

A PEDESTAL WITH INSCRIPTION FROM THE MIDDLE STRYMON VALLEY

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the present article is an inscribed marble pedestal found in 2005 during archaeological excavations of an Early Byzantine basilica in Dolnoto Gradishte locality near the village of Mikrevo, Strumyani Municipality (Southwestern Bulgaria). The monument consists of a foundation and a Tuscan base. It was made in the late 1st or in the early 2nd century AD and was most probably an element of the architectural environment of a military camp. In the late 2nd century it was reused as a pedestal upon which it may be assumed that an *ostotheke* (ash chest) was placed. A six-line Greek inscription was engraved on the front side. It is a funerary inscription dedicated by Artemidora to the memory of her son and husband with a value of 300 *denarii*.

Keywords: pedestal; funerary monument; Greek inscription; Roman archaeology; province of *Macedonia*

INTRODUCTION

An episcopal basilica dated to the 5th– 6th century was registered in the Dolnoto Gradishte locality (**Figs. 1, 2**) ca. 2.5 km to the northwest of the village of Mikrevo, Strumyani Municipality (Southwestern Bulgaria). The archaeological excavations were launched in 1996 and after a break continued between 2002 and 2008. The excavations were resumed in 2020. The basilica consists of a tripartite *naos*, a *narthex*, an *exonarthex*, an *atrium*, a *baptisterium*, and side rooms (**Fig. 3**). The *naos* and the *narthex* are 16.80 m long and 13.80 m wide. Three periods of functioning of the basilica can be defined (Petkov et al. 1998). The building was lavishly decorated with floor mosaics and wall paintings (Petkov et al. 1998, 28–30; Somova 1999, 92–93; Asmer 2016, 382–384).

An inscribed pedestal was found in 2005 during the excavations of the *atrium* (room No 6), which is located in the western part of the complex (**Fig.**

3). It was most probably reused as a base for a wooden column that had supported the timber structure of the roof (Петков, Петрова 2006, 247).

THE PEDESTAL

The pedestal is now kept in the basilica in the Dolnoto Gradishte locality at the village of Mikrevo. It comprises a monolithic marble block (**Fig. 4**). The front left part and the back right corner are missing. The artefact is 0.87 m high, 0.44 m wide and 0.42 m thick. The marble block consists of a foundation and a Tuscan base. The foundation is a parallelepiped-shaped stem and two ledges, the transitions between which are not made through profiling but through slanting. Three of the sides have been worked, while the surface of the rear one is rough. The shaft has a rectangular cross-section measuring 0.40 m x 0.38 m. There is a funerary Greek inscription in six lines on the front side (see below). The base consists of a plinth, a torus and a tall listel. Its diameter is 0.32 m. There is an opening 5 cm in diameter and 5 cm deep on it. On the front and back sides of the base, there have been carved canals running towards the opening for the pouring of molten lead. On both sides of the base, at the level where the listel starts, there are dowel openings that were used for the attachment of a detail that was to be mounted on top of the pedestal.

The convex shape of the torus suggests a date of the pedestal in the end of the 1st – the early 2nd century AD¹ (Димитров 2016, 452). Such early use of the Tuscan order is typical for the Roman military architecture. Examples include Tuscan bases from the Limes area – from the *valetudinarium* at Novae built in the late 1st century AD, as well as from *Oescus* and *Sexaginta Prista* (Димитров 2016, 446 – 447). Perhaps the monument under study was part of a military camp's architecture. The shaping of the back side shows that the pedestal was originally placed in front of a wall. Perhaps it belonged to a colonnade that flanked a row of entrances (Димитров 2016, 450). It probably belonged to the decoration of a luxurious building in the military camp.

