

Sculptures from the Propylon of the Kasta Tumulus near Amphipolis

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The Kasta Tumulus is a very large mound located north of Amphipolis, which was monumentalized in the late 4th century BC. At the top stood a lion, and a relief frieze ran at its base. At the base of the mound, facing south, were four rooms endowed with Sphinxes, female figural supports, a pebble mosaic showing the kidnapping of Kore by Hades and, finally, a painted frieze. This sequence of four rooms had two phases: in the first, it probably functioned as a heroon of Hephaestion, while in the second it became a *manteion*, probably administered by the famous seer Pythagoras of Amphipolis.¹

The entrance to the tumulus took place through an Ionic propylon, distyle *in antis*. This entrance was endowed with statues at the sides of the gate.

A marble block from Amphipolis with a dedicatory epigram by Antigonos Kalla, *hetairos* of Alexander the Great, who achieved two victories in *hoplitodromiai* at Tyre² at the time of Alexander's conquest of the city, probably supported a bronze statue. The upper face of this block suggests that this block had a wall behind and other blocks to the viewer's

¹ See Corso 2015, 193–222.

² About this block and its inscription, see Koukouli-Khrisanthaki 1971, 120–127.

left and below. Thus, it supported a bronze statue in front of a wall, probably to the viewer's left of a gate. Since the measurements of this block make it homogeneous with the corresponding dimensions of the blocks of the walls of room 1 of the Kasta Tumulus, it is likely that there was one statue at each side of the entrance. One of these two statues is probably preserved, and should be identified with the female draped marble statue found near Basilica no. 3 at the Acropolis of Amphipolis and kept at Kavala, Museum, no. Λ 607 (fig. 1).³ She may represent a priestess, a high ranking lady, or the goddess Nemesis, because her general style recalls the Nemesis of Agorakritos.⁴ If one of the first two possibilities is accepted, she may represent Olympiad. If the third hypothesis is endorsed, Nemesis would have symbolized the Macedonian victory over Persia, seen as retaliation after the Persian invasions of Greece in 490–479 BC. Since this statue is marble and the statue dedicated by Antigonos was bronze, it must have been set up at the viewer's right of the gate.

The capture of Tyre by Alexander was thought to have been propitiated by Apollo (Diodorus 13. 108. 4–5), hence the dedication to a protagonist of that episode in a sacred space in which Apollo granted the power to predict the future may have been regarded as rather appropriate.

Statues at the sides of the gates of sanctuaries were typical of classical Athens: e.g. the Knights of Lykios stood at the sides of the Propylaea to the Akropolis of Athens, the Perseus of Myron and the boy of Lykios stood at the sides of the entrance to the Brauronion of the Akropolis, and the groups of Athena and Marsyas and of Theseus and the Minotaur stood at the sides of the propylon to the court in front of the west side of the Parthenon. Sometimes these statues were also dedicated by prominent private citizens, as was the case with the Knights and the boy of Lykios.⁵

Thus this dedication testifies to the continuity of this Athenian habit in late classical Amphipolis.

Concerning the external facade - distyle *in antis* with Ionic columns and a gate in the middle - architectural blocks found together with the lion and which had been wrongly attributed to the base of the lion probably should be attributed to this front, because their shapes and measurements are consistent with the masonry of room 1, and moreover, because they pertain to a construction in Ionic order, and thus cannot have been part of the base of the lion, which was endowed with Doric half columns.

³ See Damaskos 2013, 40–41, no. 8, figs. 19–21.

⁴ See DNO 2014, nos. 1141–1154.

⁵ See DNO 2014, nos. 729–730; 734–735 and 1080–1083.

Facades of tombs showing the adoption of the Ionic order were trendy in Macedon in the late 4th century BC.⁶

It is likely that both the continuous Ionic frieze and the pediment of this facade were carved, because there are sculptures which can be attributed to these parts of the facade on the basis of their dimensions and style.

It is likely that two marble slabs currently in İstanbul once pertained to the frieze of the facade:

a. Slab no. 77 at the İstanbul Archaeology Museum (fig. 2)⁷, which represents two men with their horses behind them, standing in heraldic positions at the sides of a draped lady in full prospect. These two men, since they appear in their heroic nakedness, probably are the Dioscuri, thus related to Zeus, the supposed father of Alexander. They are emblematic of the knights who fought together with Alexander and Hephaestion to achieve the great, recent victory of their army. Of course, they are emblems of victory (for more about the Dioscuri as symbols of victory, see Diodorus 8. 32. 1–2). Their horses are so similar to the horse behind the hero with round shield in the frieze below the lion as to justify the attribution of these three horses to the same workshop. Thus, the lady in the middle is probably Helen, the heroine who was instrumental toward the sack of Troy. The popularity of the myth of Helen in Macedon in the late 4th century BC is evidenced by the pebble mosaic from Pella displaying the kidnapping of Helen by Theseus.⁸

