

THE EARLIEST INSCRIPTION FROM THRACE*

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Introduction

The earliest datable piece of evidence for alphabetic writing in Thrace consists of an inscription carved into a rectangular stone slab from the 6th century BC cist-grave discovered in the neighbourhood of present-day Kjolmen, north-east Bulgaria¹ (Fig. 1). At the moment the stone in question forms an integral part of the collection of the Archaeological Museum in Sofia (inv. Nr. 6858)². Since the initial publication of this find by the eminent Bulgarian scholar Veselin Beshevliev, several specialists in linguistics, from Bulgaria and elsewhere, have occupied themselves with the inscription and tried their hand at elucidating its contents. All these attempts at decipherment, which in the eyes of the eminent Bulgarian scholar, Georgi Mihailov, have been unsuccessful (at least up to 1983: Mihailov 1983, 22), have taken two assumptions as their starting point of which the second is purposely avoided by Beshevliev. First it is taken for granted that the content of the text is directly related to the find-context of the stone, in other words that we are dealing with a *funeral inscription*. Secondly, one assumes that the text is written in the language of the Thracian tribes inhabiting the region in question at the time (the *Krobuzoi* and *Artakioi*), in other words is written in the *Thracian language* (Georgiev 1965 [=1977]; Schmitt-Brandt 1967; Ancillotti 1986; Schmid 1987). It is the aim of the present contribu-

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¹ Note that clay stamps from the Chalcolithic period with incised decoration in the form of specific designs, which by some scholars are taken as evidence for writing, are left out of the discussion here.

² The stone measures 82 x 38 x 19 cm; one corner is broken off and the line of fissure cuts the inscription in two parts.

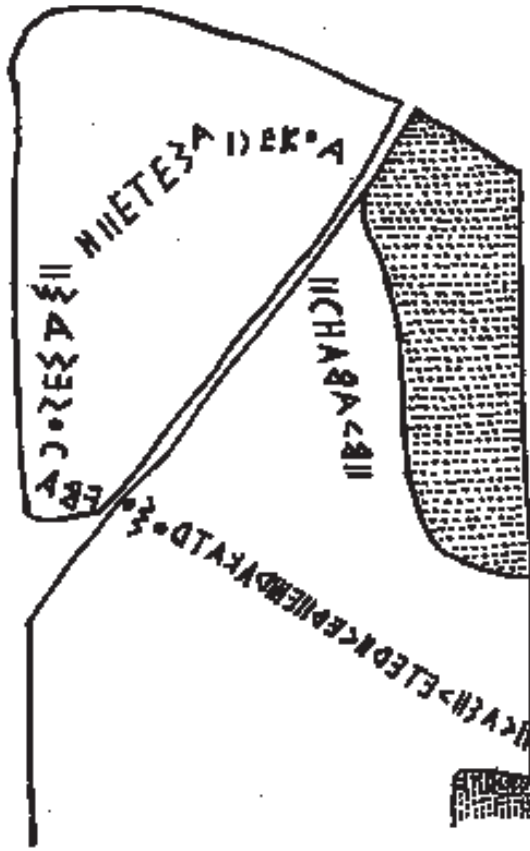


Fig. 1. Drawing of the Kjolmen inscription.

tion to show that both these premises are fallacious and that other starting points can be more productive in solving the riddle posed by the enigmatic inscription. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to scrutinise the available archaeological, epigraphical and linguistic data.

Archaeological evidence

In the introduction it has been mentioned that the inscribed stone stems from a cist-grave in the neighbourhood of present-day Kjolmen. This grave came to light during archaeological activities in the region in 1965. It was assigned to the 6th century BC on the basis of a preliminary analysis of grave goods. As no skeletal remains were traced, it is assumed that the burial rite consisted of cremation. The entire construction is reported to have been covered by a tumulus. With respect to the exact find-spot of the inscribed stone slab, Beshevliev informs us that it was lying directly on top of

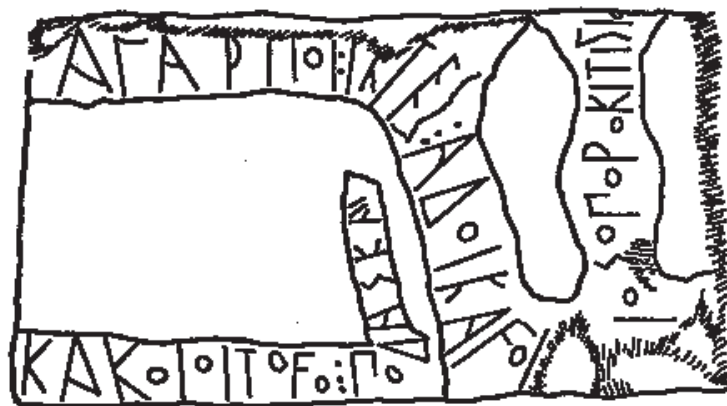


Fig. 2. Stone basis with dedicatory inscription in Old Phrygian from Gordion, 7th-6th centuries BC (Young 1969, 277, fig. 7).