There is direct epigraphic evidence indicating the functioning of a military camp in the area. A funerary stele was found in the Pushivets locality, 2 km to the southwest of the village of Ilindentsi and 3.5 km away from the Early Byzantine basilica in Dolnoto Gradishte locality (**Fig. 2**). It was built in the memory of Marcus Munatius Silvanus, an eques from a Macedonian cohort, by his colleague and heir Gaius Silius Capito (Angelov 2003, 140 – 141 II; Sharankov 2004, 198 – 199, II; Манов 2008, 128 – 129, No.172; Sharankov 2017, 21; 2020, 98 – 99, No 61). The inscription is dated to the second half of the 1st – the early 2nd century AD

¹ We are very indebted to Assoc. Prof. Zdravko Dimitrov (NAIM – BAS) who brought our attention to this detail.

based on its palaeographic characteristics (Sharankov 2020, 98, No 61). It was suggested that this military unit had been formed under Augustus with inhabitants of Macedonia and that, in the 1st century AD, it was stationed in Spain. From there, in the third quarter of the 1st century, it was transferred to the area of Ilindentsi, where it remained until its relocation in Cyrenaica at some moment between Hadrian (117 – 138) and Septimius Severus's (193 – 211) reigns (Sharankov 2020, 99, No 61).

The pedestal was reused in the late 2nd century AD. This date is suggested by the palaeography of the inscription that was carved on its front side (Sharankov 2020, 107, No 81a). The purpose of the monument also changed: from a pedestal with a base used in the official order architecture, it turned into a funerary altar. It should be noted that the use of a pedestal with a base in a funerary context stems from the notion that such monuments are used as altars. Pedestals with bases are mentioned in inscriptions in Asia Minor as βωμός or βωμόσπειρον (Coulton 2005, 142 – 143). At the same time, the term βωμός is also applied to designate funerary altars in the province of Macedonia (Αδάμ-Βελένη 1996, 11 n. 48).

The side openings were also added on the listel of the Tuscan base. Their function is related to the attachment of a detail on top of the pedestal, whose size must not have exceeded the diameter of the base. Openings of a rectangular shape for iron dowels are known from several *ostothekai* from the Middle and the Lower Strymon River. The *ostothekai* are of two types: rectangular and circular. In some of the monuments, the openings are located in the upper and lower parts of the short sides (for rectangular ones) (**Fig. 5**). And if the upper openings served for the stable attachment and sealing of the chest of the *ostotheke* to the lid, then the function of the lower ones was definitely for the mounting to a base. In some specimens, the dowels are also preserved (Милчева 2017, 57). The round shape of the base suggests that a circular *ostotheke* was probably mounted on it (**Fig. 6**). From the Middle and Lower Strymon River valley are known five circular *ostothekai*, of which only one, originating from *Parthicopolis*, has openings at the lower end (Милчева 2017, 19-20). Their diameter varies from 0.29 m to 0.47 m (Милчева 2017, 77, No 6 – 7, 78, No 9, 81, No 15, 85, No 22). Three rectangular *ostothekai* were published from the area of Ilindentsi from where the monument was most probably transferred (Милчева 2017, 76, No 4; 83, No 17, 84, No 21).

The mounting of *ostothekai* on funerary altars is attested through numerous examples in Asia Minor (Coulton 2005, 136 – 139). This practice is known also in the province of Macedonia (Αδάμ-Βελένη 1996, 30; Милчева 2017, 57 – 58). For the Middle Strymon River valley, it has been suggested that *ostothekai* were installed on top of stone bases or plinths, and for some of them, that they were placed inside tomb niches (Милчева 2017, 57).

THE INSCRIPTION

The inscription was partly published by N. Sharankov (Sharankov 2020, 107, No 81a).

The inscribed field is smooth, without a profiled frame (**Fig. 7**). Its dimensions are: height 0.33 m, width 0.40 m (top), and 0.36 m (bottom). The inscription is in six lines. The size of letters in lines 1 – 4 is 4 – 4.5 cm, and in lines 5 – 6 is 3 cm. Ligature in line 5 – HC.

