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Author(s): Vassilis L. Aravantinos
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A NEW INSCRIBED KIONISKOS FROM THEBES

A FRAGMENTARY inscription found at Thebes casts new light on the abortive invasion of Athens in 506 by Kleomenes, the Boiotians, and the Chalkidians. On the one hand, it provides valuable confirmation, soon after the event, of the general drift of Herodotos’ account of events; on the other, even in its incomplete state, it adds one important detail lacking in Herodotos. And, of course, it tells the story from the Boiotian point of view.

THE EXCAVATION

The excavation took place in the winter of the year 2001–2 in the property of Evanghelia Madhis at Thebes following her application for the construction of a new house. The plot is situated in the suburb of Pyri, in the north-west periphery of Thebes, about 800 m from the city centre of Thebes, and just beyond the Athens–Thessaloniki railway line (FIG. 1). In it was unearthed a well-built tomb-like cist, made of three rows of large conglomerate stone blocks in regular masonry; similar blocks form its pavement.² No traces of covering stones or other relevant materials have so far been discovered. However, since the contents of the cist—including objects such as the bronze inscribed sheets found at the bottom—were probably thrown there when it was abandoned, it may never have been properly covered: no trace of a superstructure or roofing system is preserved on the upper surface of the walls of the cist.

The construction of this monumental cist dates it firmly in the sixth century BC; however, it most probably continued in use till the end of the fifth, when earth and other debris from the surrounding area were deliberately thrown into it. Much later, in medieval times, several pits were opened in the rock, one of which ran into the surface of the north wall of the cist and was stopped at that point. It is not clear if in this last period the contents of the cist were disturbed, jumbled, or plundered.

CONTENTS OF THE CIST

In the loose earth filling the interior of the cist, lying among various materials, a small column or column-drum of whitish-creamy poros stone was found (Th. M. no. 35900; FIG. 2). Parts of the top of it are damaged. In the same layer a number of complete roof tiles with palmette antefixes were collected, as well as small fragments of an Archaic statue (a small sphinx?), pieces of a marble perirrhantion, an inscribed fragment of a pithos rim, and an architectural poros stone element, probably part of a temple gable. Some badly preserved bronze phialai, an iron knife, pieces of broken pottery, and a few undefined metal, mostly

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1 I wish to thank most warmly Dr A. Schachter, Emeritus Professor, Department of History, McGill University, for reading various drafts of the article and making valuable comments. Without his help the article would never have been completed. I am also grateful to A. Mathaiou, Y. Kalliontizis, and the anonymous reader of the Annual for their useful comments and suggestions. For the excavation see A. Del. 57 (2002), Chr., in preparation. For a preliminary summary see Archaeological Reports for 2004–2005 51 (2005), 46.

² Dimensions: exterior 3.18 × 2.18 m; interior 1.82 × 0.93 m; depth 1.37 m.
Fig. 1. Topographic plan of Thebes, showing location of Archaic monument.
iron, objects were found in the earth fill. The majority of the finds—to which we may add a marble roof gutus, found recently outside but very close to the cist—suggest that there was a sacred area in the vicinity.

Very close to the bottom of the cist, in a thin layer of muddy but very hard packed earth, there came to light four bronze plaques, three of them inscribed on both sides, and a bone stylus, suitable for writing on wax tablets. These seem not to have been kept deliberately in the cist before it was filled and abandoned, but were probably not disturbed later as was the upper part of the fill.\(^3\)

The decorated roof tiles, a few of which are perfectly preserved, can be provisionally dated to the second half of the sixth century, while the bronze phialai and the pottery cover a broader time-span. Some animal bones, found in very small pieces, may have been put in the cist at the same time as the rest of the contents.

THE INSCRIBED COLUMN

It is not possible to be certain whether or not the area in which the cist was found was included within the circuit of the city walls. It would appear to have belonged to an important sanctuary active in the archaic throughout classical times. The monument of which the column drum—votive statue or votive tripod—was a part must have been erected near the spot where it was buried. However, there are no sanctuaries known in the vicinity. On the other hand, we do know that the area north of the Kadmeia—between the so-called Proitides Gates, which opened to the north-east, and the road to Akraiphia—contained the city's main

\(^3\) The bronze sheets are to be studied in collaboration with A. Mathaiou.
gymnastic/athletic complex. This included the Iolaeion—a gymnasium and stadion—and next to it a hippodrome; it was at the Iolaeion that Alexander pitched camp in 335 BC, and this was no doubt the gymnasium where Phoibidas of Sparta based his troops in 382. It must have covered a large area; its location—at the edge of the urban area and near its major necropolis—recalls that of the Akademia of Athens. Such a place would have been suitable for the erection of a monument commemorating military achievements, and the recipient of the dedication must have been a deity appropriate to an athletic/military complex. A preliminary separate presentation of the inscribed column and the pithos rim is justified by the importance of the dedicatory inscriptions they bear and the relation of the texts to each other, although they are not contemporary.