the cist-grave, serving as a covering stone together with two other, un-inscribed slabs. In addition, it is even specified that the stone was placed in such a manner on top of the cist-grave that its inscribed side looked towards the inside of the grave³. Taking this information at face value, there can be no doubt that the inscribed stone slab was actually found *under* the tumulus which crowned the whole construction! Why, one wonders, has nobody realised thus far that this is an unusual position for a funeral inscription in memory of a deceased person, which, for practical purposes, is preferably situated at a *visible* spot?

But this is not all. It has virtually escaped the attention of scholars so far that the stone is *worked* – albeit in a rudimentary way. A glance at the photograph (cf. drawing in Fig. 1) is decisive in pointing out that areas along one of the larger sides of the rectangular stone slab are left in high relief, whereas the surface on which the inscription is written has been lowered several millimetres and provisionally flattened. To the right of the inscription there is even a zone sunk below the level of the flattened surface. In addition, it seems deducible from the fact that the inscription does not cover the entire flattened surface, but only encircles the central part of it, that the stone is not just worked for the sake of being inscribed alone. The latter inference may perhaps be emphasised by drawing attention to an Old Phrygian stone monument of strikingly comparable composition, assigned to the 6th or the 7th

³ Beshevliev 1966, 5-6: “Das Grab war mit drei Platten aus feinkörnigem Sandstein bedeckt. Die eine trägt eine Inschrift (...). Auf dem Grab lag die Platte mit der Inschrift nach innen.”

Beshevliev 1965	(1) //las//leted//led//epidakatrošo	ebacosesaš//	(2) h//etesaicekoa	(3) //blabahc//
Georgiev 1966	(3) n uasn letedn uedneindakatrš.	(1) ebar.zesasn	hnetesaicek.a	(2) nblabahcn
Schmitt-Brandt 1967	(3) n uasn letedn uednenidakatrošo	(1) ebarozesasn	hnetesaicekoa	(2) nblabaècn
Ancillotti 1986	(1) //vas//leted//ued//e//dakatro[m]o	ebaronesam//	(2) h//etesal//ekoa	(3) //blabal//hl//

Fig. 3. Various readings proposed.

century BC on epigraphical grounds (Young 1969, 279-80, fig. 7, Pl. 71; Brixhe/Lejeune 1984, discussion of G-02). Here again, a rectangular stone slab contains an inscription encircling a flattened zone and, this time, two pointed shoes incised in bare outline (see Fig. 2). It has been suggested by the publisher of this find, Rodney Young, that the roughly smoothed surface encircled by the inscription was the place of some movable object, which, in effect, means that the rectangular stone slab served as a pedestal for the object in question (Young 1969, 279-80). In the light of the striking parallelism, the same verdict may very well apply to the Kjolmen stone as well, in which case its nature is likely to be *determined as dedicatory rather than funerary*.

In combination, the two archaeological observations discussed here lead us to the apparent conclusion that the Kjolmen stone *originally* served as a pedestal for some dedicatory object and was only *secondarily* used as a covering-stone in the cist-grave under the tumulus. As an immediate implication, it naturally follows that the 6th century BC date assigned to the cist-grave can only provide a *terminus ante quem* for the original function of the stone, and, *mutatis mutandis*, for the inscription on the stone, as this is (as we have just remarked) so closely bound up with its original function in the design.

Epigraphic evidence

Turning next to the inscription itself, the first question to be answered is how it should be read. In the different publications dedicated to the elucidation of the text, its transliteration happens to vary considerably (see Fig. 3). As before, the main issues in this field have been most satisfactorily dealt with by Beshevliev in his initial publication of the find. So it was he who first convincingly pointed out that the inscription takes its start in the lowered zone which intersects the areas in high relief along one of the longer sides of the rectangular stone, and subsequently describes an irregular semi-circle, in the middle of which a much shorter secondary inscription is added, running along the axis of the longer sides⁴. Next, he established beyond any

