

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DATING OF THE TWO ATTIC GRAVE-RELIEFS FOUND IN MACEDONIA

In an earlier number of *Živa Antika*, Ljubiša Popović, from the National Museum in Belgrade, connected two fragmentary grave-reliefs with human figures, found in Macedonia, with the Attic sepulchral art of the fourth century B. C., on account of their themes and stylistic characteristics¹. While agreeing in general with the author's principal conclusions, we would like to discuss briefly the dating of these two reliefs and try to put them in a narrower chronological frame, for which there is a certain basis.

The better preserved of the two grave-reliefs was found in the village of Crnobuki and is now in the Museum of Bitola². On this naiskos-shaped stele a family group is represented which contains four figures. The two main ones, a man on the left, sitting on a stool³ with his feet on a footstool, and a woman on the right, standing with her weight on the right leg, are united by a handshake. Between them there is a smaller female figure and to the left of the seated man a boy in a cloak, standing with legs crossed⁴.

The sitting person can not be with certainty identified as the deceased⁵ because, as K. F. Johansen points out⁶, the dead was very often represented standing beside other sitting figures on the Attic grave-reliefs from the second half of the fifth century onwards. The inscription on the architrave of the stele, which could help in the identification of the dead, is no longer legible. The scene represented on the relief also does not help because, to quote again the Danish scholar, the contents and especially the handshake on the reliefs do not point to any special moment either in this life or beyond but without differentiating the dead from the living, symbolise the unity of the family which the intervention of death has failed to sunder.⁷. On the stele from Crnobuki one could get the impression that the standing woman takes

¹ Lj. Popović, *Deux reliefs funéraires de Macédoine*, *Živa Antika* VII, 1957, 252—260.

² First published, N. Vulić, *Antički spomenici naše zemlje*, Spomenik SAN XCIVIII, 1941—48, 26, Nr. 63.

³ Difros, type b, following the classification of Gisela Richter (*Ancient Furniture*, Oxford 1926, 32; *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans*, London 1966, 40—41).

⁴ Detailed description, Popović, *op. cit.*, 252 sqq., Fig. 1.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 253.

⁶ K. Friis Johansen, *The Attic Grave-Reliefs*, Copenhagen 1951, 37 sqq.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.



Fig. 1

leave from her husband and children⁸ who form a compositional entity. However, on the stele of Damasistrate from the National Museum in Athens⁹, which we shall have occasion to mention a few times, the disposition of the figures is almost identical with our relief but we know from the inscription that the dead person is represented by the sitting female figure and not by the man, who is apparently ready to leave. On the grave-relief depicting a girl with her parents, also from the National Museum in Athens¹⁰, which has some similarities with our stele, it is

⁸ The girl in the centre is probably a daughter, suggested by the position of the sitting man's left hand embracing her from behind.

⁹ A. Conze, *Die attischen Grabreliefs*, T. XCVII, 410; Johansen, *op. cit.*, 57, Fig. 24.

¹⁰ Conze, *op. cit.*, T. LXXX, 322; H. Diepolder, *Die attischen Grabreliefs des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Berlin 1931, T. 42, 1.



Fig. 1a

probable that the girl who takes leave is the deceased, because one can not escape the impression that the parallelism of the parents' movements expresses the unity of their feelings, and still this opinion can not be stated with complete certainty.

But to come back to the dating of the grave-relief.

The missing upper left hand corner would give a more complete picture of the organization of composition and fullness of space, which is common on the grave-reliefs with family groups from the middle of the fourth century¹¹. A tridimensional treatment which is not so noticeable in the details as in the attitudes of the figures, the stool and the

¹¹ Diepolder, *op. cit.*, 36 and 46; Johansen, *op. cit.*, 42 sqq.

footstool suggests also similar dating of the relief. The relation of the woman and the boy to the antae speaks for a certain disregard for the architectural frame, which is characteristic, according to H. Diepolder,¹² of the same period.

