

# DEATH DURING THE GRAPE HARVEST AN EARLY CLASSICAL GRAVE STELE FROM SINOPE

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**Abstract:** *This article focuses on an early Classical grave stele in the Sinop Archaeological Museum since 2013. The monument features a partially preserved figured scene in low relief and an inscription. The scene represents a seated figure interacting with a standing companion. The inscription records the passing of Mitris, the only son of Myndies, who died 'unfairly' during the grape harvest season. This temporal reference hints at the importance of viniculture in the socio-economic life of Sinope. Not only is this stele a valuable addition to the corpus of funerary monuments from Sinope, it also contributes to a broader discussion on the ambiguity of inscriptions and figured scenes on grave monuments.\*\**

## Introduction

Funerary monuments offer us a true insight into ancient societies, their structure, family bonds, economic relationships and the religious values and beliefs that hold them together. In recent years, several publications have explored ancient grave stelai and burial customs in Western and Northern Pontic cities. However, research in the Southern Black Sea region has been limited or insufficiently detailed. The same few grave monuments are often discussed in the litera-

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ture,<sup>1</sup> while some new chance finds have not yet been published. Several new grave stelai have recently been discovered in and close to modern-day Sinop. This paper presents one of these newly found stelai<sup>2</sup> that can be linked to individuals from Sinope and their socio-economic and cultural environment (Fig. 1 and 2). The exact circumstances of the stele's discovery are unknown, except that it was found by a certain Fahri Yeni while digging a pit in the Gelincik neighborhood on the Pervane Tepe, where a necropolis was located.<sup>3</sup>

### Preservation condition

The stele, crafted from a local conglomerate limestone composed of coral and shell fragments, which is abundant on Boztepe, is not intact. Its maximum preserved height is 78 cm. It is gradually tapered, with a width of 39 cm in the lower part and 36.5 cm at the relief level. The depth ranges from a minimum of 10.2 cm to a maximum of 15.5 cm. Due to the material used, the surface is heavily worn and the lower right edge is damaged. The slab features an inscription in its lower section and a partially preserved figured panel above it. The crowning finial is missing.

### The inscription

The inscription covers the flat surface on the stele's lower part (Fig. 3). The letters are not meticulously aligned – especially in lines 5 and 6 – and their height varies. With a height of 3.4 cm, the letters Π and Σ of ΜΙΤΡΙΟΣ in line 1 are the tallest. The letters Ο and Θ are perfectly circular and Ο is consistently smaller: Ο of ΜΙΤΡΙΟΣ, 2.3 cm. With 1.7 cm diameter, the Ο in the beginning of line 6 is the smallest letter in the inscription.

- 1 Μίτριος τόδε σή-  
μα τῷ Μυνδίῳ ἐν  
δὲ τρυγήτῳ κάθ-  
θ(θ)α[v]ον ὥδε ἀδ-  
5 ίκως, τῷ πατρὶ μ-  
νογενής.

*Translation:* This is the gravestone of Mitris, (son) of Myndies. During the grape harvest season, I died so very unfairly, an only child to my father.

### Comments:

I. 1, Μίτριος: the genitive of the name of the deceased, Μίτρις. The name appears only on an Attic curse tablet, in the accusative form (Μίτρην).<sup>4</sup> The etymology of

<sup>1</sup> AKURGAL 1955; AKURGAL & BUDDE 1956, p. 15–20; PFUHL & MÖBIUS 1977, p. 14, no. 13, pl. 4; p. 16–17, nos. 22–24, pl. 6; HILLER 1975, p. 59–61, pl. 2, 2–12, 2; HAGEMAJER ALLEN 2003, p. 217; ÖZGAN 2009; VLASSOPOULOS 2013, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Inventory Number: 3.1.2013. A rather recent article dedicated to this stele (SAĞLAN 2019) provides neither an accurate reading of the inscription nor an in-depth interpretation of the figured panel.

<sup>3</sup> The stele was donated to the Sinop Arkeoloji Müzesi on 23 October 2013. On the Gelincik necropolis KABA 2019, p. 177, fig. 1.

<sup>4</sup> IG III App. 73 (Imperial period), l. 4: καὶ Μίτρην καὶ Κόμμον καὶ Θοῦας; according to the editor, R. Wunsch, the names are clearly non-Greek: *nomina prorsus barbara*.

the name is unclear. It might be related to the Greek word *μίτρα/μίτρη*,<sup>5</sup> which is first attested in the *Iliad* and is thought to have an Indo-Iranian origin, possibly derived from an Anatolian language, like Lydian or Phrygian. *Mitris'* cognate, the more common name *Μίθρης*,<sup>6</sup> is also believed to have Persian origins.

1. 2, τὸ Μυνδίω: the article τὸ refers to *Μίτριος* as an attribute, in the sense of τὸῦ υἱοῦ – the son. Belonging to the third declension, *Mitris* could either be a male or female name. The use of τὸ confirms beyond any doubt that the name is male.<sup>7</sup> The differentiated rendering of the genitive ending with -ὸ<sup>8</sup> for the article and -ω<sup>9</sup> for the name suggests that *Μυνδίω* is not the genitive of the name *Μύνδιος*, a primarily ethnic name denoting a citizen of *Myndos*,<sup>10</sup> which was also thought to be recorded as a personal name on an Ephesian inscription.<sup>11</sup> *Μύνδιος* belongs to the second declension and its genitive would have been written *Μυνδῖο*. The form *Μυνδίω* with the ending in -ω indicates that this is an instance of Ionic genitive of a first declension masculine noun,<sup>12</sup> which in turn points to the hitherto unattested personal name *Μυνδίης/Μυνδίας*. In fact, considering this new

<sup>5</sup> BEZENTAKOS 1987, esp. p. 23–27; cf. the probably Greek name *Μίτριχος* on an undated inscription from Orchomenos, Boeotia, IG VII 3259.