⁴ Beshevliev 1966, 5-6: "Der Inschrift stellt einem unregelmässigen Halbkreis dar, der am rechten Rand der Platte beginnt, nach links fortführt, am linken Rand entlang weiter geht, eine Biegung nach rechts macht und die Platte schräg durchzieht, um kurz vor rechtem Rand zu enden." And "In der Mitte des Halbkreises ist noch eine zweite

possible doubt that the writing of the main inscription at the beginning runs in retrograde direction, but towards the end suddenly goes over to the left-to-right direction; in other words, runs boustrophedon (doubts can only be raised about his analysis of the direction of writing of the much shorter additional inscription – see below)⁵. And in the third place he correctly deduced from the fact that not only the shorter additional inscription, but also the first section of the main inscription, running, as we have just seen, in retrograde direction, start and end with one and the same symbol in the form of two vertical strokes, that this symbol apparently functions as a punctuation mark⁶. It is worth mentioning in this connection that the system of punctuation just referred to has recently been refined by the Italian scholar Augusto Ancillotti. Apart from plausibly reconstructing two more instances of the common word divider, he convincingly identified the three vertical strokes occurring almost in the middle of the first section of the main inscription as a variant of the punctuation mark, expressing some different degree of word division⁷. Furthermore, it is important to realise that other peculiarities of the script, such as the rendering of *omicron* by a simple dot or the absence of *iota*, are directly connected with or even a mere function of the scribe's preference for the present system of punctuation.

The three fundamental observations by Beshevliev given above, determine the reading of the inscription in its main outlines: it can be improved only by minor adjustments. Pride of place among these goes to Vladimir Georgiev's recognition of the inverse variant of *lambda* as a separate sign

angebrachte Inschrift zu sehen, deren Buchstaben sich merklich durch ihre Grösse von jenen der grösseren Inschrift abheben. Diese Inschrift läuft fast parallel zu den Rändern der beiden längeren Seiten der Platte."

⁵ Beshevliev 1965, 317: "Die Richtung der ersten 33 Buchstaben und somit der Inschrift ist von rechts nach links. Dann laufen die übrigen 15 Buchstaben von links nach rechts. (...) Bei der Inschrift handelt es sich also um eine richtige Bustrophedon-inschrift (...). *Eine andere Lesung der Schrift würde dem Bustrophedoncharacter der Inschrift widersprechen und epigraphisch nicht gerechtfertigt sein*" (my italics).

⁶ Beshevliev 1965, 320-1: "Die richtige Deutung der beiden Vertikalstriche, die hier in verschiedenen Abständen auftreten, macht besondere Schwierigkeiten. (...) In den semitischen und karischen Texten sowie einigen griechischen Alphabeten dient eine Vertikalstrich zur Trennung der Wörter und Satzteile. Die gleiche Bedeutung haben die beiden Vertikalstriche aller wahrscheinlichkeit nach auch in unserer Inschrift. Die mittlere Inschrift beginnt mit zwei Vertikalstrichen wie die grosse und endet wieder mit zwei solchen. *Es ist kaum anzunehmen, dass beide Inschriften mit dem gleichen Buchstaben beginnen und enden*" (my italics). The objection by Schmitt-Brandt that there is no parallel for such a punctuation mark in Greek alphabetic writing fails to do justice to other non-Greek features of the script.

⁷ Ancillotti 1986, 4-5. The two instances of the punctuation mark reconstructed by Ancillotti are located in the line of fissure of the stone (p. 4: "un // portrebbe anche essere stato inciso in questa sezione nel punto in cui passa la frattura") and just before the word *ekoa*, where one of the strokes is clearly misrepresented.

(Georgiev 1977: 122; cf. Schmitt-Brandt 1967). However, instead of considering this particular sign as a sidelong variant of *upsilon*, as Georgiev does, it is quite obvious in the light of the parallels that we are dealing here with a variant of *gamma* well-attested for alphabetic writing in general⁸. Secondly, Georgiev rightly identified Beshevliev's three-stroked variant of *sigma* as *zèta* (Georgiev 1977, 122). If, finally, allowance be made for two corrections by autopsy⁹ and substitution of *delta* for *rho* in connection with the reading of the 23rd sign on the basis of the (so far unobserved) principle that rounded variants of *gamma*, *delta* and *lambda* appear alongside angular ones¹⁰, all this apparently leads us to the following transliteration of the text as a whole:

- (1) //cas//leted//ced//e//dakadoso[//]ebalozesas//
 (2) (a) ///etesa//ekoa (b) //c//abacb//

In this transcription of the text the much shorter secondary inscription is grouped with the second section of the main inscription from the fact that, contrary to the opinion of Beshevliev, basing himself on the direction of the two *bètas*, the writing appears to run in the same direction, *i.e.* left-to-right. This is indicated first of all by the way in which the second *alpha* from the left is executed, the right leg being placed much higher than the left one in accordance with the overall rising tendency of the entire inscription. Secondly, it is strongly suggested by the fact that only when read from left to right two *alphas* and two *bètas* are supplemented by two *gammas* in this additional part of the text, which therefore does not contain meaningful combinations of signs but simply an exercise in alphabetic writing¹¹!

