

## A New Metrical Funerary Curse from Miletoupolis

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An interesting funerary stele probably from Miletoupolis has been relatively recently published by E. Laflı and M. E. Uyar (Laflı – Uyar 2021, 77-79 no. 2, with phs. figs. 6-8; henceforth referred to as “edd.pr.”). The stele is dated ca. 80-150 AD by edd. pr. on the basis of its relief, showing a seated woman to the right and seated man to the left, as well as two diminutive attendants in front of their respective seats. Edd.pr. give the text and translation of the inscription as follows:

[--]Δ ύμετέρην στήλ(λ)ην ληίσσεται ἢ περιθραύση

2 [-] γῆ EM[-]TA γλύκας εἰς ἑτέρους ἀναθῆ

ΣΕΥΣΕΣΩΑΗ γένος ἐγγένου ἐξολέσειεν

4 Α μήτε τιν(ὰ) ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐς φάος εἰσιέν{ν}αι

“(?) the shattering around will destroy your stele

2 the earth ... offers others its (?) sweets (??) rejected ?

... the lineage of the family member .....(?)

4 neither of you two turns towards the light.”

The inscription is worn to the left and also partly obscured on its left side by some vegetation near the stone—one is thus not able to fully control the inscription from the published photograph, especially at the beginning of line 3. In line 1, edd.pr. think of restoring part of a personal name, [EY]ΔΑΙΜ ΕΤΕΡΗΝ. As will be clear, they do not succeed in making sense of the text.


The text is an interesting four-line metrical curse, whose letters are carefully inscribed within visible guidelines.<sup>1</sup> The names of the deceased—no doubt the couple depicted in the relief—must have been inscribed or painted at the top of the stele, which is now broken off above the relief; that the text continues from another part of the stele is also confirmed by the preposition δέ (δ’) which can be read in line 1. Beneath the four extant lines of the text, which are placed directly below the relief, follow a few well polished, but empty line spaces; below that, the stone is roughly and diagonally scratched, perhaps to facilitate its insertion into the ground or its placement next to another object. On the basis of the published photograph, the text may be read and translated as follows:

ὄστις δ’ ύμετέρην στήλ(λ)ην ληίσσεται ἢ περιθραύση

<sup>vac.</sup> ἢ μεταγλύψας | εἰς ἑτέρους ἀναθῆ,

[ὁ] Ζεὺς ἐξώλη, γένος ἐγ γένου ἐξολέσειεν

4 <sup>vac.</sup> . μήτε τιν’ ἐξ αὐτῶν | ἐς φάος εἰσιέν{ν}αι

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<sup>1</sup> For metrical curses from Phrygia and their formulation, see Staab 2018, esp. 145 n. 422 for a list of texts.

“And whoever steals (or: acquires) your stele or breaks (it) into pieces  
or, after recarving, sets (it) up for others (or: in other places),  
may Zeus utterly destroy him and his lineage from its stock,  
nor is any one of them to walk into the light.”

1. ὄστις read together with A. Petrovic per litt., though the letters are admittedly faint and the apparent *omicron* reaches partly into the left edge of the stone; [εἶ] τις could have been a shorter and equally suitable alternative, but it does not match the traces visible on the published ph. || 2. μεταγλύψας read with A. Chaniotis per litt.<sup>2</sup> || 3. initio [ὁ] or perhaps [ὦ]; [τῶ] or [οἰ] sugg. Petrovic; [τὸν] sugg. by an anonymous reviewer per litt., but there is not enough space at the beginning of the line; see comm. below || 4. ΕΙΣΙΕΝΝΑΙ lapis, εἰσιέ{ν}ναι edd.pr., metri causa Petrovic.

The lines form a pair of elegiac distichs, though the first line appears to be a heptameter (A. Petrovic points to an early instance of a heptameter in Hansen, CEG 530.2, 4th c. BC); line 3 is a hexameter. Each pentameter (lines 2 and 4) is marked by an indentation with empty space. Though the reading is rather unclear (especially in line 4), each of these shorter lines may also have been prefaced by a sign that has a base bar and a top bar, connected by a curved vertical stroke. This sign, appearing roughly like  $\overbrace{\quad}$ , resembles a κορωνίς, and must have served to further demarcate the pentameters.