The individual figures do not contradict these general conclusions on the date of the stele from Crnobuki. The standing woman in counterpoise is perhaps closer to Athena on the contract between Athens and Corcyra from 375 B. C., than to Athena on the Lachares' proxeny decree from 355/4 B. C.¹³, though she is much more firm in the attitude than a large number of figures in similar poise, dated in the seventies and the sixties of the fourth century¹⁴. Her attitude is in a way closest to the young athlete Aristion on the grave-relief from the National Museum in Athens¹⁵. However, this stele must be earlier than ours because Aristion's little servant, from the position of his legs, is typologically earlier than the boy on the Crnobuki stele. The representation of the legs crossed, known before in Greek art¹⁶, became almost a manner on the grave-reliefs from the middle of the fourth century, probably influenced by the works of the great masters of this time¹⁷. So, the servant on the earlier mentioned stele of Damasistrate, dated about 350 B. C.¹⁸, has a very similar attitude to the boy on the Crnobuki stele.

On account of these observations the grave-relief from Crnobuki could be dated at the end of the first half of the fourth century B. C. or somewhere between 355 and 350 B. C.

Finally, on the basis of the work one could draw a few conclusions about its master. In spite of serious damage on the surface of the relief an impression of unskillfulness of finish is given, for example, by the instability of the chair, by a certain disproportion in the sitting man's body, by the linearity of some details which testify to the incomplete mastery of volume. The avoiding to represent the left leg of the sitting figure which can not be taken in this case only as a desire to simplify the compositional scheme, could be explained in a similar way. On the other hand considering the disposition of the main planes, the expressed balance of the left and the right side, the emphasis on the diagonals and keeping the handshake in the very centre of the relief,

¹² *Op. cit.*, 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36 sqq., Abb. 9 and Abb. 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37 sq.

¹⁵ Conze, *op. cit.* T. CCVII, 1035; Diepolder, *op. cit.*, T. 36, 2; Johansen, *op. cit.*, Fig. 8. Underlining the close similarity between Athena on the proxeny decree for Lachares and Aristion, Diepolder (*op. cit.*, 42) dated this also in 355/4 B. C. However, Aristion's stele could be a few years earlier because of the slightly stronger inclination of Athena's body.

¹⁶ E. g. the well known stele from Orchomenos, signed by Alxenor of Naxos (Johansen, *op. cit.*, 122, Fig. 59), dated in the beginning of the fifth century, or the stele of Ktesileos and Theano (*Ibid.*, 40, Fig. 21) from the beginning of the fourth century.

¹⁷ Looking at the boy on the stele from Crnobuki, it calls to mind the well known boy from Tralles, now in the Museum of Antiquities in Istanbul, who is thematically very close to our figure.

¹⁸ For the dating of Damasistrate's stele, Diepolder, *op. cit.*, 49.

one could conclude that the artist knew the principles of composition as well as the main trends in the art of the middle of the fourth century. Let us, for instance, compare our grave- relief with Damasistrate's stele on which not only the disposition of the figures but also their attitudes are very similar. This one is undoubtedly more advanced in technique and artisans' skill, but it could be argued that the Crnobuki stele shows a more alive and better organized composition. Both reliefs possibly followed the same common type of family group which appeared in the sixties of the fourth century and developed with many variations. The relief from Crnobuki, somewhat earlier than Damasistrate's stele, was closer to the earliest disposition of figures.

For these reasons one could consider that the author of the Crnobuki stele was a talented but not sufficiently learned artist, who developed his artistic activity in some provincial town having lived a few years in an important artistic centre. Frequent finds of grave- reliefs which belong to the Attic types from the end of the fifth to the last decades of the fourth century B. C. in the Greek cities on the North Aegean coast¹⁹ speak for the possibility that local sculptural workshops existed here under the influence of Attic art. One could go perhaps so far as to maintain that these workshops were founded by some of the Parthenon masters' apprentices who continued their career here after the completion of the great building era in Athens. True to the Attic artistic principles they adopted also the shapes of its sepulchral monuments. A grave-relief from Vergina the work of a local master, also favours this idea. It was dated by M. Andronicos, in a very large analysis, between 360 and 350 B. C.²⁰, and by a strange coincidence contains also four figures, disposed similarly to those on the Crnobuki stele.