An epigraphically sound reading of the text is, of course, a prerequisite for linguistic interpretation of its contents, to which subject we will turn in a moment. Before we do this, we must first investigate how the epigraphical evidence relates to the archaeological conclusions. In other words: are the

⁸ Jeffery 1961: table of letters; note that the identification of *lambda*, generally accepted, is much more problematic than that of *gamma*, as the closest parallel is traceable only in the Phoenician alphabet. The mixing-up of *gamma* and *lambda* in the Phrygian alphabet and in the text of the Lemnos stele may add further substance to the close relationship in form between these two signs, and therefore to the plausibility of the present proposition.

⁹ The two corrections concern the fourth sign after the line of fissure in the stone, which certainly is a rounded variant of *lambda* instead of *rho* (the supposed hasta is in fact only a border zone between areas of different height), and the first sign of the section in left-to-right direction of writing, which certainly is a damaged instance of the punctuation mark in the form of two vertical strokes (a square zone of the area between the two strokes is splintered off).

¹⁰ *Gamma*: angular in 2nd, 12th and 57th positions, rounded in 51st position; *delta*: angular in 10th, 14th and 18th positions, rounded in 23rd position; *lambda*: angular in 6th position, rounded in 30th position.

characteristics of the script compatible with the 6th century BC *terminus ante quem* date for the original function of the stone as a pedestal for a dedicatory object? Going into the details of this question, it appears that the script certainly shows a number of archaic features. Firstly, the rendering of *omicron* by a simple dot is a device paralleled by inscriptions on stone objects stemming from the period before the introduction of the cutting compass, which in Greece took place at the end of the 6th century BC (Jeffery 1961, 152). As a consequence, Ancillotti's description of the writing as a variant of the 5th century BC Greek alphabet is definitely erroneous¹². A second archaic feature is formed by the variable, "nonstandardised", execution of the signs. So, as we have noted above, rounded variants of *gamma*, *delta*, and *lambda* occur alongside angular ones. In addition, *sigma* is represented by two distinct variants, one of four strokes well-known from the Greek alphabet and one of six strokes with clear antecedents in the Phrygian alphabet – the latter observation being of interest for our comparison of the Kjolmen stone to an Old Phrygian monument of similar design in the preceding paragraph¹³. And finally, *alpha* is once rendered in sidelong variant – a feature which reminds us of *alphas* written sidelong and upside down in Aegean and north-west Anatolian inscriptions stemming from the late 8th and early 7th century BC (not to mention the Phoenician model)¹⁴. Yet another epigraphic archaism is the occurrence of signs in mirrored position, as it is the case with *sigma* in the second section of the main inscription and, in my opinion, the two *bêtas* in the additional writing exercise. This peculiarity is evidently generated by the instability in direction of writing which characterises early literacy and to which the Kjolmen inscription bears testimony itself for the simple fact that it is written boustrophedon – the most systematic expression of instability in the direction of writing. The fashion for writing boustrophedon reached its zenith at the turn of the 7th/6th centuries BC and for this reason it seems to provide us with one of the most significant indications as to the date of the inscription according to epigraphic criteria¹⁵. A final archaic feature, is the

¹² Ancillotti 1986, 2; note furthermore that the relationships of the script are rather with north-west Anatolian writing than writing in Greece.

¹³ Beshevliev 1965, 320: "In den phrygischen und lydischen Alphabeten wird eine aufrechtstehende sechsstrichige Zickzacklinie für den Zischlaut *ś* verwendet."; cf. Young 1969: nos. 25, 30 and 32 for the earliest instances, dating to the 8th century BC.

¹⁴ Jeffery 1961: Attica no. 1, dated *ca.* 740 BC and ascribed to a learned foreigner for the un-Attic features of the script; cf. Powell 1988, 67 (sidelong *alpha* in mirrored position). Woudhuizen 1982-3, 92; 110, note 8 with reference to "Euboea" no. 22, dated *ca.* 700 BC, Smyrna no. 53 and Sardis Lyd. B, I, 5, dated to the first half of the 7th century BC (*alpha* upside down). Note that here, again, the Phoenician offers the closest parallel.

¹⁵ Klaffenbach 1957, 47; cf. Jeffery 1961, 43 ff. In the north-Aegean region, the Lemnos stele can safely be assigned to the last decades of the 7th or the first decades of

addition of writing exercises or abecedaria to otherwise meaningful messages. This phenomenon is recently discovered for the thus far enigmatic final section of the inscription on the famous dipylon vase from Attica, dated *ca.* 740 BC (Powell 1988, 65-86, esp. 74 ff. (78 f.)). But it was already well-known for early alphabetic writing in Italy, where inscriptions from the beginning of the 7th to the first half of the 6th century BC testify to the gradual diffusion of this practice from Etruscans in Campania and Etruria to indigenous Italian tribes such as the Faliscans in the hinterland of southern Etruria¹⁶.