Ἀρτεμιδώρα
 Διονυσίου τῷ
 υἱῷ Πύρρῳ καὶ τῷ
 ἀνδρὶ Καμπανῷ
 5 μνήμης χάριν ἐποίη –
 σεν (vac) * (vac) τ'

“Artemidora, daughter of Dionysios, made in memory of her son Pyrrhos and her husband Kampanos, *denarii* 300.”

L. 1: Artemidora is a theophoric name that is frequently attested in the region. It is recorded in inscriptions from *Parthicopolis*, Piperitsa, and *Heraclea Sintica* (Геров 1961, 199 – 200; Митрев 2001, 201; IGBulg. IV, 2272, 2278, 2314, 2325; Махов 2008, 127, No 169, 136, No 203, Митрев 2011, 40 – 41, No 17; Sharankov 2020, 90, No 34, 105, No 81). L. 2 the name Dionysios is also of theophoric origin, known from *Neine*, Piperitsa and *Heraclea Sintica* (Митрев 2001, 202; IGBulg. V, 5886, 5887, 5922; Махов 2008, 108-109, No. 114, 127 – 128, No. 170; Sharankov, 2020, 88, No 26, 92, No 40, 96, No 59; 2021, 7 – 12, No 2, 26 – 33, No 4). L. 3 the name of the son, Pyrrhos², is one of the more common names in the Middle Strymon valley. It has been attested in inscriptions from Kresna, *Neine*, *Parthicopolis*, Laskarevo, Kovachevo, Piperitsa, Melnik, and *Heraclea Sintica* (IGBulg. IV, 2240, 2241, 2263, 2271, 2272, 2291, 2303, 2319, 2330; V, 5884, 5886, 5888bis, 5888ter, 5890; Махов 2008, 109 – 110, No 116, 123, No155, 129, No. 173, Sharankov 2017, 23 – 24, 30-34, III; 2020: 80, No 2, 93, No 46, 99, No. 62, 106 – 107, No 81a; 2021, 7 – 12, No. 2, 26 – 33, No 4). L. 4 Campanus is a Latin name, which is rare in the Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire. One of the few examples comes from the sanctuary of the god Σαληνός in *Parthicopolis*, where a certain Γράνιος Καμπανός is attested, whose slave made a dedication in honour of the deity (IGBulg. V, 5903). The inscription is dated in AD 229/230. Granus Campanus was a Roman citizen, part of the *gens Granii*, which are well attested in the Roman province of Macedonia (Tataki 2006,

² About the name see also Sharankov 2017, 23 *with ref.*

243 – 244, no. 257). However, the person mentioned in the inscription in question was not a Roman citizen. It is possible that he was related to ancestors of Granius Campanus, from whom he took his name, but there is another possibility. Campanus is attested in inscriptions from Asia Minor (Ionia, Bithynia and Phrygia) as the name of both Roman and non-Roman citizens (IK Klaudiu polis 116; SEG 33, 944; 39, 1339; MAMA IX, 179, P48). A few years ago Mirena Slavova proved the presence of an immigrant population from Ionia in *Neine* and *Parthicopolis* (Slavova 2010, 42). It is also possible that the person was a descendant of immigrants or an immigrant from Asia Minor. L. 6 the symbol * denotes *denarii*. A fragment of an inscription, most likely from Parthicopolis, has the same sign. Due to a break at the place where the sum of money is mentioned, the latter cannot be determined with certainty, although it is assumed to be 300 or 360. Perhaps the numbers indicated in both inscriptions represent the monetary worth of the burial monuments (Sharankov 2020, 106 – 107, No 81a). In the case of the Mikrevo inscription, the value most probably comprised not just the pedestal but also the *ostotheke* that was put on it. The inscription's palaeography suggests a date in the late 2nd century AD (Sharankov 2020, 107, No 81a).