A fragment of a stele from the Archeological Museum in Skopje, found somewhere in South Macedonia²¹, gives much less possibility to draw some conclusions. Only the right lower part is preserved where one can distinguish the figures of two women. One is sitting on a chair without back²² and is turned to the left, the other, somewhat smaller, is standing behind the stool, at the very edge of the relief²³.

The stele of Sostrate from the Metropolitan Museum in New York²⁴ was put forwards as the closest analogy to the relief from Skopje

¹⁹ L. Heuzey — T. Daumet, *La mission archéologique de Macédoine*, Paris 1876, T. 6 (Amphipolis); S. Casson, *Macedonia, Thrace and Illyria*, Oxford 1926, 259, Fig. 99 (Ainos); Δ Λαζαρόδη, 'Ανασταφαὶ καὶ φρενοὶ Ἀμφιπολέως, Πραχτικά Ἀρχ. Ἑταίρ. 1960, 71-72, Πλv 55β, 58α, β. Cf. BCH 1961, 820, Fig. 14—15; also, *BCH* 1966, 889, Fig. 7 (Messi, near Komotini); M. Andronicos, *Deux stèles funéraires grecques de Vergina*, *BCH* 1955, 87 sqq. M. Andronicos, *Stèle funéraire de Kassaudra*, *BCH* 1962, 261 sqq.

²⁰ Andronicos, *BCH* 1955 97.

²¹ First published, N. Vulić, *Antički spomenici naše zemlje*, Spomenik SKA LXXI, 1931, 240, Nr. 640.

²² Diplos, type a, following the classification of Gisela Richter (*op. cit.*, 31 sq.).

²³ Detailed description, Popović, *op. cit.*, 257, Fig. 2. Cf. Also, Б. Јосифовска, *Богич низ Лапидаријум*, Археолошки Музеј, Скопје 1961, 23 sq. T. III.

²⁴ Diepolder, *op. cit.*, T. 30: Johansen, *op. cit.*, Fig. 22.



Fig. 2

grave-relief. The monument very possibly belongs also to the family group type because of the standing figure behind the chair. By comparing the size of the diphros with the same type on other grave-reliefs one could conclude that there was enough space for one more figure, may be only for a child, in front of the sitting woman. In this case three figures could have been disposed diagonally on the relief, in a similar way to the stele of Polyxena.

²⁵ Diepolder, *op. cit.* 35 sq.

²⁶ This form of diphros appears more often towards the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth century on the grave-reliefs (Richter, *loc. cit.*) which could suggest an earlier date for the fragment from the Archeological Museum in Skopje. However, there are also later examples, as the grave-relief from the Piraeus Museum, No. 429, which is a copy of the well-known relief of two women in the National Museum in Athens (Conze, *op. cit.*, T. LXXVII, 320; Diepolder, *op. cit.*, 50, ref. 4, T. 47), dated in the first decade of the second half of the fourth century. Cf. recently, slightly earlier date, *BCH* 1968, 714.

²⁷ Cf. ref. 10. Recently, this relief is dated between 365 and 355 B. C (*BCH* 1968, 714).

²⁸ Conze, *op. cit.*, T. LXVI, 284; Diepolder, *op. cit.*, T. 40; Johansen, *op. cit.*, Fig. 10.