The rim, found in the north-eastern corner of the cist, belonged to a large pithos. The letters of this partially preserved inscription ΞΟΙ ΑΝΕΘΟΙ can be dated rather late in the fifth century BC.

The dimensions of the inscribed column drum are H. 57.02 cm, D. (top) 19.3, (base) 19.8. It has ten flutes, each 5.00 cm at the top, 6.01 cm at the base. The tenon attaching it at the top measured 4.02 × 4.03 cm. Letters H.: o.33 cm to 0.21 cm. Another slightly different drum may have been attached to the top of the drum by the tenon which is still partially preserved in the mortise.

Comparison with other inscribed votive columns reveals significant differences, both in content and in material. Most of the others record private rather than public or collective dedications; they are also rather larger (as can be determined from their diameters) and—where they are fluted—have more flutes.

Interestingly enough, such similarities as exist are to be found at the sanctuaries of nearby Akraipha: collective dedications of tripods to the Hero Ptoios, and, from the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoieus, a ten-fluted poros column drum 39 cm long, D. (top) 17.2 cm, (base) 16.18 cm at the base, with the flutes measuring 5.5 to 5 cm at the top, and 5.5 to 6 cm at the base.

THE INSCRIPTION

The surviving letters are disposed along the flutes as follows:

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ΟΣΦΟΙΝΟΑΣΚΑΙΦΥΛΑΣ
ΗΕΛΟΝΤΕΣΚΕΛΕΥΣΙΝΑ
ΑΙΧΑΛΚΙΔΑΛΥΣΑΜΕΝΟΙ
ΜΟΙΑΝΕΘΕΙΑΝ
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They can be transcribed thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ος Φοινόας αί Φυλάς} \\
\text{Ηελόντες κέλευνα} \\
\text{αι χάλκιδα λυσιμενοι}^{11} \\
\text{μοι ανέθειαν}
\end{align*}
\]

The lettering is careful, clear, and consistent. The Η at the beginning of l. 2 is unambiguous, while in l. 4 Μ is the only restoration possible (compare the Μ in l. 3; contemporary Boiotian gamma had a vertical upright). The text is in the Boiotian dialect,\(^{12}\) and the letter forms are consistent with a date of the late sixth to early fifth century BC.\(^{13}\)

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historical context is clear enough: the inscription refers to events described by Herodotos (v. 74–7). In 506 BC, Kleomenes of Sparta conspired with the Boiotoi and the Hippobotai of Chalkis to launch a series of attacks on Athens, with the intention of restoring Isagoras and his faction. He did this without telling his Peloponnesian allies or his fellow king Demaratos (v. 74.1). When the Peloponnnesians reached Eleusis and Kleomenes’ intentions were revealed, first the Corinthians, then Demaratos, and finally the others broke with Kleomenes and the expedition fell apart before battle was joined with the Athenians (v. 74.2–75.3). Meanwhile, the Boiotoi had taken Oinoe and Hysiai, which Herodotos calls δήμους τοὺς ἕσχατοις τῆς Ἀττικῆς, while the Chalkidians raided other regions of Attica (v. 74.2). After the collapse of Kleomenes’ invasion, the Athenians turned their attention to the Chalkidians, and set out to attack them. However, en route they encountered the Boiotoi on their way to the Euripos, and decided to deal with them first (v. 77.1). They defeated the Boiotoi, killing

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\(^{11}\) The omission of the accent is deliberate: see below.

\(^{12}\) As 1.4 ανέθειαν shows: see e.g. C. D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects* (Chicago and London 1955), 22, §9.4 and 112, §138.5.

many, and taking 700 prisoners (v.77.2). On the same day, according to Herodotus, they
crossed over to Euboia, defeated the Chalkidians, and took an undisclosed number of them
prisoner, leaving 4,000 klerouchs in the territory belonging to the Hippobotai (v.77.2). The
prisoners were subsequently ransomed for 2 minas each, and a tithe of the ransom money was
used to make a four-horse chariot, which was dedicated to Athena on the Akropolis (v.77.3–
4).14 The Athenian klerouchs left Chalkis in 490 by way of Eretria (Herodotos vi.100.1); the
Hippobotai eventually returned to Chalkis, whence they were finally evicted by Perikles in 446
(Plutarch, Perikles 23.3–4).