ABBREVIATIONS / ИЗПОЛЗВАНИ СЪКРАЩЕНИЯ:

- IGBulg IV** = Mihailov, G. Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae. Vol. IV. Inscriptiones in Territorio Serdicensi et in vallibus Strymonis Nestique repertae. Serdicae, 1966.
- IGBulg V** = Mihailov, G. Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae. Vol.V. Inscriptiones novae, addenda et corrigenda. Serdicae, 1997.
- IK Klaudiu polis** = Becker-Bertau, F. Die Inschriften von Klaudiu Polis. (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 31). Bonn 1986.
- MAMA IX** = Levick, B., Mitchell, St., Potter, J. Waelkens, M (eds.) 1988. Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua, vol. IX. Monuments from the Aezanitis (= Journal of Roman Studies Monographs 4). London, 1988.
- SEG 33** = Pleket, H., Stroud, R. (eds.). *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Vol. 33, Amsterdam, 1983.
- SEG 39** = Pleket, H., Stroud, R. (eds.). *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Vol. 39, Amsterdam, 1992.

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ПОСТАМЕНТ С НАДПИС ОТ ДОЛИНАТА НА СРЕДНА СТРУМА

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Настоящата статия разглежда мраморен постамент с надпис, открит през 2005 г. при разкопки на ранновизантийска базилика в м. Долното градище при с. Микрево, общ. Струмяни.

Паметникът е изработен от мраморен блок с височина 0,87 м, ширина 0,44 м и дебелина 0,42 м. Състои се от основа и тосканска база, включваща в себе си плинта, торус и висок листел. Диаметърът ѝ е 0,32 м. От двете страни на базата, на нивото, от което започва листелът, има отвори за скоби, придържали детайл, който е бил поставен върху постамента. Върху лицето на постамента е изписан шестредов надгробен надпис на гръцки език. Конвексната форма на торуса на базата позволява паметникът да се датира в края на I в. – началото на II в. сл. Хр. Толкова ранно използване на тосканския ордер е характерно за римската военна архитектура и намира паралели в зоната на лимеса. В края на II в. сл. Хр. постаментът е бил преупотребен. Към това време насочва палеографията на надписа, изписан върху лицевата му повърхност. Променено е и предназначението на паметника, който от постамент с база, използван в представителна орденархитектура, се превръща в надгробен олтар. Вторично са направени и страничните отвори, разположени върху листела на тосканската база. Тяхната функция е свързана със закрепването на кръгла остотека.

Надгробният паметник е посветен от Артемидора в памет на нейния син Пир и съпруга ѝ Кампан, на стойност 300 денария. Най-вероятно споменатата сума включва освен постамента и остотеката, която е била монтирана върху него. Надписът е датиран в края на II в. сл. Хр.



Fig. 1. Province of Macedonia 2nd – 3rd century (author: Ph. Kolev).

Обр. 1. Провинция Македония II – III век (автор: Ф. Колев).



Fig. 2. Map of Middle Strymon valley (author: Ph. Kolev, base map Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire. Lund University, Sweden (<http://imperium.ahlfeldt.se/>)).

Обр. 2. Карта на долината на Средна Струма.

(автор: Ф. Колев, основа на картата Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire. Lund University, Sweden (<http://imperium.ahlfeldt.se/>)).

