A FUNERARY MARBLE STELA FROM STYBERRA

Abstract. – The subject of this paper is a funerary marble stela found in the Styberra area and kept in the Collection of epigraphic inscriptions and marble elements within the NI Institute and Museum, Prilep. In addition to the description of the monument, the analysis of the iconography and the deities carved, as well as the paleographic analysis of the letters, the paper considers the relations between the dedicant Octavianos Insteianos Atticos and the well-attested family of Insteii in Styberra. A prosopography of the Insteii testified in Styberra is included in the paper.

Key words: stela, Insteii family, Heracles and Aphrodite, inscription.

1. Introduction

The ancient city of Styberra abounds in epigraphic material which confirms the high level of culture and intense social life in the city, particularly in the time span between I and III c. AD, yet the funerary monuments found hitherto are scarce. The rarity of sepulchral inscription findings can be attributed mainly to two factors: a) The ancient Styberra area unearthed so far was a part of the central urban area where social and administrative life had taken place, so that such finds would not be expected in the excavated area originally, and

b) the research suggests that Styberra has ceased to exist for a relatively short period of time as no testimonies dating after the III century A.D. have been discovered so far; therefore, the known practice of re-using ancient monuments, including funerary ones, would not be considered probable as it was the case with other ancient cities (e.g. Heraclea).1 Re-use of Styberra’s monuments as construction materials has been noted much later, in the 19-20th century buildings mainly in the villages Čepigovo and Trojkrsti.

1 Kalpakovska V., Gjorgjievska A., Nasuh E., Fragmentary Inscriptions from Heraclea Lyncestis, Systasis XVII.
So far, four funerary monuments have been unearthed from Styberra: the first is a marble stela of Αριστονίκη from the Hellenistic period (III c. B.C., inv. no 313), the second – a marble stela built into the church of St. Nicholas in Čepigovo, showing a fragmentarily preserved inscription dating from the Ist c. A.D., the third monument is also a marble fragment dating from II - III c. A.D., originally found in Čepigovo, afterwards transferred to Prilep and later lost. The text of the fragment is illegible. The fourth monument is a fragmentally preserved grave stela without inscription (Inv. No. 314) housed in the NI Institute and Museum of Prilep.

In some of the surrounding villages – Ivanjevci, Trojkrsti, Zagorani, Rufci, Krivogaštani, Bučin and Bela Crkva – some sepulchral monuments were found, mostly from the Roman period, which presumably originate from Styberra, but reliable confirmation is missing. Although some inscriptions found in these villages are known to originate from Styberra, the grave inscriptions cannot be linked with certainty to Styberra, given the fact that there were other settlements in pre-Roman and Roman times and there are inscriptions indicating origin from these ancient settlements.

In this article, we present a funerary marble stela found at the location of Styberra and brought to the NI Institute and Museum – Prilep in 2016 as a present by a resident of the village of Čepigovo.

This is a second stela with an inscription that originates from Styberra; it is fairly important, as it opens the chapter on Styberra’s sepulchral monuments, an area where the research and excavations lie ahead and can throw light upon many aspects of the life of the city’s population in ancient times.

2. Description of the stela and technical information

The stela is well preserved, although the upper part has been broken. It was cut from a single piece of marble, with three elements:

3 Inscriptiones Graecae, 344.
4 Inscriptiones Graecae, 345.
5 Inscriptiones Graecae, 303, 305, 309, 313, 350, 351.
6 Inscriptiones Graecae, 328, 329.
7 Inscriptiones Graecae, 348, 349; Вулић, Н., Споменик LXXI, Београд, 1931, 141-142.
8 Inv. No.3586.
9 The find has been accidently discovered during re-arranging activities in the yard belonging to the family Debrešlioski from Čepigovo. We would like to take this opportunity to praise the gesture of the Debrešlioski family and thank them for the high awareness and respect for the ancient cultural heritage.
a triangular fronton, a relief field and an inscription field (tripartite), typical for funerary stelae from the Roman period. Dimensions: 102 cm x 53 cm x 11 cm (Ph. 1).

The dimensions of each element are as follows: the fronton – 35 x 9 cm, the relief field – 45 x 35 cm and the inscription field – 40 x 35 cm.