The preceding survey of datable epigraphic characteristics, apparently indicates that the inscription on the Kjolmen stone is unlikely to have been written after *ca.* 500 BC because of its *omicron* in the form of a simple dot and is most likely to be assigned to the turn of the 7th/6th centuries BC on account of its boustrophedon nature. The other features discussed are mostly less clearly defined in chronological terms, but their attestation for inscriptions stemming from the general period covering the late 8th to the early 6th century BC substantially confirms the option for an early dating. It seems, therefore, that the epigraphical evidence is reasonably compatible with the 6th century BC *terminus ante quem* date for the original function of the stone on the basis of archaeological considerations.

Linguistic evidence

In the realm of linguistics, the first step toward the ultimate elucidation of the text has been taken once again by Beshevliev, who successfully isolated the element *dakat* and identified it as a verbal form on account of its striking formal resemblance to Phrygian *addaket* (Beshevliev 1965, 321; Georgiev 1977, 127, 132). This verb is characteristic of the Phrygian variant of the damnation formula, where it marks the protasis of this formula from Archaic times onwards, being first attested in most simple form without the preverb *ad-* as *dachet* in the so-called Areyastin-inscription stemming from the first half of the 6th century BC¹⁷. In texts of later date, however, the verb occurs once in variant form *'ddike[t]* in a maker formula, which harmonises reasonably well with its ultimate derivation from the PIE root **dhek-* “to make” (Calder 1911, 179-80 (= no. 30); Jokl 1927/8, 151). Taking these data at face value, it furthermore seems deducible that the word belongs to the strong class of verbs, as the difference between present (*addaket*) and past (*'ddike[t]*) tense happens to be indicated by vowel change. In the Kjolmen inscription, on the other hand, the situation seems to be a little different. Following Ancillotti’s refinement of the system of punctuation, it appears that the verb is preceded by a single element *e-*, sep-

¹⁶ Jeffery 1961: Western Greece no. 2 (= Cumae, *ca.* 700-675 BC); *ibid.*: no. 20 (= Formello, *ca.* 650-600 BC); Vetter 1953: 283 ff. (= Falerii Veteres no. 242, *ca.* 600-550 BC).

arated from it by a punctuation mark consisting of three vertical strokes, which, as we have seen, expresses a degree of word division different from that of the common word divider. Is it, then, in the present situation too far-fetched to assume that we are actually dealing here with an augmented *edakat* as an alternative formation of the past tense of the Phrygian verb after the pattern of, for example, Greek *eluon*? Especially if we bear in mind that there is ample evidence for the distinction of pre- and suffixed elements as separate entities in alphabetic inscriptions using markers for word division¹⁸. Whatever one may be apt to think about the latter suggestion, the presence in our text of a Phrygian verbal form, or one closely related to it, should warn us against the oversimplified notion that the language is Thracian.

Credit for a second major contribution to our understanding of the text on the Kjolmen stone must be given to the Bulgarian linguist Vladimir Georgiev. He convincingly analyzed the sequence immediately following the line of fissure in the stone, read here as *ebalozesas*, as a combination of personal name and patronymic on account of the fact that its latter part strikingly recalls the Thracian personal name *Zeizas*, *Zeisis*, etc. (Georgiev 1977, 126, 130; cf. Detschew 1976, *sub voce*). For the first name, *Ebalo*, written without proper nominative singular ending *-s*, comparison to derivations from the Thracian onomastic element *-balos* as, for example, *Decebalos*, seems a reasonable suggestion (Detschew 1976, *sub voce*). In the light of the just noted omission from the spelling of the nominative singular ending, the final *-s* of the patronymic no doubt represents the ending of the genitive singular, as is the case in numerous IE languages. As a consequence of this analysis, however, the text must – whatever the nature of its language – be considered to be written down in honour of, or on the initiative of, a Thracian tribesman.