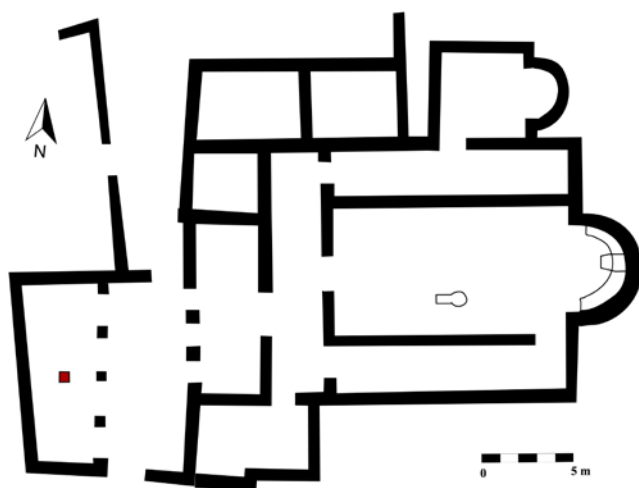


Fig. 3. Plan of Early Byzantine basilica at Dolnoto Gradishte locality. The red dot shows the location of the pedestal (authors: Vl. Petkov, Ph. Kolev).

Обр. 3. План на ранновизантийската базилика в м. Долното градище. Червената точка показва местоположението на постамента (автори: Вл. Петков, Ф. Колев).



Fig. 4. The pedestal from the village of Mikrevo (photos: Ph. Kolev).

Обр. 4. Постаментът от с. Микрево (снимки: Ф. Колев).



Fig. 4. The pedestal from the village of Mikrevo (photos: Ph. Kolev).

Обр. 4. Постаментът от с. Микрево (снимки: Ф. Колев).