The stela is made of Prilep fine grained white marble. At the top of the stela there is a fronton with hardly noticeable acroteries. The rear side of the stela has been roughly done; the bottom side shows slight traces of the original wedge, which is not preserved. The upper part of the fronton has been damaged, wherein stylized palm leaves have been carved, of which two are visible. The palm tree symbolizes victory, longevity and immortality.10

In the relief field there are three full-sized figures, while the inscription mentions four people: a dedicant and three deceased people carved in high relief.

The relief carvings show Aphrodite, young Heracles in the middle and a matron sitting on a chair with a backrest.

3. The iconography of the grave stela

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The stela was set for the three deceased persons depicted on the relief, two of them depicted as deities and a matron. The deities are positioned frontally, while the matron is in a ‘three-quarters’ posture, having her feet placed on a plinth that indicates her high social status in the society. There is no communication between the persons.

The iconographic type of Aphrodite carved on the stela, whose body is not standing on a plinth, belongs to Aphrodit Pudica and was made according to Praxiteles’ Aphrodite of Knidos.

Aphrodite’s naked body is covered with a cloth around the hips, which Aphrodite conceals with her right hand; the fabric falls between the legs, while with the left hand she holds the fabric that falls along the body. Aphrodite’s face is damaged on the relief, so the facial expression cannot be seen.

Young Heracles is positioned in the middle, with the right hand resting on a wooden club; on the left one, bent at the elbow, a lion’s skin is depicted, not very skillfully carved. He stands on a plinth with his feet bare. The head and the body are fashioned in soft and rounded shapes. His look is calm and there is a slight smile on his face.

The posture of the matron shows dignity; she sits on a *clismos* chair, on a pillow, dressed in a chiton, wrapped in a chimation tied in a knot. The folds of her clothes are impressive. Her left hand is bent at the elbow through the waist, while her right hand is raised to her face and touches the cheek. In Roman grave stelae, this posture usually indicates that the woman was in mourn.\(^{11}\) Reliefs from Roman period often depict women showing body language elements of the *Pudicitia* type, dating back to Hellenistic times,\(^ {12}\) as is the case with this matron.

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\(^{12}\) Ibidem.
The face shape of the matron is oval, the eyes reflect calmness and sadness. The hair is parted and wavy, tied back in a hair bun. Similar hair fashion has been attested on many terracottas unearthed in Styberra dating from the Roman imperial period, as the ones shown here:

On this stela, two of the deceased are depicted in the image of deities, a practice often found on grave monuments from the Roman imperial period. There is also a number of grave monuments in Macedonia from the Roman period where a combination of depictions of mortals and immortals (common people and deities) can be seen, especially on stelae portraying several generations of deceased. The elderly deceased are usually portrayed as ordinary people, while the young deceased are portrayed as deities / heroes, as is the case with the Styberra stela.

There are many examples of both deities, Aphrodite and Heracles, in funerary art. Depicting deities on grave monuments indicates a desire to ascribe the best qualities / attributes to the deceased, and to ask the gods for help in the afterlife. Both deities depicted on the stela are known for their chthonic character.

Furthermore, during the III and the IV c. A.D., the idea of coalescence of the soul of the deceased with the deity is spread, which

13 Inscriptiones Graecae, 214, 225.
14 Археолошки Музеј на Македонија, Водечни низ постојаната археолошка поставка, Скопје, 2016, 119.
explains the fact that the deceased are depicted in the form of deities on the monuments.¹⁵

The findings hitherto show that most examples of heroized deceased are found in Pelagonia.¹⁶ Most often, the heroized deceased are represented with Heracles’ attributes or identified with the hero.¹⁷

In addition to the stela discussed here, these two deities together are attested on another family grave stela from Prilep from the III c. A.D., where the children of Ἐπίκτης Λικαίας and her husband Μακάδων are represented also as Heracles and Aphrodite¹⁸.

The depictions of the deceased in the form of deities on the grave stelae raise more questions on the connection between the cults of the deities and the funerary practice.

Archaeological findings indicate that Aphrodite has been represented in fundamental context¹⁹ in various regions in Macedonia since the Hellenistic period. The cult of Aphrodite is also maintained in the Roman period; we find it attested on an inscription from the III century A.D. from the village of Podmol, Prilep.²⁰ The funerary reliefs depicting women in the image of Aphrodite have been produced throughout the imperial period.²¹

²¹ Aphrodite related to the dead could be found in literary sources, too, e.g. Plutarch, Moralia, Roman Questions, 23.- Αφροδιτή εἰπτύμβια.
The cult of Heracles in Styberra (Deuriopos) and Pelagonia has been attested in numerous, not only funerary monuments.