Subject and verb being established in this manner, the remainder of the text should be easy to analyze if we are correct in our archaeologically based identification of the monument as dedicatory instead of funerary. For in that case functionally relevant additions are restricted to two basic categories: 1. indication of the object, and 2. indication of the recipient deity. The category of evidence first mentioned, then, is likely to be represented by the grammatically associated couple *leted ced*, as the ending which both these words share is so strikingly reminiscent of the accusative singular neuter in *-d*

¹⁸ If vertical strokes are transformed into dots, the closest parallel for the present system of punctuation is offered by the inscription of the Praeneste fibula, where the words are divided by two dots, but the reduplication of the verb is indicated as a separate element by three dots, see Gordon 1983, 75-6 and esp. Pl. 1. Cf. also Vetter 1953, *Falerii Veteres* no. 241 (reduplication separated from the root of the verb by the common word divider) and the text of the Lemnos stele (enclitic copula *-m* “and” separated from the immediately preceding word by the common word divider for the text of the front side

attested for IE languages such as, for example, Lydian and Latin (Gusmani 1975, 138). Next, it seems deducible that the receiving party is indicated by the likewise grammatically associated couple *etesa ekoa*, as, in the light of the parallels, their common ending *-a* has the best chance of representing the dative case¹⁹. If this be considered a plausible analysis of the structure of the phrase, interpretation of the first combination, *leted ced*, as a noun bearing reference to the stone monument (*cf.* Greek *lithos*!) with postpositioned demonstrative pronoun becomes almost self-evident. With respect to the second combination, *etesa ekoa*, it is interesting to observe that its first element *etesa* has already been interpreted by Georgiev on the basis of a possible etymological relationship with Greek *etos* “year”²⁰. This possible etymological relationship gains weight if we realize that in Old Phrygian, too, a related form of the Greek word in question is traced, showing genuine Phrygian features in the preservation of the initial *wau*²¹. However, the additional element *-s-* in the form presently under discussion seems to point to a comparison with the adjectival derivation *etēsios* “a year long, annual” rather than the simplex *etos*. If this is correct, *etesa* may plausibly be considered as an adjective qualifying the noun *ekoa*. The meaning of the word *ekoa*, then, can perhaps be elucidated by its formal resemblance to Latin *equa* “mare”. In the present context, this solution would imply that the inscription on the Kjolmen stone bears evidence for the worship of a horse goddess, comparable to the Mycenaean *po-ti-ni-ja I-qe-ja* “Mistress of the Horses” on the one hand and Celtic *Icona* or *Epona* on the other²². The question whether there is corroborating evidence for a goddess of this type in the iconography of Thracian art falls outside the scope of the present section and receives separate treatment in the appendix below. Let it suffice to say here that, as the dedication is made by a Thracian tribesman, the venerated deity may very well be the subject of a local Thracian cult.

In this particular section our attention needs to be directed to two elements in the text which still go without proper explanation, *viz.* *cas* at the very start of the sentence and *doso* directly following the verb *edakat*. Of these elements, the one last mentioned is evidently based on the same root as, for example, Greek *didōmi* and Latin *donare* “to give”. Seen from this perspective, the grouping together of the verb and *doso* between a pair of punctuation marks may very well be intentional in order to stress their formula-

¹⁹ See, for example, Meriggi 1980, 275 for the Anatolian language group. Note that, as *iota* is not written, the ending in question might also be analyzed as *-a(i)*, in which case a regular IE dative singular in *-i* comes into consideration.

²⁰ Georgiev 1977, 127, 130.

²¹ Old Phryg. No. 15a, 1: *otuwōi vetēi* < **oktuwōi vetēsi* “in the eighth year”, see Jokl 1927/8: 143 f. and *cf.* Friedrich *PW*, col. 874, where it is indicated that this identification was first proposed by R. Meister.

²² Ventris/Chadwick 1973, glossary *sub voce*; Best 1981, 66.

ic association (*cf.* in this respect Greek *dōron anethēken* and Latin *donum dedit*)²³. As it is inconceivable that the accusative singular ending *-n* would have been omitted from the spelling, but, as we have noted in the preceding section, there is sufficient reason to think that *iota* is not written at all, the form *doso* is most likely to be analysed as a dative singular **dosoi*, representing the meaning “as a gift”²⁴. Finally, the word *cas* at the start of the phrase is interpreted here on the analogy of an Etruscan inscription from Vetulonia (TLE 373), running as follows: *ka amu kaviaś[* “I (am) of Kavier[”, as an introductory particle *ca-* with enclitic pronominal form *-s* attached to it. Such sentence introductory particles are a characteristic feature of the IE Anatolian language group (*i.e.* Hittite, Luwian, and Palaic), to which Etruscan, in the opinion of the present author, must be classified²⁵. As a consequence, the language of the inscription shows clear traces of IE Anatolian adstrate or substrate influences²⁶.

In sum, the preceding linguistic considerations lead up to the following interpretation of the text on the Kjolmen stone:

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | <i>ca-s leted ced</i>
<i>edakat doso(i)</i>
<i>ebalo zesas</i> | “This stone (monument),
Ebalō, (the son) of Zesa,
has made (it) as a gift |
| 2a. | <i>etesa(i) ekoa(i)</i> | for the annual/yearling Mare.” |
| 2b. | <i>c abach</i> | (abecedarium) |

As we have seen, this interpretation is based on three main categories of linguistic comparison:

- (1) Thracian, represented by the first name and patronymic of the dedicator;
- (2) Phrygian, represented by the verb *edakat* and, to a lesser extent, the word *etesa*;
- (3) IE Anatolian, represented by the accusative singular neuter ending *-d* and the use of a sentence introductory particle *ca-* with enclitic pronominal form *-s* attached to it.