<sup>6</sup> The LGPN database retrieves 41 instances of *Μίθρης* and 12 of *Μιθρής*. The stem *Μιθρ-* was also used as part of many compound names in Northern Asia Minor, see HARRISON 1982.

<sup>7</sup> If *Mitris* were a woman, the inscription would have read: *Μίτριος τόδε σῆμα τῆς Μυνδίω*; cf. SEG 12.546, l. 1, *Ἀθηναῖδι τῆ Ξεννίου σῆμα* (from Nazianzos, Cappadocia, most probably Roman Imperial). For this syntactic structure, see, in particular, the eight honorary decrees for Archippe, daughter of *Dikaiogenes* from *Kyme* (c. 130–100 BC), *I.Kyme* 13, which repeat the formula in nominative, genitive, and accusative: *Ἀρχίππη ἡ Δικαιογένου* (II, l. 23–24; VII, l. 2–3; VIII, l. 2), *Ἀρχίππα ἡ Δικαιογένεος* (III, l. 60), *Ἀρχίππης τῆς Δικαιογένου* (IV, l. 82–83; V, l. 100), *Ἀρχίππην τὴν Δικαιογένου* (I, l. 6), *Ἀρχίππην μὲν τὴν Δικαιογένου* (VI, l. 18), *Ἀρχίππην τὴν Δικαιογένου* (VI, l. 39–40).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. THREATTE 1980, 238, no. 13.00; for this ending on Sinopean inscriptions see FRENCH 2004, nos. 20 and 64 (*Ἐκαταῖο*), 22 (*Ἡφαιστῖο*), 41 (*Ἡρωνύμο*), 52 (*Κίσισο*), 53 (*Διονυσῖο*), 58 (*Ἀναξιμβρότο*), 59 (*Ἰστιαῖο*), 71 (*Δρομῖο*).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. THREATTE 1980, p. 47–48, no. 2.034.

<sup>10</sup> *Myndos* was a small city close to *Halikarnassos* and, like *Halikarnassos*, a colony of *Troizen* (Paus. 2.30.9). An amusing story links it to *Sinope*, or rather to *Sinope's* most famous citizen, *Diogenes*. 'As *Diogenes* arrived to *Myndos* and saw how large the gates were compared to the small city, he exclaimed: Men of *Myndos*, shut the gates, lest your town marches out!' (Diog. Laert. 6.2.57).

<sup>11</sup> A votive inscription to *Zeus Keraunios* names *Myndios*, son of *Nestor*, as the father of a priest *Demetrios*, *I.Ephesos* IV 1239: *Διὶ Κεραυνίῳ, | Δημήτριος | Μυνδίου τοῦ Νέστορος, ὁ ἱερεύς, | ἀνέθηκεν*; in this case, the name is deduced from the genitive *Μυνδίου*. There is, however, a clear instance of *Μυνδία*, the feminine of *Myndios*, as personal name; a funerary inscription from *Stratonikeia* commemorates the Rhodian *Myndia*, daughter of *Aristodemos*, *I.Stratonikeia* 1254.

According to LGPN I, p. 321, s.v. *Μύνδιος*, an unpublished inscription in *Rhodes* mentions a certain *Myndios* as father of a woman, *Hageso*. This information is erroneous. The relevant inscription refers to a man, *Hagesas*, who was *Myndian*. Many thanks go to *Charoula Fantaoutsaki* at the Ephorate of Antiquities of *Dodecanese* for her help in clarifying this issue.

<sup>12</sup> For further instances of Ionic genitive in inscriptions from *Sinope* see FRENCH 2004, nos. 11 and 21 (*Ἡρακλείδεω*), 19 (*Ἡγησαγόρεω*), 48 (*Ἀθηναγόρεω*).

information, the patronymic on the Ephesian inscription mentioned above<sup>13</sup> must have been Myndias, not Myndios.

1. 3, ἐν δὲ τρυγήτῳ: the word τρυγήτος ('vintage') preceded by the preposition ἐν defines the time-frame or the action, in which Mitris' death occurred.<sup>14</sup> This reference shows that the Sinopeans were engaged in viticulture already in the fifth century BC. The fact that Sinope was producing wine is sometimes disputed by historians,<sup>15</sup> although Xenophon mentions in the *Anabasis* (6.1.15) that, in 399 BC, the Sinopeans 'sent to the Greeks, as hospitality gifts, three thousand *medimni* of barley and fifteen hundred vases of wine'. Sinope's reputation for wine is also mirrored in a secondary foundation myth of the city involving a heavy-drinking Amazon.<sup>16</sup> In addition, numerous Hellenistic terracotta figurines from Sinope and Amisos depict a god with his hair and beard shaped as bunches of grape, indicating the popularity of the cult of Dionysos Botrys and the cultivation of vineyards in the region.<sup>17</sup>

1. 3–4, κάθθανον: an alternative to κάθθανον – a poetic form for κατέθανον; a third *theta* that appears on the fourth line is likely a mistake of the letter-cutter. The verb in the first person makes the deceased the narrator.