In Styberra, two inscriptions have been found so far, related to two priests of Heracles; Λουκιος Νεικηφόρος Κέλερ 22 from the II c. and Γαίος Ιοστείως Ζωίλος 23 from the III c. A.D. To this epigraphic evidence we may add the statue of Heracles found in the Gymnasium in Styberra, the votive plate with Heracles’ relief and many terracottas of Heracles from the same area 24.

4. Inscription on the grave stela

![Inscription on the grave stela](image)

Ph. 6. Inscription; detail of the grave marble stela

Ph. 7. Facsimile of the inscription of the grave stela

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22 *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 319.


The inscription is carved in the lower half of the slab in a profiled field (dimensions: 40 x 35 cm). The text, in ancient Greek, initially carved in eight lines, is well preserved and legible, ending with hederai. The letters' dimensions are 2 x 2 cm. There are no ligatures. In addition to the information it contains, the elegantly engraved letters enrich the aesthetic appearance of the monument.

Text of the inscription: Translation:

`Οκταβιανός Ινστει- 
ανός Αττικός τῷ
ύιῳ Αττικῷ καὶ τῇ
μητρί αὐτοῦ Ὀλυμ- 
πιάδι καὶ τῇ ἁδελ-
φῇ αὐτοῦ Νεικοπο- 
λιάνῃ μνεῖας χά-
ριν

Octavianos Inste- 
anos Atticos [raises the monument]
to the son Atticos, to his
mother Olympias
and to his sister
Neicopoliane
for memory

The orthography of the inscription is quite correct; the letters are oval. The letter β in Octavianos’ name attests that it was pronounced as “v”, which in other inscriptions dating from same period is usually written with an omicron-ypsilon.25

The shape and the type of the letters are identical to another inscription from Styberra found in the poterna; even the “handwriting” of the stonemason is the same, so we think that it may have been produced in the same workshop and belongs to a same period, III c. A.D.26

Judging by its contents, the inscription is sepulchral: Octavianos Insteianos Atticos raises the stela for three members of his family from different generations: the son Αττικός, the mother Ολυμπίας, and the sister Νεικοπολιανή.

The iconography of the stela (especially the depiction of the mother Olympias) and the inscription where Octavianos Insteianos Atticos appears only as a dedicant, indicate that he was a part of the upper class in the city, so he placed a stela only for the deceased close relatives, and could afford a separate monument for himself.

In addition to the iconography of the relief depictions, the above is supported by the name of Octavianos Insteianos Atticos, fashioned according to the Roman naming formula tria nomina, used by Roman immigrant citizens or romanized local population. Octavianos Insteianos Atticos possessed the right of citizenship according to the Roman laws, and all three elements of his name are of Latin origin, the praenomen and the nomen being derived from nomina gentilicia with a suffix characteristic for cognomina.

25 Inscriptiones Graecae, 180, 184, 190, 249, 266.
26 Inscriptiones Graecae, 321.
The local origin of Octavianos Insteianos Atticos is proven by the names of his mother Olympias and his sister Neicopoliane, names from the local onomasticon.

The names Octavianos and Atticos have not been attested in the onomastics of Styberra and Deuriopos. In the neighbouring Lyncestis (Heraclea), a grave monument dating from of I-II c. A.D. mentions a deceased Octavis, most likely a slave of some Maxima.27

Atticos has also not been attested in inscriptions from the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

The nomina derived with the suffix –anus, characteristic of cognomina of persons who were adopted to other families, and added their original nomen as cognomen with the suffix -anus, most probably indicate a similar connection of Octavianos Insteianos Atticos with the Instei family from Styberra. Octavianos Insteianos Atticos could have another nomen, but in order to emphasize his origin and his connection to the Instei family, he states the cognomen.

In Styberra there are other examples dating from the III c. A.D. of people whose nomen has been derived with same suffix -anus: Ailia-nos Pantauchos, Ailiane Sosipatra.28

Concluding this section, we date the stela to III c. A.D. and concisely state arguments in favour: the iconographic representations encountered in III c. A.D.; the idea of merging the soul of the deceased with a deity (Aphrodite, Heracles) spread in III c. A.D.; the shape of the letters in the inscription identical to the already published inscription from Styberra dated III c. A.D.; the family Instei being confirmed in Styberra in III c.A.D. in other inscriptions.