For the determination of the nature of the language in which the text is written, it is significant to note that only the two categories last mentioned have a bearing on matters of grammar and syntax. Consequently, the language in

²³ Mihailov *IGBR* III, no. 918; Vetter 1953, nos. 229-30, 512, and Pulgram 1978, P 26, P 28.

²⁴ Cf. Linear B *do-so-mo* = Greek *dosmōi* “as a present”.

²⁵ Best/Woudhuizen 1989, 139-79; Woudhuizen 1986/7: 125 ff.; Woudhuizen 1988/9, 109 ff.; Woudhuizen 1992, Chapter III.

²⁶ Note in this connection particularly the sequence of introductory particle—object—verb—subject, comparable to Lycian *ebe-ñne chupā me-ne prñna[w]ate Sbicaza* “this tomb, Sbigaza has built it” (TL70) and Etruscan *i-ta tmia i-ca-c heramasva vatieche* (...) *thefariei velianas* “this temple and this statue, Thefarie Velianas has made (it) (...)”



a



b

Fig. 4. Appliqués from Letnitsa treasure with Thracian horseman accompanied by (a) female head, (b) horse head (from Fol/Marazov 1977).

question must be defined as a blend of Phrygianising and Luwianising elements. Such a combination of influences can only be imagined for the Troad or immediately neighbouring regions during the Early Iron Age²⁷. Therefore, it may safely be concluded that the text was the conception of a learned foreigner or professional scribe originating from north-west Asia Minor, working in consignment for an indigenous Thracian customer.

Appendix: A Thracian Horse Goddess?

In the preceding contribution it has been observed that the interpretation of the word *ekoa* in line with Latin *equa* as “mare” raises the question whether there is corroborating evidence for a horse goddess in the iconography of Thracian art. To this question we will now direct our attention.

The first piece of information relevant to the subject is offered by a sidelong remark in Plato’s *Republic*. Here it is indicated that as part of the festivities in honour of the Thracian goddess Bendis at the Athenian harbour town Piraeus “a torchlight race (...) on *horseback*” is held²⁸. From this remark, Ivan Marazov inferred that the cult of the Thracian goddess at Piraeus “involves a hippomorphic aspect” (Marazov 1988/9, 42). A problem for this inference, however, is posed by the fact that the text subsequently makes clear that a torchlight race *on horseback* is considered a novelty by Plato himself.

A second possible indication for the existence of a Thracian horse goddess stems from the pictorial designs on *appliqués* of the Letnitsa treasure, dated to the first half of the 4th century BC. One of the *appliqués* shows the Thracian hero riding on horseback and carrying a spear. Behind him is the head of a woman, rightly interpreted by Marazov as the goddess rendering divine protection to the hero. In the further identical design of another *appliqué*, however, the head of the woman is replaced by that of a horse, which, according to Marazov again, performs the same function, *viz.* rendering divine protection to the hero. Is it, then, in the light of this evidence too far-fetched to assume that the horse in the second design represents the goddess, in other words: that we are dealing here with a horse goddess (see Fig. 4)²⁹?

Next, in the recently discovered silver treasure from Rogozen, dated to the latter half of the 4th century BC, there is a vessel worked in relief which depicts the scene of the Amazon defeating Heracles. Rightly, scholars have stressed the non-Greek, and therefore typically Thracian character of this design, in which Heracles represents the Thracian hero and the Amazon stands for one

²⁷ See Strabo’s remark on the Mysian language: (...) *tēn dialektion mixoludion gar pōs einai kai mixophrugion* (12. 8. 3); *cf.* Cox/Cameron 1932 and Bayun/Orel 1988, discovering Phrygian and, to a lesser extent, Lydian influences in the only Mysian inscription thus far known.

²⁸ Plato, *Republic* I, 328 according to the translation of Hamilton/Cairns 1973, 577 (*my italics*).

²⁹ Fol/Marazov 1977, 34-5; the present suggestion was orally transmitted to me by Prof. Marazov when I showed him the first draft of my article on the Kjolmen inscription.

of the appearances of the Great Goddess, *viz.* as a young girl, capable of fighting – a metaphor for unmarried, virginal status (Marazov 1988/9, 42). Among the animals accompanying this representation of the goddess, there is again the horse, schematically rendered as a protome behind her left shoulder (see Fig. 5)³⁰.

