

Funerary Ara from Heraclea

Vesna Kalpakovska

(e-mail: kalpakovska@yahoo.com)

Anica Ćorgievska

(e-mail: anicagjorgjievaska@yahoo.com)

Engin Nasuh

(e-mail: joenmk@yahoo.com)

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In this text, we deal with a fairly well-preserved funerary ara excavated in Heraclea in the spring of 2009.

1. Ara whereabouts

The ara was unearthed in a facility adjacent to the south rampart (IP G sq. 16). During excavations of the upper layer, many fragments of pottery and construction ceramics, glass, construction waste, stones, fragments of mosaics, soil mixed with plaster, modern metal, osteological animal material, and small marble pieces were found. Removing this upper layer revealed a facility with dimensions of l. 7,50m X w. 6,60m.

The facility is east-west oriented, having an entrance on the east side. At the entrance on the left side, there is a base (ara-like) made of roughly cut stone with minimal and primitive decoration. (Dim. 139cmX80cm) (Ph. 1)



Ph. 1

The south wall of the facility is the city rampart. Many architectonic elements were found throughout the facility: in the north part – a fragment of a pillar (h. 78cm, d. 53cm); and, to the east – an Ionic capital, part of a marble decorated baluster, meno and the ara. All of these elements were found in a supine position.

In addition to these elements, many marble fragments were built into the walls of the facility as spolia.

In the north-west corner, next to the wall, there are four graves (without grave contributions), one of which enters the adjacent facility.

This ara was found beside the north wall in a semi-supine position. (Ph. 2)



Ph. 2

Due to terrain configuration, it is possible that all of these findings were not in the facility originally, but have slid and fallen through time.

Description of the funerary ara

The ara is pretty well preserved, although the upper part has been broken. It was cut from a single piece of marble (monolithic), with three elements: base, body and crown (tripartite). Dimensions: 85cmX55cmX45cm (Ph. 3).



Ph. 3

From the base upwards the ara slightly narrows. There is a recipient in the upper part that was originally fashioned in a square shape.

The diameter of the upper part of the ara (recipient) is 30 cm , with a depth of 14 cm. The recipient has two holes, one in the middle (dia 5 cm) and another in the upper left corner (dia 4 cm) (Ph.4)



Ph. 4

The base of the ara narrows upwards, and is separated into a rectangular plinth and two profiles: cyma recta; and, above (probably), cyma reversa (a broken part). There is a profiled field on the front with an inscription without decoration.

The crown of the ara, which is more preserved on its right side, shows more profiles. It has cyma reversa, torus and an upper strip. All of these are separated from each other with narrow plain strips.

On the left lateral there is a simply profiled field where a relief has been carved. The back side of the ara is also carefully done and smooth, from which we may conclude that the ara was positioned to be visible from all sides. The bottom side, which is not exposed to viewers, was also very carefully crafted. This type of ara is typical for the Roman period.

An ancient Greek inscription of 6 lines has been carved on the front side, solidly preserved and legible; and, on the left lateral, there is a relief of a horseman galloping to the right, wearing chiton and chlamys. The field with relief is not quite horizontal: the right lower corner is 4 cm higher than the left lower corner. (Ph. 5).



Ph. 5

The relief is not completely preserved: the head of the horseman is missing, while the largest part of the horse, a large portion of the horseman's body (from the shoulders downwards), and a part of his chlamys, are preserved.

Later intervention in the ara's recipient is noticeable. Originally, it was square-shaped; afterwards, an additional depression of about 3 cm, circular in form, was fashioned and the hole in the middle (5 cm dia) was made. (Ph. 4).

This intervention left the hole in the upper left corner above the level of the depression, which proves the additional intervention. The role of the recipient is uncertain; it may have been a focus for sepulchral sacrifices or a depositus for the ashes of the remains of the deceased [1]. The height of the ara is ideally suitable for offering sacrifice in the recipient itself.

Supporting Ideas for this postulation may be found in the inscription that will be explained below.

2. Iconography of the funerary ara

Equestrian iconography is a frequently met scene on sepulchral monuments from Roman times, which is another argument supporting the dating the ara [2]. Considering the recipient and the inscription with sepulchral contents, we believe that this scene most probably has solely a funerary function, i.e. it emphasizes the heroization of the deceased.

Almost the same iconography was found once again in Heraclea on a fragment of a relief of a horseman. (Ph.6). Later, this relief was used as construction material.



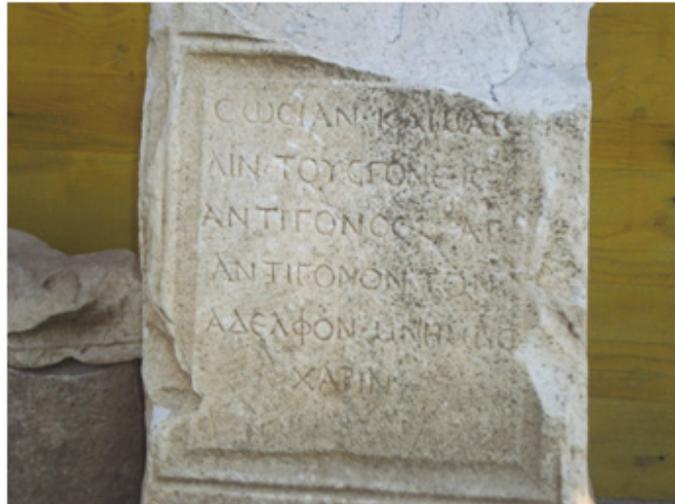
Ph. 6

The relief is in the museum in Heraclea. The preserved part has dimensions of 54X35X16cm. Even though the preserved part of this relief is the one that is missing on the ara's relief, there are sufficient elements to conclude that the same iconography is in question (emphasizing, of course, that the horseman on this relief is larger and that the relief is deeper, with more details because of its larger size). Besides the similarity of the scheme, the type of marble is the same, which leads us to the assumption that it was made by the same stonemason or a workshop from the same period.