Having already considered Octavianos Insteianos Atticos, we believe that it would be useful to list all Instei that have been found and attested on inscriptions in Styberra, where the concentration of people with the nomen Instei is the most intense.29

Representatives of the family Instei in Styberra are attested in the I, II and III c. A.D., being 12 in total. The earliest references are found in the lists of ephebes where the Instei are mentioned as ephebes, leading ephebes and ephebarchos (I c. A.D. and beginning of II c. A.D.). Names of the ephebes from the Instei family up to 121/2 A.D. are fashioned in the Roman naming formula, all three components being Latin, while in 121/2 A.D. there are an ephebarchos and an epimeletes in the gymnasium, whose cognomina are of local origin (Philoxenos and Orestes).

27 Inscriptiones Graecae, 123.

28 Inscriptiones Graecae, 334.

In the II c. A.D., two members of Insteii family appear once again, honored with statues and inscriptions due to their virtue. The first inscription has been dedicated to Alexandros Insteios by his parents, the father Flavios Paramonos and the mother Insteia Nicopolis; the second inscription has been dedicated to Insteios Alexandros' mother, Insteia Nicopolis.

In the III c. A.D., a member of the Instei family is attested as a priest of Heracles: Gaios Insteios Zoilos, son of Gaios Insteios Theogeiton. All Instei from II and III c. A.D. bear local cognomina that relate to their local origin.

5. Prosopography of the Insteii from Styberra

M. Ινστείος Ποντικός: Leading ephebus, 87/8 A.D.
L. Ινστείος Γεμελλός: Ephebarchos, 87/8 A.D.
Μ(άρκος) Ινστείος Μέμμιος: Ephebus, 107/8 A.D.
Λούκιος Ινστείος Όυαλεντίους: Ephebus116/7 A.D.
Μ(άρκος) Ινστείος Δομέστικος: Ephebus, 121/2 A.D.
Μ. Ινστείος Κασσίανος Φιλάξινος: Ephebarchos, 121/2 A.D.
Μ(άρκος) Ινστείος Ορέστης: Epimeletes, 121/2 A.D.
'Ινστείος Αλέξανδρος: Inscription on marble base, son of Flavios Paramonos and Insteia Nicopolis, votive monument, II c. A.D.
'Ινστείος Νικόπολις: Mother of Insteios Alexandros from the previous inscription, honored because of virtue with votive monument, II c. A.D.
Γαῖος Ινστείος Ζώιλός: priest of Heracles, IIIc. A.D.
Γαῖος Ινστείος Θεογείτων: father of the priest, end of II c. – beginning of III c. A.D.
Οκταβιανός Ινστειανός Αττικός: dedicant of grave stela to his family members, IIIc. A.D.

We are hopeful that future excavations in Styberra will provide many finds that will enhance our understanding of the social mosaic of Styberra in ancient times.

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30 The Prosopography includes all people from Styberra that have the element Insteios in their names.
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Во текстов се разгледува мермерна надгробна стела пронајдена во с. Чепигово, во ареал на античкиот град Стибера. Стелата има три елементи: триаголен фронтон (делумно оштетен), релјефно поле со претстава на три покојни лица и натпис во 8 реда со одлично сочуван текст на старогрчки јазик. Текстот завршува со хедера. Од трите покојни лица, две се претставени како божества, Афродита и Херакле. Третото у покој но лице е повозрасна дама.

На натписот, пак, се спомнува четири лица; подигнувачот на стелата кој бил жив, Октавијан Инстеејан Атик и неговите блиски у покое ни родници: синот Атик, мајката Олимпијада и сестрата Нејкополи јана. В о името на Октавијан Инстеејан Атик сите три члене се латински, а неговото локално потекло се докажува со имињата на мајка му Олимпијада и сестра му Нејкополи јана, чиишто имиња се дел од локалниот ономастикон. Октавијан Инстеејан Атик, според вториот член од името, бил поврзан со веќе потврдената фамилија Инстееј од Стибера. Досега во Сти бера, каде што е најголема концентрација на луѓе што го носат гентилното име Инстееј, се потврдени 12 лица во периодот од 1 до 3 в. по Хр., мегу кои има ефеби, ефебарси, истакнати граѓани почестени со споменици, свештеници на одредени божества (Херакле).

Оваа стела го збогатува епиграфскиот корпус од Стибера, се отвора полето за сепулкални споменици и особено придонесува за просопографскиот и ономастичкиот фундус на Стибера.

Ключни зборови: стела, гентилно име Инстееј, божества Херакле и Афродита, епиграфски натпис.