1. 4, ὦδε is ambiguous. It most probably means 'so very', emphasising the adverb that follows (ἀδίκως), but it could also mean 'here', implying the verb κείμαι, i.e. 'I lie here'.

1. 4–5, ἀδίκως: unjustly/unfairly; it refers to the verb κάθθανον, 'I died'. A fourth century BC grave stele from Gonnoi in Thessaly<sup>18</sup> asserts that the deceased did not die ὁσίως, 'in accordance with the divine law' (i.e. naturally), but ἀδίκωι θανάτῳ, 'unjustly' or 'unfairly' (i.e. violently, unnaturally).<sup>19</sup> Two Delian almost identical Jewish curse inscriptions on funerary stelai from Rheneia (late second–early first century BC), appeal to *theos hypsistos* to avenge the murder or poisoning of two girls, Marthine and Heraclea, who died untimely (ἄωροι), and whose 'innocent blood' was spilled ἀδίκως.<sup>20</sup> In such a context, it is not surprising that, according to Sophocles, an unjust death falls within the realm of the Erinyes.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See n. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Notably, however, much later inscriptions present Hades himself as a 'grape reaper'; cf. an inscription from Rheneia (early first century BC): ἄς ἐτρύγ[ησ] Ἀίδας] (COUILLOUD 1974, no. 483, l. 6), and one from Naples (first century AD): δακρυχαρῆς Πλούτων, ... τί τρυγᾶς ὄμφακας ἡλικίης; (*I.Napoli* II, no. 95, l. 5–6).

<sup>15</sup> See the relevant discussion in DE BOER 2013, p. 111–112. The early significance of the southern Black Sea region as a grape-growing area, particularly during the Old and Middle Hittite periods, is supported by archaeobotanical data obtained from the site of İkiztepe, located in the Halys Delta, approximately 100 km east of Sinope: IOANNIDOU 2011, p. 253, 256–258, 264; cf. CORTI 2017, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> BRAUND 2010, p. 16–18.

<sup>17</sup> For Amisos, see SUMMERER 1999, p. 40–43, 168–169.

<sup>18</sup> AD 35 B'1 (1980), p. 295.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. a lost inscription from Capri (first or second century AD), IG XIV 902; VÉRILHAC 1978, no. 182, l. 4–6: οὐ κρίσει ἐγμοιρῶν ἥρπασμένον, ἀλλ' ἅ βιαίῳ | αἰφνιδίῳ θανάτῳ μήνιος ἐξ ἀδίκου. NB that the Greek word ἀδικος keeps the ambiguity between unjust (legal aspect) and unfair (emotional aspect).

<sup>20</sup> ID 2532 I and II; COUILLOUD 1974, no. 485; SALVO 2012, p. 237–244.

<sup>21</sup> Soph. *El.* 112–113: Ἐρινύες, αἱ τοὺς ἀδίκως θνήσκοντας ὀρᾶθ'...

Nonetheless, other funerary inscriptions show that the mere fact of death depriving parents of their children was considered to be unfair as well.<sup>22</sup> Some inscriptions even reproach the gods, Hades, Moira or Tyche for such premature deaths.<sup>23</sup> Directly after ἀδίκως, our inscription refers to Mitris' situation. He was an only child to his father (τῷ πατρὶ μονογενής). Although there is no information on Mitris' age or any direct reference to other facts, the implication is that he was survived by his father, and therefore probably died young. Consequently, his death was considered premature and unfair.

1. 5–6, μῶνογενής: only-begotten, single. The adjective μονογενής (Ionic form μῶνογενής) only rarely appears on funerary inscriptions. The inscriptions, on which it is encountered, generally date to the Roman Imperial period. The only exception to this time-frame is another Sinopean, early Classical inscription (c. 475–450 BC), carved on the funerary pyramid for the daughter of the Carian Nadys.<sup>24</sup> That inscription also refers to the father; πατρώθεν ὄλετο μονογενής: 'an only child, she was lost to her father'. While other epitaphs give more information, both in the case of Mitris and of the daughter of Nadys, there is no mention of a mother. This could be due to the economy of the text, to a literary topos for that time and place or to the fact that these mothers died before their children. However, such assumptions are arbitrary. The two Sinopean epitaphs may simply reflect the patriarchal values of their society. For instance, a fourth century BC grave epigram for the baby Lysandros from Eretria mentions both his mother and father, yet it assigns to them different roles and it names only the latter, who, therefore, gets more prominence. In particular, in relation to the father, it uses a word corresponding to μονογενής, but from the father's perspective, μονόπαις: νῦν δὲ ἀπὸ μαστοῦ μητρὸς ἀφείλετο Μοῖρα σὺν Ἄιδῃ | καὶ παιδὸς μονόπαιδ' Εὐβιον ἐστέρησεν,<sup>25</sup> 'but now, Moira and Hades took him away from his mother's breast and deprived Eubios, father of an only son, of his son'.

#### *Metre*

The text of the inscription is an elegiac distich, with a single metric anomaly: the long vowel of τῷ (second line) forms a short syllable.