²⁹ Conze, *op. cit.*, T. CLXXVII, 901; Diepolder, *op. cit.*, T. 41; Johansen, *op. cit.*, Fig. 10.

because of the same attitude of the two figures as well as of the same type of stool. This stele represents a prototype of the family group on the grave-reliefs of the fourth century and is dated, on the basis of the style and other characteristics, to the years about 380 B. C.²⁵ However, the fragment from the Archeological Museum in Skopje could not be dated as early as that²⁶. Having in mind its round formed figures as well as the largely and freely worked drapery, which falls on the stool in many folds, this stele is clearly different from the expressed linearity of the relief in the Metropolitan Museum, and approaches in style the later grave-reliefs, for example the already mentioned stele of the girl with her parents²⁷ or the steles of Polyxena²⁸ and Ameinokleia²⁹, also from the National Museum in Athens.

It is difficult to say something about the composition of this

The reliefs mentioned up to now are mainly dated in the last decade of the first half of the fourth century B. C., but we propose for our fragment, especially because of the relief depth, a slightly later date — between 350 and 340 B. C.

The technique of finish on this relief as far as one can judge from the preserved fragment, is on a higher level than on the Crnobuki stele. Bearing in mind also its smaller dimensions³⁰, one can suppose that it was imported to Macedonia from an important artistic centre of this period in the South.

The dating of the two grave-reliefs in the same period, found in Macedonia, which belong to the circle of Attic sepulchral art of the middle of the fourth century, can be explained also by the political circumstances. Lj. Popović has already pointed out the various and enduring relations between these parts of Macedonia and Greece, especially Athens³¹. We limit ourselves to underline the complicated political situation in Greece in the middle decades of the fourth century and the importance, which the northern neighbours of the increasingly powerful state of Macedonia could have at this time for Athens. These half-barbaric sovereigns are now mentioned more frequently in connection with the history of Athens as for example Menelaos the Pelagon³² on whose territory, it is probable, the Crnobuki stele was found. It is possible that the number of Greeks, who were moving to the North for different reasons and for a longer or shorter period, increased at this time. There they were erecting to themselves or to the members of their families the same type of sepulchral monument as they would have done in their native city. The Greek tomb in Demir Kapija, with white lekythoi from the end of the fifth century³³, speaks clearly of this trend.

In this moment it seems to us a more probable supposition that the fragmentary grave-reliefs of the fourth century B. C., found in Macedonia, were made by Greek sculptors for Greeks and not for



Fig. 2a

³⁰ Cf. Popović, *op. cit.*, 258.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 258 sqq.

³² Geyer, *PWRE* XV, 830, s. v. Menelaos Pelagon; also, Geyer, *PWRE* XIV, 719, s. v. Macedonia.

³³ D. Vučković-Todorović, *Grčki grob iz Demir Kapije*, Starinar N. S. IX—X, 1958/9, 281—296.

the natives. In spite of the strong Hellenization of North Macedonia in the fifth and especially in the fourth century, the indigenes were not sufficiently mature to understand and adopt a sepulchral art which spoke of life and death in a different way from their large necropolises of this period with tombs rich in gold and silver. However, even if we would go so far as to suppose that one of the local kings or chieftains expressed a wish to erect a colossal sepulchral monument with figural representations, like those of the Persian satraps, one should expect a heroic poise, similar perhaps to that of Dexileos³⁴, where the dead triumphs over his enemies, and not a closed family circle which depicts the union of the deceased and the survivors out of time and space.

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³⁴ Conze, *op. cit.*, T. CCXLVIII, 1158. The Dexileos motives appear also later in the fourth century on the grave-reliefs, e. g. No. 3620 in the National Museum in Athens. Cf. the recently discovered marble lekythos with similar motif (*BCH* 1970, 912, Fig. 59), which should be dated towards the middle of the fourth century on account of certain resemblances to the Amazon frieze from Halicarnassos. With more daring one could see in this grave-relief a detail from the cavalry skirmish at Mantinea, painted by Euphranor, probably towards the end of the first half of the fourth century B. C.