The canon of the female body adopted for this figure is characterized by a short torso and long legs, and is the same as was adopted for the Korai in room 2 of the Tumulus. The drapery between the two legs of the heroine determines a concave configuration with curved folds and goes down to the ground and above the feet: these features are also found in the Korai of room 2. Even this lady may have been regarded as a mythical antecedent of the powerful woman who probably patronized the monument: Olympias, Alexander's mother.

b. Slab no. 78 in the same museum (fig. 3).⁹ It also displays three figures: from the viewer's left, a high official standing in front of his horse, then a goddess wearing short chiton and boots and holding a bow in her left hand, probably to be identified as Artemis, and finally a Nike holding

⁶ See Drougou 2016, 335–350.

⁷ See Mendel 1914, 2. 293–294, no. 572. About the standard association of Dioscuri with horses, see Walker 2015, 126–180.

⁸ See Lilimpaki 2011, 252–253.

⁹ See Mendel 1914, 2. 294–296, no. 573.



Fig. 1. Statue from Amphipolis. Kavala, Archaeological Museum 607

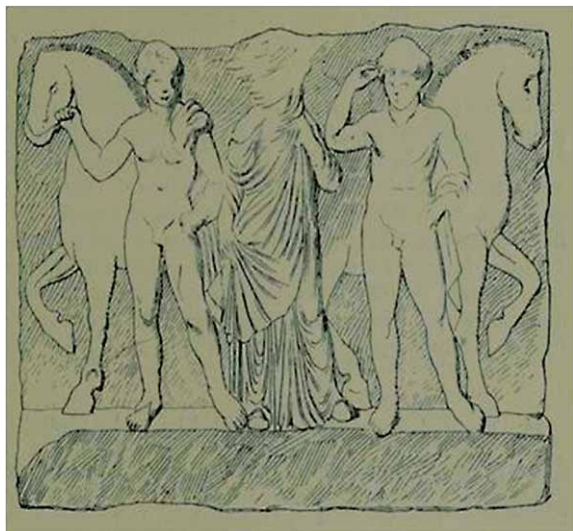


Fig. 2. Relief slab. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, no. 77.
Adopted from Mendel, 1914

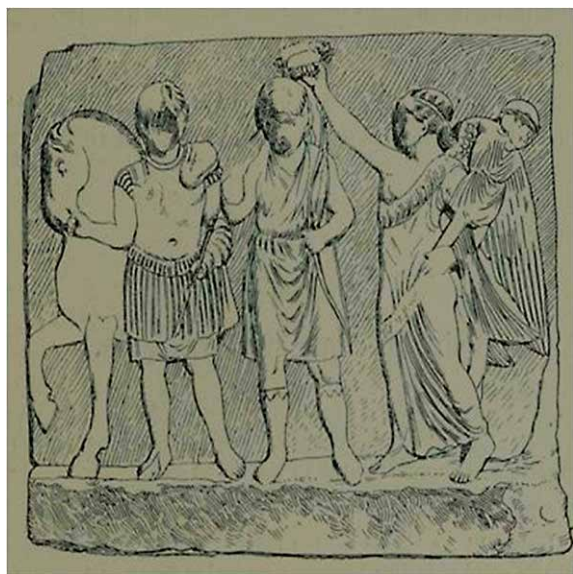


Fig. 3. Relief slab. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, no. 78.
Adopted from Mendel, 1914



Fig. 4. Relief slab. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, no. I. N. 2308



Fig. 5. Relief slab. Paris, Louvre, DAGER, no. Ma 3582



Fig. 6. Relief slab. Paris, Louvre, DAGER, no. Ma 800

a trophy in her left hand and crowning Artemis with her right hand. The official in this slab appears to be the same as shown in the frieze below the lion, and thus may also represent Hephaestion. The horse is also similar to the horse in the frieze below the lion, as well as to the two horses of the previously mentioned slab: in all of these examples, the rendering of the head, eyes and mane of the animal is basically the same.

Artemis with the bow is probably Artemis Brauronia,¹⁰ whose cult was probably of the highest possible importance at Amphipolis (see Antipater, *Anthologia Graeca* 7. 705): her iconography with a short chiton is indebted to the definition given to this goddess in Attica throughout the late 5th and 4th centuries BC.¹¹

The Nike is endowed with long wings, similar to the wings of the Sphinxes of room 1. The strap across her chest and the concave configuration of the drapery with curved folds between her legs make this figure similar to the Korai of room 2.