#### **The relief**

About three quarters of the figured panel is preserved. It depicts a scene with two figures in low relief. The composition is dominated by a person seated on a *diphros*, a backless seat, and portrayed in profile, facing left, whose shoulders and head are lost. The seated person wears a long *chiton* that leaves the ankles uncovered, and a *himation* with a triangular fold under the elbow. The person's feet are resting flat on the floor. As the person is turned to the left, the left foot is

<sup>22</sup> Gortys, IC IV 372 (second or first century BC); Gonnoi, HELLY 1973, no. 212 (late first century BC / first century AD); Daldis, VÉRILHAC 1978, No. 183 (first century AD); Tenos, IG XII,5 973 and VÉRILHAC 1978, no. 168 (Imperial period, maybe first century AD); Massalia, IG XIV 2437 (second century AD).

<sup>23</sup> Halicarnassus, VÉRILHAC 1978, no. 157 (fourth century BC); Cures, VÉRILHAC 1978, no. 156 (first century AD). For a nuanced analysis, see VÉRILHAC 1982, § 95.

<sup>24</sup> FRENCH 2004, p. 43–45 no. 73.

<sup>25</sup> IG XII,9 293, l. 3–4; cf. VÉRILHAC 1978, no. 22.

in the foreground and the right one is set forward. Apart from a barely noticeable U-shaped line on the lap, no drapery folds are shown.

Only the lower part, below the waist, of the figure standing in front of the seated person has been preserved. This is a slender, probably youthful individual, wearing a long *chiton*. The two persons appear to be interacting in some way, with the hands of the standing person seemingly directed towards the seated one, probably offering an unidentifiable object.

### Missing part of the stele

There are two fully preserved examples in Sinope of the type of grave stele with an image field in low relief in the upper section and an inscribed lower section, the stelai of Gaga<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 4) and Brithagore (Fig. 5).<sup>27</sup> These stelai, also carved from the local shelly 'Boztepe' limestone, depict a seated woman with a standing female attendant within an architectural frame. The relief panels are crowned by a finial. The Gaga stele has a triangular pediment with acroteria carved in outline; the Brithagore stele displays an anthemion in shallow relief. The general proportions of image vs inscribed field of the Mitris stele are similar to those of the stele of Brithagore, but it is unclear whether the partially preserved lateral frames of the relief panel ended in ionic capitals, as in the Brithagore stele. The missing upper segment of the Mitris stele must also have borne a finial, possibly an anthemion (Fig. 6) or a pediment (Fig. 7).

### Iconography

The iconography of the relief seems at first to be fairly straightforward. The seated person is prominent and therefore likely represents Mitris, the deceased. Accordingly, the standing figure is probably a young attendant. The scene apparently corresponds to the depictions found on the stelai of Gaga and Brithagore, as well as on another Sinopean grave monument fragment, the so-called 'three-figures stele'. Here a seated woman is facing right, accompanied by two servants standing in front of her; their bodies are superimposed, only their heads reveal the presence of two figures (Fig. 8).<sup>28</sup>

However, with light projected at certain angles, the seated figure on the Mitris stele appears to have a female bosom (Fig. 9). This raises the question of whether this is an optical illusion caused by the corrosion of the stone's surface or if, indeed, the seated figure represents a woman. The figure is seated on a *diphros*, a seat usually associated with representations of women,<sup>29</sup> but there are several exceptions.<sup>30</sup> In fact, depictions of the deceased on grave reliefs do not necessarily adhere to strict rules.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Sinop Arkeoloji Müzesi, inv. no. 15.6.76; see FRENCH 2004, p. 35–36 no. 58 (with previous literature); ÖZGAN 2009, p. 247.

<sup>27</sup> Sinop Arkeoloji Müzesi, inv. no. 4.1.99; see FRENCH 2004, p. 41–42 no. 71; ÖZGAN 2009, p. 244–245.

<sup>28</sup> Sinop Arkeoloji Müzesi, inv. no. 15.7.76; AKURGAL 1955, p. 5–10; ÖZGAN 2009, p. 246.

<sup>29</sup> STROSZECK 2020, p. 410.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, a stele from Rhodes in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, dated to 530–520 BC, BERGER 1970, p. 99, Abb. 120; the stele of Atrastas from Sardis, dated to the late sixth or the early fifth century BC, KAHILL 2010, cat. 10 (C.H. Greenewalt, Jr), with earlier

Compared to known Sinopean grave reliefs depicting seated women, i.e. the stelai of Gaga<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 4) and Brithagore (Fig. 5),<sup>33</sup> the three-figures stele (Fig. 8),<sup>34</sup> a fragmentary stele with a seated woman (Fig. 10),<sup>35</sup> and the relief on the grave pyramid of Nadys' daughter,<sup>36</sup> the seated figure on the Mitris stele wears a shorter chiton, reaching only the mid-calf. This length matches the garment worn by a standing man depicted with a dog on another fragment of a funerary stele from Sinope, dated to 460–450 BC.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, the outlined criteria are not completely sufficient to definitively resolve the interpretation of the depicted scene. There are more possibilities. We may have two male figures, with Mitris seated and attended by a standing servant, or alternatively, the seated figure represents a woman, whose head was covered by her *himation*. This leads to the inference that she represents Mitris' previously deceased mother, a fact that could explain why she is not mentioned in the inscription. In this scenario, Mitris is portrayed as the standing youth in front of her. A similar scene is depicted on a Lydian anthemion grave stele from Haliller, most probably dated to 342/1 BC.<sup>38</sup> A woman is seated on a stool, facing right, with her feet placed on a footstool. In front of her, a very small accompanying figure stands on the footstool and reaches out to her. The small figure could be a child due to its size and, given that it shares the footstool with the woman, it could be her own child rather than a slave.