3. Inscription on the ara

As mentioned above, the ara on the front side has a 6-line inscription in ancient Greek, well preserved and readable, with the exception of a word in the third line, in which only two letters could be recognized: A and Γ (Ph. 7). The inscription is in the standard profiled field (dim. 38X34cm) without decoration.

Σωσίαν. καὶΜατε-
λιν. τοὺς γονεῖς
Ἀντίγονος. .ΑΓ.
Ἀντίγονον. τὸν
ἀδελφὸν. μνήμης
χάριν



Ph. 7

The letters have a height between 2 and 2.5 cm, and the distance between the lines is 3 cm; there are no ligatures on the inscription. The lettering is even and consistent, having an aesthetic appearance, and a morphology that is identical regardless of the number of times the letters are inscribed in the text: Omega is lunar, and sigma also; and M has rounded internal crossbars. Although the text is very simple, we may conclude that the language is correct, without orthographic errors. The disposition of the text in the field, the proportion of the letters and the distance between the lines, the symmetry in the last line, and the distance from left and right of the last word, all indicate that before inscribing the text there was a preparation phase (ordinatio). There is no distance between the words, but generally they are separated by a period. Names of the deceased are in Acc. (usually practiced during the 3rd C, AD in sepulchral inscriptions).

The text reads:

To the parents Sosias

and Matelis

[the son places the monument]

Antigonos . . AG

to the brother Antigonos

in memory

The ara's dedicant, in memory of his parents, is Antigonos; however, in the next line, a person with the same name Antiognos is deceased, and his brother or sister is inscribed 'in memory'. Considering that the text is very meticulously inscribed with a lot of care to the symmetry and proportion of the text in the field, there is a question of how in the middle of the text Antigonos is the dedicant and in the next line he is mentioned as deceased. There are several options for explaining this, but all of them are merely hypothetical. There are no traces of altering or effacing the text or the letters in the inscription.

We assume that originally the ara was made for the parents Sosias and Matelis, when the recipient was 11 cm deep (as confirmed by the hole in the upper left corner). Shortly thereafter, the dedicant deceased, and the same ara was used. The recipient was then depressed a 3 additional cm (to a depth of 14 cm), for placing the urn with Antigonos' ashes; and, on that occasion, the relief of a horseman was carved.

The crown of the ara is damaged, so we could not say if there was a cover or of what type it may have been.

All of the deceased are mentioned by their given name, but this criterion itself cannot indicate a clearer idea of social status. There are no names of Latin origin in the inscription. The father's name, Sosias, has not been met in Heraclea, but is met frequently in Styberra, where it is mentioned many times (7) as personal in the ephebic lists from the first through the third centuries, AD. [3]

The name Matelis (Matelin in the text, in Acc.) was also seen for the first time in Heraclea: Matelis, a female, is testified on a sepulchral stele from Gradište, Prilep, as a personal name dated from 2-1 BC [4].

Antigonos is a name with a long tradition in Heraclea, Styberra and beyond. This name of royal origin was given to people from various social classes and so far there are more than 30 people testified having this name as a part of their names (personal or patronymics). [5]

Considering all these elements we would date the ara in the third century, AD.

Notes

[1] More on recipients and other parts of aras, cf. D. Marsic, *Tusculum* Vol.3, "Bilješke uz dva nadgrobna spomenika u perivoju Garagnin-Fanfogna u Trogiru", 2010, 31-42; Idem, "Aserijatske nadgrobne are", *ASSERIA*,3, 2005, 25-52.

[2] N. Proeva, Heroizacija pokojnika u rimskoj provinciji Makedoniji, *Zbornik Narodnog Muzeja, XX-1*, (arheologija), 2011, 129-155; *Inscriptiones Graecae*, MIM, 16, 31, 92, 174, 223, 240, 265; R. Petkovski, "Simbolikata na životinsките i čovečki pretstavi modelirani na rimskite nadgrobni spomenici vo Makedonija. *Patrimonium IV*, 67-74. (Петковски, "Симболиката на животинските и човечки претстави моделирани на римските надгробни споменици во Македонија". *Патримониум IV*, 67-74).

[3] *Inscriptiones Graecae*,(1999) Sosias: 323, 324, 325.

[4] *Inscriptiones Graecae*, (1999) 159: Matelis Lysaniou.

[5] *Inscriptiones Graecae*, (1999): 10, 21, 75, 76, 231, 289, 311, 323, 325, 326, 399.

Надгробна ара од Хераклеја

РЕЗИМЕ

Надгробната ара е откриена при ископувањата во 2009 г. Пронајдена е во просторија до јужниот бедем заедно со други фрагменти од камена пластика. Можно е сите овие наоди да не биле изворно во таа просторија, туку да се свлечени со текот на времето.

Арата има натпис во 6 реда на старогрчки јазик и на левата страна има релјеф на коњаник што јава надесно.

На горниот дел арата има реципиент кој веројатно претрпел интервенција откако бил првично направен.

Арата е подигната на родителите Сосија и Мателис од Антигон и на братот Антигон за спомен.