The iconography of Nike, who crowns the tutelary goddess of Amphipolis, may be intended to exalt the crucial contributions of valuable men from this *polis* to the enterprise of Alexander.¹² *Nikai* with the same attire, with long wings and about to outstretch a wreath with their left hands appear often in the coinage of Alexander the Great,¹³ and so this iconography may be a direct reference to a widespread pattern in royal propaganda.

Nikai holding wreaths will become traditional iconographic patterns in Amphipolitan imagery, and will continue to appear on the reverses of coins struck by this city in early Roman imperial times.¹⁴

Thus, this frieze may be intended to glorify the Amphipolitan leaders of the expedition of Alexander through the prism of mythology, i.e. their tutelary goddess as well as the Dioscuri and Helen.

The association of Artemis with Helen and the Dioscuri as depicted on this frieze may have been influenced by Euripides' "Rhadamanthys", where Artemis appeared and instructed Helen to establish rites to honour the dead Dioscuri (see the hypothesis of this tragedy). At a later point in

¹⁰ For the importance of the bow in the iconography of Artemis Brauronia, see Despinis 2010, 105–114, pl. 23.

¹¹ This iconography of Artemis may have been introduced by Strongylion with his Artemis Soteira: see Corso 2004, 58–62.

¹² One of Alexander's eight squadrons of Companions' Cavalry was Amphipolitan: see e.g. Lorber 1990, 62.

¹³ See Price 1991, 81.

¹⁴ See Head 1879, 51.

this drama, Artemis declared that the daughters of Rhadamanthys had become goddesses, and that perhaps she may also have announced a similar destiny for the Dioscuri.

It is obvious that Euripides had a deep impact on Macedonian culture, since he spent his last years in the court of the Macedonian king Archelaus.

Thus, also in this frieze, perhaps Artemis is represented in her capacity to give immortality to another heroic dead, who in this case must be the young Macedonian official to her right.

Moreover, another marble fragment may have been pertinent to this frieze, because its dimensions and style are very similar to the two aforementioned slabs. This fragment was also found at Amphipolis, and is now kept at Kavala, The National Archaeological Museum, no. Λ 867.¹⁵ It depicts a young draped female with a girdle below her breasts. The back of this figure is flat and rough; thus, this sculpture is projected from a vertical slab.

One more marble slab should be placed in the same frieze. It also comes from Macedon, and is now at Copenhagen (fig. 4).¹⁶ Its pertinence to this frieze is proven by the height and the thickness of the slab, as well as the shapes of the upper and lower listels, the projection of the relief from its background and the style of the figures are identical to those features of the slabs at the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. This slab depicts a tree with the usual coiled snake, which places the scene in a heroic sanctuary. Two boys are throwing stones at the tree, probably to coax the snake out. Two other boys are carrying a sick, old and bearded man on a stretcher in front of the tree with the snake. The bearded man is motioning to the snake with his right hand, probably in order to recover his health. The scene reveals that the heroon which it decorated was also endowed with healing functions. This slab, depicting a scene with movement to the viewer's left, was probably on the right-hand side of the frieze.

Other surviving marble slabs and figures may have been pertinent to the pediment of the facade.

There are three available fragments which were probably originally part of the pedimental composition:

a. Slab no. Ma 3582, bearing figures, in high relief, of a matronly lady and a girl, from Amphipolis, at the Louvre in Paris (fig. 5).¹⁷

¹⁵ See Damaskos 2013, 71, no. 48.

¹⁶ Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, no. I. N. 2308: see Moltesen 1995, 130–131, no. 67.

¹⁷ See Kalaitzi 2016, 251–252, no. 173.

b. Slab no. Ma 800, with figures in high relief, depicting a curved man resting on a stick and a seated woman holding a baby. This slab also comes from Amphipolis and is kept at the Louvre in Paris (fig. 6).¹⁸

c. Sculpture no. A 335, in high relief, also from Amphipolis, kept at the National Archaeological Museum in Kavala.¹⁹ The *schema* of this figure depicts a Muse holding a lyre in her uplifted right hand, as in Mantinea.²⁰ The back of this sculpture is flat and rough. This implies that it was a high relief figure projecting from a vertical slab.

These three fragments are stylistically similar and their dimensions are in keeping with their pertinence to the same pedimental composition.

In order to understand what has been depicted, we should begin with the only identification which appears to be highly probable: the Kavala sculpture 335 is so similar to the Mantineian Muse with lyre as to even enable this figure to be identified as a Muse. She probably also held a lyre in her uplifted right hand. Therefore, the story depicted in this pediment probably had to do with Muses.