It is unclear how the two figures interact. The standing figure may be offering an object to the seated one with extended hands, as in numerous funerary representations. Given the preserved rounded outlines, this object could have been a bird, possibly a rooster. Birds and roosters often appear on grave reliefs from this period. In Sinope, a rooster is present under the *diphros* on the Gaga and the three-figures stelai.<sup>39</sup> Such depictions on women's stelai evoke the atmosphere

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bibliography; the seated bearded man receiving a helmet from a young man on the north side of the Harpy tomb (early fifth century BC), RUDOLPH 2003, pl. 16; the famous Eastern-Greek physician's stele in Basel, around 480 BC, BERGER 1970; an Atticising stele from Rhaidestos in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, dated to the late fifth century BC, DESPINIS, STEFANIDOU-TIVERIOU & VOUTIRAS 1997, p. 28–29 no. 14, fig. 38 (G. Despinis); the votive stele of a potter at the Acropolis of Athens (500–490 BC), BERGER 1970, p. 99, Abb. 119; and the stele of a seated young man with a book-roll of unknown provenience (probably Asia Minor) in Grottaferrata, dated to the begin of the fourth century BC (PFUHL & MÖBIUS 1979, p. 25–26 no. 56, pl. 14). For some interesting remarks on this subject, see LEADER 1997, p. 691.

<sup>31</sup> GROSSMAN 2013, p. 2–3; MARGARITI 2016.

<sup>32</sup> See above, n. 26.

<sup>33</sup> See above, n. 27.

<sup>34</sup> See above, n. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Sinop Arkeoloji Müzesi, inv. no. 19.7.75; ÖZGAN 2009, p. 248–249; SAĞLAN 2014, p. 109.

<sup>36</sup> İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, inv. no. 3868; CLAIRMONT 1970, p. 33–37 no. 10, pl. 36; PFUHL & MÖBIUS 1977, p. 16–17 no. 22, pl. 6; cf. above, n. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Sinop Arkeoloji Müzesi, inv. no. 15.11.76; PFUHL & MÖBIUS 1977, p. 14 no. 13, pl. 4; AYKANAT 2013.

<sup>38</sup> KAHILL 2010, cat. 11 (C.H. Greenewalt, Jr), with earlier bibliography.

<sup>39</sup> Similarly, on a grave relief from Pydna (around 400 BC) in the Museum of Dion, a rooster is shown in front of the *diphros*, on which a pensive mother is seated; she holds her young son who reclines on her lap (KOSTOGLU-DESPINI 1988).

of domestic life in the women's quarters. However, roosters also appear on men's grave monuments, who are often shown interacting with the roosters, holding or offering them.<sup>40</sup> If indeed a rooster is being offered on the Mitris stele, this would indicate that the two figures were men. Maybe the Sinopean stonemason employed existing patterns, like those used for women's stelai, and adapted them for Mitris and his father. If this was the case, the bird, besides its chthonic connotations,<sup>41</sup> might also have symbolised the paternal affection<sup>42</sup> of Myndies, who mourned the loss of his only child.

### Style & chronology

The closest counterpart to our stele is the aforementioned grave stone of Brithagore, also discovered at the Gelincik necropolis. Both share similarities in general design, composition, inscription lettering, silhouette shape, and their crude style. The figures are outlined and lack intricate plastic structure.

The silhouette-style, as observed in Sinopean stelai, is a typical characteristic found in Persian-period grave monuments across Anatolia.<sup>43</sup> Chronologically classifying this style raises challenges due to the lack of contextual evidence. Proposed dating ranges span from the late sixth century to the fourth century BC. Earlier dating proposals draw analogies with the Late Archaic anthemion-stelai from Athens, Samos, Lydia, and Phrygia.<sup>44</sup> Advocates for later dates suggest that the spread of anthemion stelai to Anatolia occurred long after their use in Attica and Ionia. Some suppose that the Late Archaic/Early Classical anthemion stelai might have been repurposed after several decades by incorporating figurative reliefs and inscriptions onto them.<sup>45</sup>

In 1955, Ekrem Akurgal published two naiskos stelai from Sinope<sup>46</sup> – the 'three-figures relief' (Fig. 8) and the stele of Gaga, daughter of Anaximbrotos (Fig. 4). He classified them as 'provincial' examples of the Ionic tradition, which

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<sup>40</sup> On the east side of the so-called Harpy tomb from Lycia, now in the British Museum (early fifth century BC, cf. RUDOLPH 2003, p. 9–11), a boy is depicted bringing a rooster to a bearded man seated on a throne (RUDOLPH 2003, p. 24 with pl. 25 and 27). A rooster links the figures of a young man and a boy on a grave stele of the first half of the fifth century BC from Rhodes (KANINIA 1997). Finally, a youth, Mnasitheos, is depicted standing and holding a rooster with his left and a flower with his right hand on his anthemion stele from Akraiphia, Boiotia (520–515 BC; ANDREIOMENOU 2012; ESTRIN 2016a, p. 13–38; ESTRIN 2016b); the subject may have been wide-spread, since a roughly contemporary (late sixth century BC) tomb relief – not a free-standing stele – from Gökçeler in Lydia also shows a standing youth carrying a rooster (ÇEVİRİCİ COŞKUN 2018).