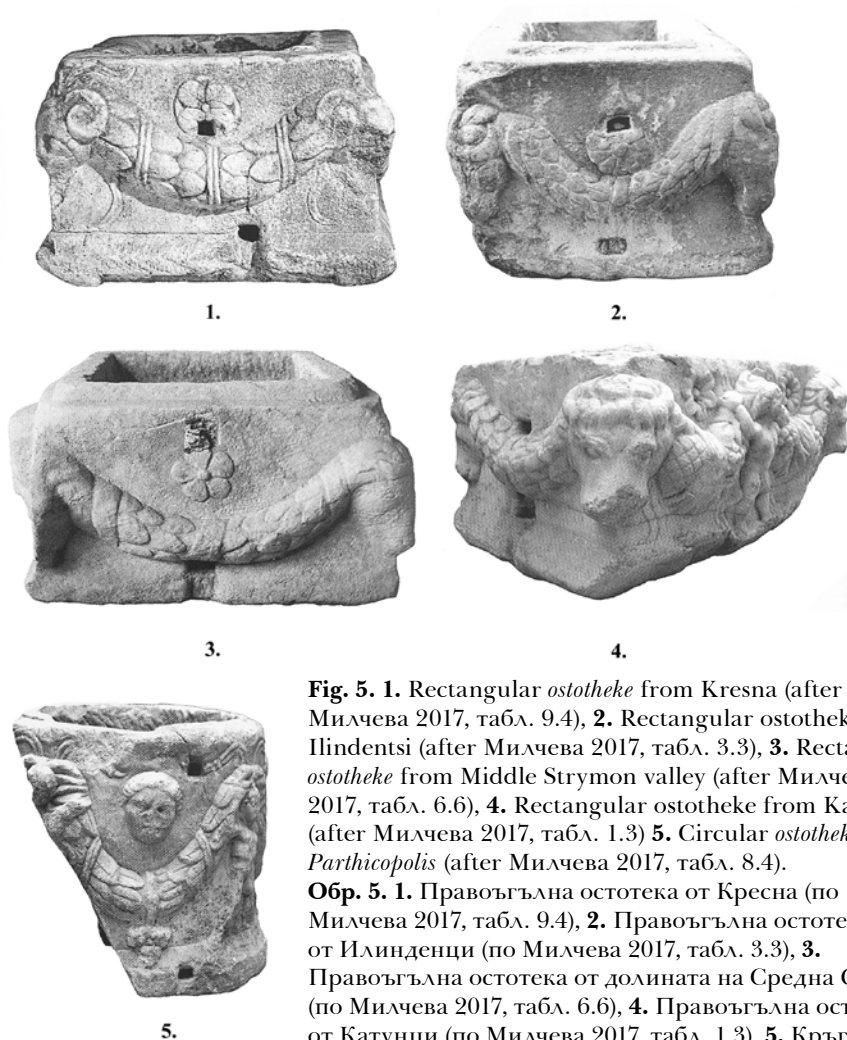


Fig. 5. 1. Rectangular *ostotheke* from Kresna (after Милчева 2017, табл. 9.4), 2. Rectangular *ostotheke* from Ilindentsi (after Милчева 2017, табл. 3.3), 3. Rectangular *ostotheke* from Middle Strymon valley (after Милчева 2017, табл. 6.6), 4. Rectangular *ostotheke* from Katuntsi (after Милчева 2017, табл. 1.3) 5. Circular *ostotheke* from Parthiopolis (after Милчева 2017, табл. 8.4).

Обр. 5. 1. Правоъгълна остотека от Кресна (по Милчева 2017, табл. 9.4), 2. Правоъгълна остотека от Илинденци (по Милчева 2017, табл. 3.3), 3. Правоъгълна остотека от долината на Средна Струма (по Милчева 2017, табл. 6.6), 4. Правоъгълна остотека от Катунци (по Милчева 2017, табл. 1.3), 5. Кръгла остотека от Партикополис (по Милчева 2017, табл. 8.4).

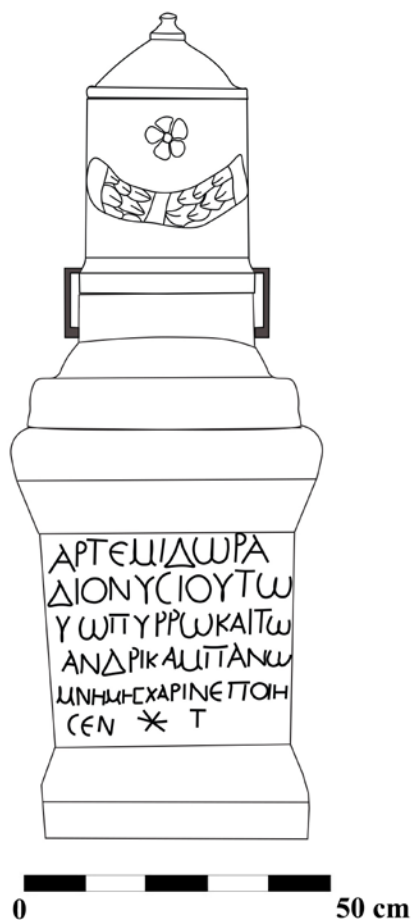


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of the pedestal with a circular *ostotheke* on it (drawing: Ph. Kolev).

Обр. 6. Реконструкция на постамента с кръгла остотека върху него (чертеж: Ф. Колев).

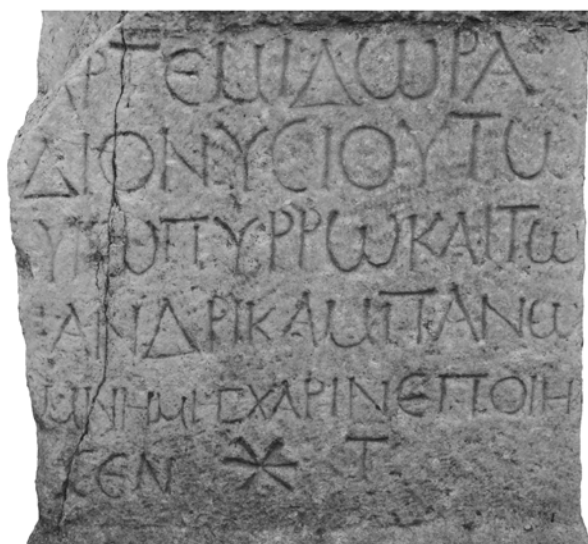


Fig. 7. Detail of the inscription (photo: Ph. Kolev).

Обр. 7. Детайл на надписа (снимка: Ф. Колев).