The first part of the curse in lines 1-2 reveals a series of standard scenarios about seizing, damaging or reusing the funerary monument, though these are presented in relatively novel terms when compared to known funerary imprecations. ληΐζομαι is distinctive: it does not feature in the index of Strubbe, *Arai epitymbioi* (for a different use of this verb in a grave epigram from Lykaonia of the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> c. AD, see Thonemann 2014, 216-217 no. 12.4). Though simple theft of the stele would be the most straightforward way of interpreting ληΐζομαι, this is not the most commonly envisaged crime in funerary curses. Alternatively, the verb might mean “acquire” or “win for oneself” here, with an evidently negative connotation, i.e. “to divert” the stele from its original purpose or “to coopt” it. θραύω is fairly common in the context of curses in the Imperial period (see e.g. Strubbe, *Arai epitymbioi* 147 from Byzantion and SEG LVII 1207.7 modern Ramhiye, in the region of Lydia)—the emphatic περιθραύω much less so (compare, however, περικόπτω and περικρούω). The new compound μεταγλύψω builds on γλύψω, perhaps by analogy with μεταγράφω: it is only after recarving it, especially erasing and replacing the names of the owners of the tomb, that the stele would be able to be set up anew (ἀναθῆ) and essentially reconsecrated by its violator. The phrase εἰς ἑτέρους might be taken to refer to the purpose of this reuse, “other people”, i.e. another family which will be honoured by the monument. A. Petrovic points out that the phrase could also have implied εἰς ἑτέρους (τόπους): the stele would then be imagined to have been taken away and relocated, to be set up in a different plot.

Lines 3-4 also warrant a few comments. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Zeus is the prime agent invoked to wreak destruction on the violator and his kin. Zeus notably appears in this guise in curses in the Phrygian language (cf. SEG LVIII 1543, from Polybotos, Imperial period; 1546, from Synnada, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD), but seldom in other epigraphic curses (he appears e.g. in funerary imprecations from Pisidia, yet only as the recipient of a fine and with a toponymic epithet, for instance in Strubbe,

<sup>2</sup> I had originally considered μετὰ γλυψάς, but, after looking more carefully, the psi is actually clear on the published ph.

Arai epitymbioi 300, Apollonia, Imperial period). Zeus seems to have been one of the main gods of Miletoupolis and its surroundings (cf. I.Miletupolis 1, late 4<sup>th</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, mentioning Zeus Polieus, Zeus Olympios, and Zeus Agoraios; I.Miletupolis 5, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD; and Akyürek Şahin – Yıldız 2020, 153-154 no. 1, late Hellenistic/early Imperial). In local funerary inscriptions of the Imperial period, I.Miletupolis 47.4-5 and 69.4-5, we find the very common curse formula αὐτὸν ἐξώλη... καὶ γένος αὐτοῦ. We have here a much-abbreviated formula: ἐξώλη implying αὐτὸν and then γένος in asyndeton. This is comparable in the first instance to a funerary curse from Samos, IG XII.6 709.4-7 (1<sup>st</sup> c. AD): ὃς ἂν λυμάνηται, ἐξώλη(η) κ(α)ὶ γένος αὐ(τ)οῦ. The repetition ἐξώλης... ἐξόλλυμι is a common rhetorical emphasis in curses (compare the formulae ὡλης ἐξώλης ἀπόλοιτο or ἐξώλης πανώλης εἶην / ἔστω and the like). γένος ἐγ γένου is a further instance of this kind of pleonasm and a direct parallel appears in a funerary inscription from Thebes in Boiotia, IG VII 1345.5-6 (3rd-4th c. AD): ἀλλ' ἐγ γένους ὄλοιτο πάνρειζον γένος (compare also the formulation in SEG LVI 794.9-11, Thessalonike, 234/5 AD, though it is not clear whether this belongs to a curse). There is no need to correct γένου here into the otherwise expected γένους (cf. Gignac 1975, 208, 211-212). For curses preventing the desecrators to “see again the light of day/sun”, cf. Strubbe, Arai epitymbioi 19 / SGO 08/06/06.8 (Hadrianouthera, 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC-AD?); Strubbe, Arai epitymbioi 271 (Kuzören = Selme/Selmea in Phrygia, after 212 AD) and 275 (Turgut, 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD or later).

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### Miletoupolis'ten Yeni Bir Vezinli Mezar Laneti

#### Özet

E. Lafli ve M. E. Uyar tarafından yakın zamanda muhtemelen Miletoupolis'e ait yazıtlı bir mezar steli yayımlanmıştır (Lafli – Uyar 2021, 77-79 no. 2). Bu kısa yazı, yazıtın yayınlanan fotoğrafına göre revizyonunu ve kısa bir yorumunu sunmaktadır. Yazıt, stela saygısızlık edenlere karşı bir mezar lanetlemesi içeren bir çift elegeia beyiti olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu beddua bilinen formülleri çağrıştırmakla birlikte, yeni bir bileşik fiil de dahil olmak üzere birkaç farklı ifade de içermektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Miletoupolis; Mysia; mezar steli; mezar bedduası; vezinli beddua; Zeus.

**A New Metrical Funerary Curse from Miletoupolis****Abstract**

An inscribed funerary stele probably from Miletoupolis has been recently published by E. Laflı and M. E. Uyar (Laflı – Uyar 2021, 77-79 no. 2). This short note offers a revision of the inscription from the published photograph as well as a brief commentary. The inscription is identified as a pair of elegiac distichs containing a funerary imprecation against any desecrator of the stele. While this curse echoes known formulae, it also contains a few distinct phrasings, including one new compound verb.

*Keywords:* Miletoupolis; Mysia; funerary stele; funerary imprecation; metrical curse; Zeus.