<sup>41</sup> On the rooster as a symbol for passage rites, including its association with the ultimate transition from life to death, see PALADINO 1986; cf. CSAPO 2016, p. 16–17.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. ESTRIN 2016a, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> AKURGAL 1966; NOLLÉ 1992; ÖZGAN 2009, p. 245–248. Four new stelai were recently found in Hellenistic Phrygia: ERPEHLIVAN 2021.

<sup>44</sup> HANFMANN 1976; ALP 2013.

<sup>45</sup> BERNARD 1969; AKURGAL 1974, p. 147–156.

<sup>46</sup> AKURGAL 1955.

may have influenced the later Attic reliefs.<sup>47</sup> In particular, he showed that the two monuments are examples of 'a decisive step in the process of the development from the heroic reliefs to the depiction of human interaction'.<sup>48</sup> He proposed dating them to 460–450 BC, a timeline that was mostly adopted in subsequent literature.<sup>49</sup> The three-figures stele stands out notably due to its Ionic architectural frame and reiteration of the standing attendants.<sup>50</sup> Alongside the stele of Gaga, it exhibits stylistic traits characteristic of the Severe style. These include inclined heads with cap-like hair, profiles featuring heavy chins, and almond-shaped eyes. The figures are arranged paratactically, lacking depth and foreshortening. Their garments are sculpted without intricate folds, appearing either plain or sparsely pleated.

The marble anthemion stele of Nana, daughter of Hekataios, discovered in Sinope during the 1970s without a known context, depicts a distinct image: a lone standing woman engaged with a pyxis (**Fig. 11**).<sup>51</sup> Scholarly analysis identified certain resemblances between this relief and the Parian stele Giustiani, a renowned example of the Severe style.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, Serra Durugönül dated the stele of Nana to the middle of the fifth century BC. However, Ramazan Özgan rightly noted some inconsistencies. While the stele of Nana adopts a Severe style image type and is crowned with an earlier type of anthemion, it incorporates perspective in rendering the pyxis and the eye.<sup>53</sup> This situation prompts the question of whether Sinopean sculptors revisited image types from the Severe Style in the later fifth century BC, but it mainly shows the limits of our knowledge concerning the vast Ionian artistic production.<sup>54</sup>

The fragmentary stele from Sinope portraying a seated female facing to the right<sup>55</sup> (**Fig. 10**) lacks contextual information. Nevertheless, its significance emerges from its resemblance to the Sinopean three-figures relief and to an even closer parallel found recently in Amisos, roughly dated between 500 and 450 BC.<sup>56</sup> Both stelai share similarities not only in the distinctive type of *diphros* and the

<sup>47</sup> Cf. BIESANTZ 1965, p. 62; RIDGWAY 1970, p. 98; for a different opinion, see ANDRONIKOS 1956, p. 208–215.

<sup>48</sup> AKURGAL 1955, p. 22. See further RIDGWAY 1970, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> PFUHL-MÖBIUS 1975, p. 14; HILLER 1975, p. 59–60. BIESANTZ (1965, p. 62, n. 72) disputed the dating of the Gaga stele, claiming that it could equally well be a work of the fourth century BC. However, the Severe style on the stele 'appears mixed not with later but with earlier traits' (RIDGWAY 1970, p. 98).

<sup>50</sup> See above, n. 28.

<sup>51</sup> DURUGÖNÜL 1992; FRENCH 2004, p. 38, no. 64.

<sup>52</sup> DURUGÖNÜL 1992, p. 150.

<sup>53</sup> CLAIRMONT 1995, p. 48, no. 1040, supposes that the anthemion and image were carved in different periods. DOKSANALTI – ÖZGAN 2009, p. 4–5 date the stele of Nana to 460 and ÖZGAN 2009, p. 244 to 460–450 BC, a dating adopted by SAĞLAN 2014, p. 110.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. RIDGWAY (1967, p. 100): 'ancient funerary art is as yet imperfectly known. We tend to think in terms of Attic art alone'.

<sup>55</sup> See above, n. 35.

<sup>56</sup> AKYÜZ 2013; LAFLI 2015; LAFLI & MEISCHNER 2015; TEMUR 2015; cf. SUMMERER 2018, p. 161.

style of drapery folding, but also in the representation of pointed shoes reminiscent of those seen in Late Hittite reliefs.<sup>57</sup>

Considering the context of the newly discovered Amisene stele and drawing parallels with other Sinopean grave stones portraying matrons and servants, notably the stele of Brithagore, we can tentatively place the stele of Mitris in the first half of the fifth century BC, probably higher than lower in this timeframe.

Previous scholarship dated all Sinopean grave reliefs generally to the middle of the fifth century BC or later, and sometimes it has been assumed that they were influenced by the presence of the 600 Athenian cleruchs who, according to Plutarch,<sup>58</sup> settled in Sinope in the early 430s BC during Pericles' expedition to the Black Sea.<sup>59</sup> Ramazan Özgan recently proposed to expand the timeline, placing these reliefs between the last decade of the sixth century and around 450 BC. According to him, the stele of Brithagore represents the earliest example from the turn of the sixth to the fifth century, while the stele of Nana stands as the latest, dated to around 450 BC.<sup>60</sup> Although Özgan's arguments for this chronological sequence are somewhat speculative, he rightly disputes the perception of the Sinopean stelai as 'backward and provincial' in their silhouette style and draws connections to the tradition of Neo-Hittite art.<sup>61</sup> Dialoguing pairs of deity and votary, king and subordinate, master and servant, and mistress and maid, although in a non-funerary context, are observed on stelai from Maraş and Zincirli.<sup>62</sup> These observations imply the emergence of a new elite class in Sinope, Daskyleion, and elsewhere under Persian domination, potentially rivaling older Anatolian art traditions.