A final piece of evidence, from about the same period of time as the other objects discussed, is a silver plate found in a tumulus grave from the necropolis at Duvanli. The inner side of this plate is decorated with an incised design depicting a lady riding on horseback. This might, of course, be a representation of an aristocratic woman exercising her favourite pastime. But, in the light of strikingly similar representations of Celtic *Epona* from a later period, it might just as well depict a Thracian horse goddess (see Fig. 6)³¹. For the sake of completeness, it must be added here that there are two stone monuments from sites in present-day Bulgaria which are generally considered as votive offerings to a horse goddess. But, as these stone reliefs stem from a much later period (2nd-3rd centuries AD), it is difficult to determine whether they are inspired by Celtic *Epona* or rooted in more ancient local cult traditions³².

All in all, the evidence provided by the iconography of Thracian art cannot be considered as conclusive proof for the veneration of a horse goddess during Classical times. The most persuasive argument in favour of the existence of such a type of deity is, in the opinion of the present author, formed by the interchange of the head of a horse with that of a goddess on the two *appliqués* from the Letnitsa treasure, but even this is not watertight. On the other hand, the material offers indications too strong for the possibility to be dismissed entirely. In this sense, the plausibility of our interpretation of the word *ekoa* as “Mare” has received additional confirmation.

Addendum The present contribution was prepared and delivered as a paper to the Plovdiv seminars of 1990. Since then, I know of only one article on the subject by the hand of the Bulgarian scholar Nikola Theodossiev, entitled “On the Reading and Date of the Kjolmen inscription”, which appeared in *Indogermanische Forschungen* 102 (1997) 216-29. In this contribution the author sets out to explain the peculiarities of the script according to late 5th century BC standards, being unaware of the fact that the stone has been *reused* for burial purposes and therefore dates to a period *prior* to the foundation of the grave. He further proposes to read the inscription the other way

³⁰ Note that the drawing from the German exhibition catalogue gives the scene in mirrored position.

³¹ Filow 1934, Pl. V; Magnen 1953, Pl. 4 ff.

³² Magnen 1953, Pl. 60-1; I owe this reference to Nanny de Vries, who also kindly drew my attention to the typical Thracian elements in the way the goddess is depicted in these two reliefs.



Fig. 5. Drawing of Rogozen no. 154 (after German exhibition catalogue 1988).

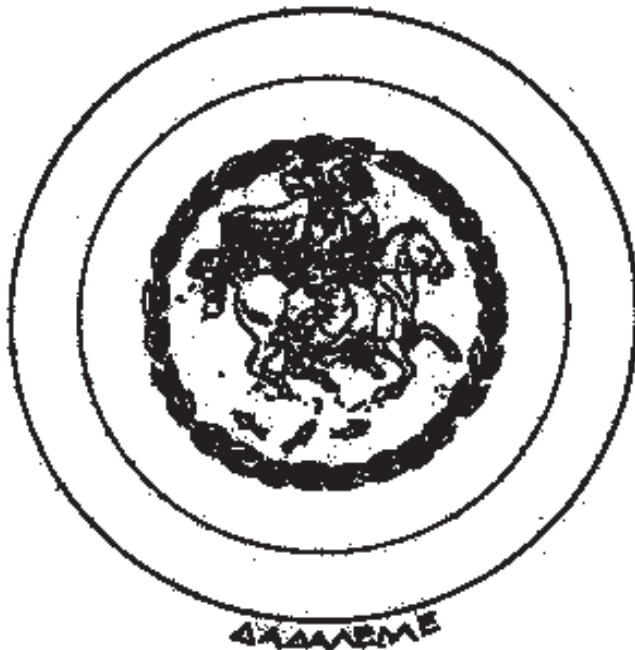


Fig. 6. Drawing of silver plate from tumulus grave at Duvanlii (from Georgiev 1977).

round, misguided as he is by the various signs occurring in mirrored position—as we have seen a definite archaic feature. I have myself briefly discussed the Kjolmen inscription in an article entitled “Old Phrygian: Some Texts and Relations”, which appeared in *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 21 (1993) 1-25. Here I adjusted my view on the language in the sense that it might just as well be genuinely Thracian (p. 20, note 42). In this adjustment I now feel strengthened to a great deal by the analysis of Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjaceslav V. Ivanov in their book *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (Berlin-New York 1995), according to which (pp. 313-21) sentence introductory particles (= the main IE Anatolian feature) are reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European. Finally, I would like to point the reader to the fact that a more sophisticated interpretation of the Pyrgi text, referred to in note 26, is provided by my latest monograph on the Etruscan language, entitled *Linguistica Tyrrhenica II* (Amsterdam 1998), see esp. pp. 163-76.

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