In the Louvre slab 3582, the matronly figure may be Mnemosyne, with a maid, attending the event taking place in the centre.

Finally the Louvre slab 800, because of its dimensions, must have been in the centre of the pediment, and thus probably conveys the crucial moment of the sacred story which was narrated in this part of the building.

The lady shown on this slab is also in high relief and is wearing chiton and himation. She seats on a *klismos*. The fact that she rests her feet on a footstool conveys the notion of the special importance of this figure. She holds an infant and has a man in front of her. The man is clearly the father of the infant. A himation wraps the lower part of his body, while his torso is bare. Since he is bent toward the woman and the infant, it is clear that the latter two figures are more important than him and are the central characters of the narration.

By analogy with statue 355 at Kavala, the young woman represented here must also be a Muse, and specifically one of the Muses who gave birth to a child. Since this composition was carved at Amphipolis, she is probably the Muse who bore Rhesus.²¹ This Muse was usually identified as Klio. Of course, the infant is Rhesus, while the man with a bare torso

¹⁸ See Kalaitzi 2016, 252, no. 174.

¹⁹ See Damaskos 2013, 42–43, no. 11.

²⁰ See Kaltsas, Despinis 2007, 82–87.

²¹ About Rhesus as son of a Muse, see True 1997, 1044.

must be the father of Rhesus, i.e. the river Strymon.²² The advanced age of this man, as shown by his bent-over posture, his resting on a stick, and the weak rendering of his torso with light-dark modeling, are typical features of depictions of rivers.

Thus the pediment probably represented the birth of Rhesus, the hero who symbolized the mythical past of Amphipolis.

His father Strymon was with his mother: the caring attitude of this figure, pathetically bent toward the newborn child, is typical of the late classical age and reveals concern and affection, which is most famously depicted in Eirene with Ploutos by Kephisodotus the Elder.

The child receives the care of his mother and is also welcomed by her sisters, the other Muses. Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses and the grandmother of the child, does not miss the event.

The re-use of one type of the Praxitelean Muses, known to us thanks to the slabs of Mantinea, in order to represent a Muse at Amphipolis in around 320 BC is noteworthy because it reveals the rise of a sense of great respect toward visual *schemata* which characterized renowned *opera nobilia*.

Thus, whoever approached the facade of the tumulus could see the birth of the most important mythological hero of this region from his divine parents.

This theme was in-keeping with the probability that bones believed to be those of Rhesus were preserved in room 4 of the tumulus.

These findings lead one to the conclusion that the Kasta Tumulus was seen as the monument (*mnemeion*) to Rhesus, which was located on a hill (*epi lophou*) at Amphipolis, according to Marsyas, *FgrH* 135–136, *frg.* 7. This early Hellenistic Macedonian historian specifies that the *hieron* of Klio lay before the monument of Rhesus: thus, the place sacred to the mother of Rhesus may be identified with this propylon. A late classical dedication of a woman to Klio, found north of the city (*SEG* 24, 586), strengthens this identification.²³

Finally, the façade was probably also endowed with *akroteria*. A kneeling draped girl with a girdle below her breasts, from Amphipolis and kept at the National Archaeological Museum in Kavala (no. Λ 629)²⁴ is probably a local Nymph whose style is very appropriate to the *akroterion* to the viewer's left. She is crouching, like the Nymph who witnesses

²² About the Euripidean version according to which Strymon was the father of Rhesus, see Weiss 1994, 814.

²³ See Caruso 2016, 356.

²⁴ See Damaskos 2013, 42, no. 10.

the Kidnapping of Persephone in the wall painting at Vergina. Even the crouching Nymph on our propylon is probably marveling at the sacred story narrated in the pediment.

The central *akroterion* has probably also been preserved, and is the *anthemion* found at Kasta, kept at the National Archaeological Museum of Kavala (no. Α 319).²⁵

This propylon with its sculptural display is in-keeping with the formal features of sacred architecture and sculptures of the so-called Ionian Renaissance, and conveys the messages of the holiness of the Kasta mound with the 4 rooms behind the entrance, the great recent victory reported by Macedon, as well as the pride of Amphipolis: this town contributed a lot to the victory and was endowed with a wealthy mythical tradition, as well as divine founders.

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²⁵ See Lazaridis 2014, fig. 88.

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Captions

1. Statue at Kavala, Archaeological Museum Α 607.
2. Slab at İstanbul Archaeology Museum, no. 77.
3. Slab at İstanbul Archaeology Museum, no. 78.
4. Slab at Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, no. I. N. 2308.
5. Slab at Paris, Louvre, DAGER, no. Ma 3582.
6. Slab at Paris, Louvre, DAGER, no. Ma 800.