Katarzyna Hagemajer Allen suggests that the naiskos stelai from Sinope found their inspiration in the gable façade of Paphlagonian rock-cut tombs, which, in turn, drew theirs from the architecture of royal Persian burials.<sup>63</sup> While there is no consensus regarding the chronology and origin of the Paphlagonian rock-cut tombs, this proposal presents an alternative explanation for the emergence of the Early Classical Sinopean naiskoi, especially by integrating them into a wider cultural environment, thus diverging from the notion that they were merely 'provincial' works.

### Conclusions

Funerary practices in Sinope involved in the first half of the fifth century BC anthemion and naiskos stelai that were decorated with dialoguing paired figures. Representations with a seated main woman attended by a standing girl belong

<sup>57</sup> ORTHMANN 1971, *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> Plut. *Per.* 11.5–6, 19.1, 20.1–2; on this event, see further MITCHELL 2010, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup> DURUGÖNÜL 1992, p. 106; ÖZGAN 2009, p. 251. To date, 'only three Athenians are attested at Sinope' and 'it is likely that they were members or descendants of the cleruchs Pericles had sent to Sinope' (RUSCU 2008, p. 95). However, it should be noted that their three grave stelai (FRENCH 2004, nos. 54, 57, 61) are simple inscribed slabs without reliefs.

<sup>60</sup> ÖZGAN 2009, p. 244, 246.

<sup>61</sup> ÖZGAN 2009, p. 252.

<sup>62</sup> ORTHMANN 1971, pl. 46–48, 59, 63.

<sup>63</sup> HAGEMAJER ALLEN 2003, p. 215–219.

mostly to the iconographic type 'mistress and maid' that was popular in Attica after 430 BC.

The stele presented in this article belongs most probably to the group of anthemion or pediment stelai inscribed in their lower section and decorated with a relief panel in an architectural frame. In terms of form, size and material it corresponds more closely to the stele of Brithagore. The silhouette-style of the relief that is common to the Sinopean stelai should not be considered as 'provincial', but rather a recourse to Late Hittite relief styles.

Although the inscription on the Mitris stele is succinct, it stands as one of the most extensive inscriptions preserved from the Greco-Persian period in Sinope. A noteworthy aspect is the designation of a period in civic culture based on the grape harvest, indicating the extensive cultivation of vineyards in and around Sinope. Offering a brief glimpse into the challenges faced by a small nuclear family during fifth-century BC Sinope, the inscription serves as a tiny, but valuable window into their lives. Moreover, it prompts a reconsideration of the partially preserved relief panel, challenging our preconceptions about the depictions on grave reliefs.

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Fig. 1. The grave stele of Mitris (photo: P. Christodoulou).



Fig. 2. The grave stele of Mitris (photo: P. Christodoulou).

