleri Laflı ve Bru tarafından Halikarnassos'a atfedilen yazıt taşıyıcının, seyahati Bodrum Müzesi'nde son bulan gezgin bir taş (pierre errante) olduğunu iddia etmektedirler. İkonografi temelinde yazıt taşıyıcının aslen kuzey veya kuzeybatı Anadolu'dan (örn. Hellespontos) gelme ihtimali son derece yüksektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bodrum; Thrak atlı; Thrak binici; Tryphon; Bassos; *heros*; νήπιος.