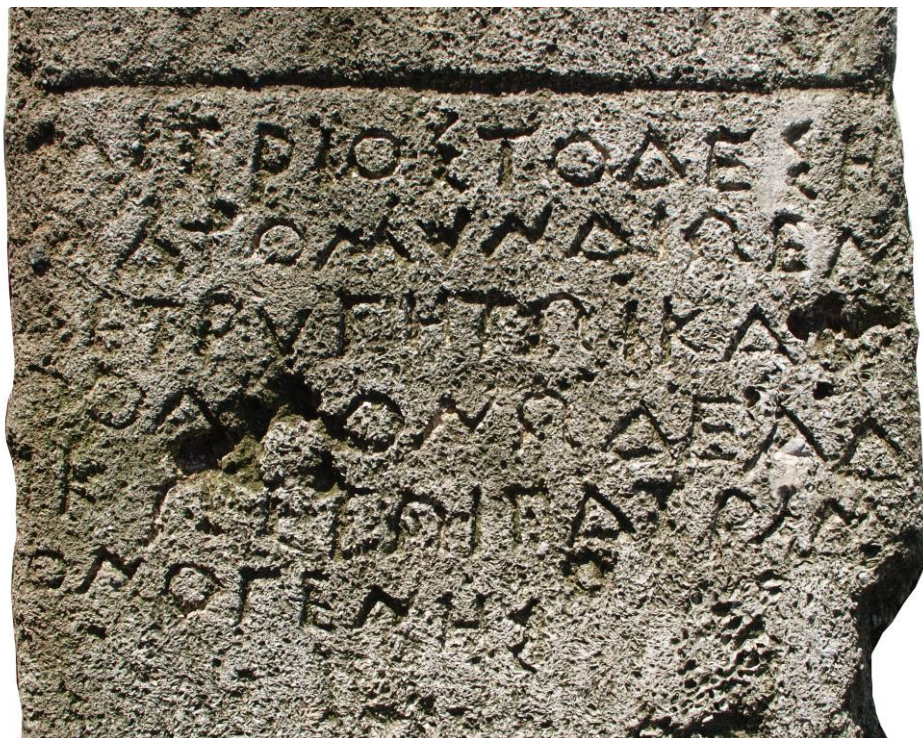


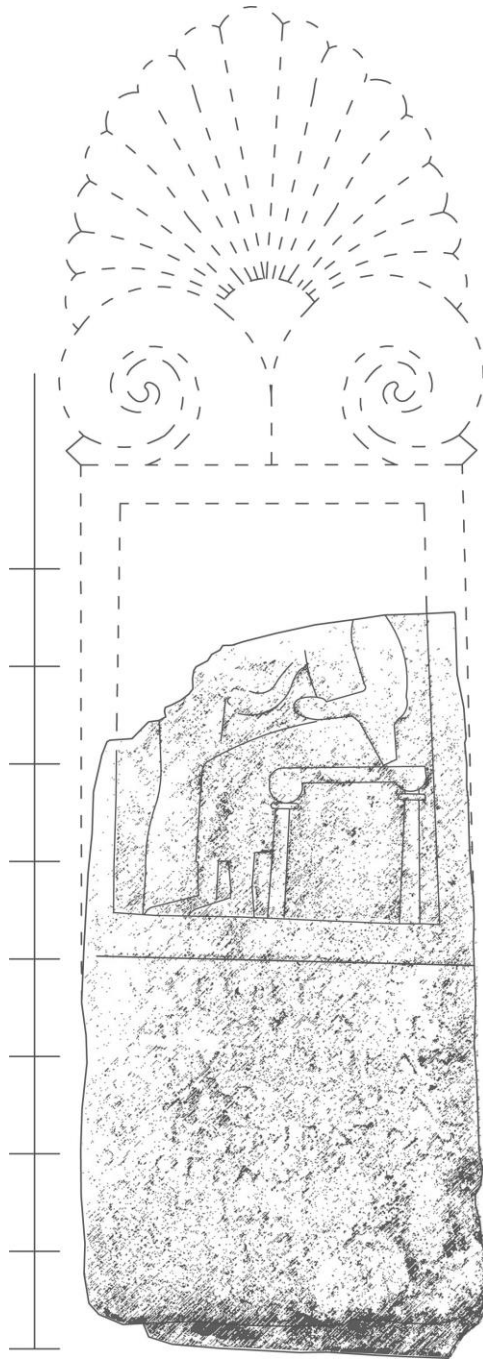
Fig. 3. The inscription on the Mitris stele (photo: P. Christodoulou).



Fig. 4. The grave stele of Gaga (photo: P. Christodoulou).



Fig. 5. The grave stele of Brithagore (photo: P. Christodoulou).



**Fig. 6.** The Mitris stele reconstructed with an anthemion finial (drawing: D. Miliopoulos).

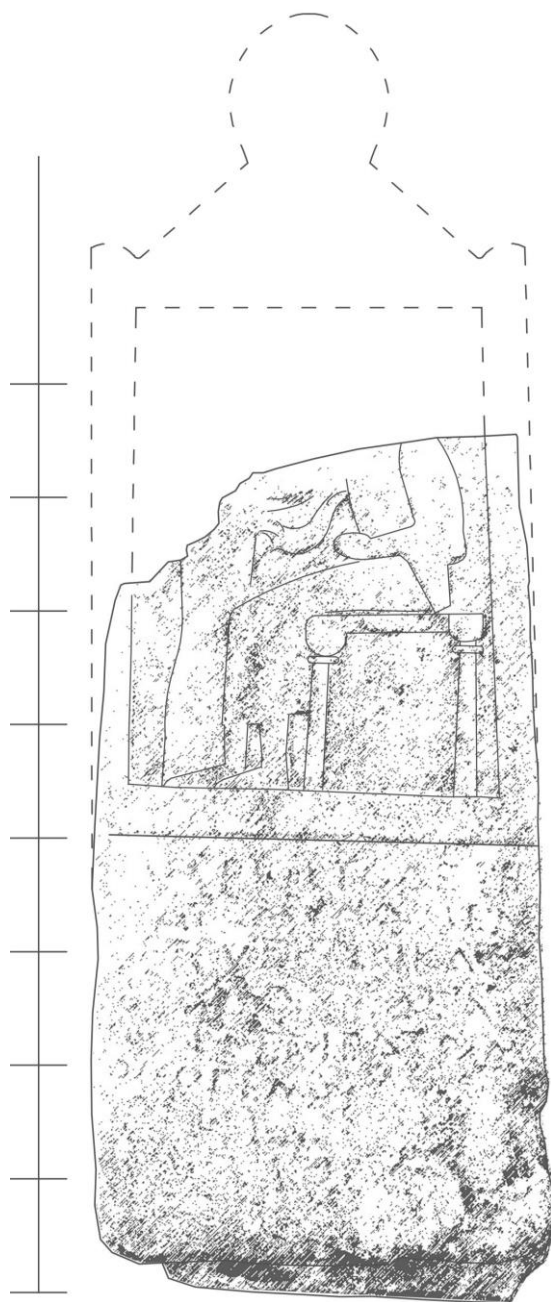


Fig. 7. The Mitris stele reconstructed with a pediment (drawing: D. Miliopoulos).



Fig. 8. The 'three-figures stele' (photo: P. Christodoulou).



Fig. 9. The relief panel of the Mitris stele (photo: P. Christodoulou).



Fig. 10. Fragment of a grave stele with a seated woman (photo: P. Christodoulou).



Fig. 11. The grave stele of Nana (photo: P. Christodoulou).