By and large, this inscription confirms Herodotus’ testimony. There are, however, some
interesting differences. First, Herodotus does not mention the capture of Phyle. In fact, Phyle
would, together with Oinoe, qualify as being δήμοι οἱ ἐσχάτοι τῆς Ἀττικῆς, whereas Hysiai
was not a Kleisthenic deme.15 It is very possible that Herodotus or his source conflated two
pieces of information, one about the outlying demes of Oinoe and Phyle, the other about
Hysiai. As far as Hysiai is concerned, it is probable that it was referred to in the missing part
of l. 2 (or even l. 1).

A second difference is that, according to Herodotus, the only incursion into Eleusis was by
the Peloponnesian forces; the inscription, on the contrary, seems to say that the dedicators of
the monument—probably the Boiotoi—were also somehow involved at Eleusis. Indeed, it
would be surprising if an invasion of Attica which began with Hysiai and then moved on to
Oinoe and Phyle (by way, no doubt, of the Skourta Plain) did not end up in the territory, if
not the town site itself, of Eleusis. Presumably the Boiotoi, having got as far as that, on
learning that Kleomenes and his forces had retired, themselves withdrew and returned to
Boiotia.

Finally, the inscription seems to imply that those who made the dedication were closely
involved in the ransoming of the captives, who would probably have been mentioned in the
missing part of the text. See below.

At this point, relative certainty gives way to conjecture.

**GENERAL PROBLEMS**

First there is the question of whether the text is in verse or prose. Ordinarily, one would
expect a text of this length and of this date to be in verse. But here there is no discernible
pattern (compare Φοινίκας καὶ Φυλάς with Χαλκίδα λυσαμένοι καὶ ανεβίαιν). There is also
precedent for the text—in this case the last—containing the actual dedication to be in prose

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14 Remains of the inscription commemorating this
dedication, which Herodotus quotes, have been found in
two versions: the original of c.506 and a restoration from
about the middle of the 5th c. Herodotus, followed by
Diodoros x. 24.3 among others, read the later version, in
which the first and third lines are exchanged. The original (as restored from Herodotus) read:

[δειμοί εν ἵππωντο σιδηρείδοι εἰδέσαντο ἡῳ, παῖδες οἱ θεοὶ ἔργασαν εἰμὶ πολεμόι] |
| [ἐθνεὰ Βοιωτὸν καὶ Χαλκίδαν δαμάσαντες] \|  
| στὸν ἱππὸν δέκατον Πάλλαδό ταῦτο θέουσαν].

The earlier text is *IG* iv. 501A, the later 501B. See too

Epigraphica Graeca*, i (Berlin and New York, 1983), no. 179 (with references to other sources dealing with this
incident).

15 D. Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica 508/7–ca. 250 B.C.*
(Princeton, 1986), 48 (“Dēmos” in Herodotus is virtually
always best and most appropriately translated as “village”)
and n. 39, where he cites Hysiai, among other examples.
See too G. Nenci (ed. and comm.), *Erodoto, Le Storie*, v
(Verona, 1994) 269 (and on the whole incident pp. 268–74).
while the body of the text is in verse. However, the syntax of this text—\(\text{ἡελόντες}, \text{λυσάμενοι}(?)\), \(\text{ἀνέθειαν}\)—suggests that it is one single utterance—unless, of course, there was a different finite verb in the missing portion of the text. Here, however, we must be cautious, for there is a limit to how much could have been missing.

The monument to which this drum belonged could have been the support of a votive statue or the central pillar of a votive tripod. What survives is apparently the lowest part of the column. There was at least one other drum attached to it, perhaps more, not necessarily of equal length. It is possible that the missing part of the text is at least as long as what survives.

Since it is impossible to say precisely how much of the text is missing, or whether it was in verse or prose, it would not be prudent to try to propose a detailed restoration of its content; the best we can do in the circumstances is to offer suggestions as to what it might have contained.

**Comments on the Text**

We can now look more closely at the surviving part of the text, and see what can be conjectured from it.

**General**

This is a dedication made by a group of men to commemorate their involvement in military activities. Normally one expects both the dedicator and the recipient of a dedication to be named, although the latter is not mandatory. The letters \(\text{ΜΟλατ}\) at the beginning of 1.4 could therefore be nominative plural (the dedicator) or dative singular (the divine recipient). On the possibilities, see below, ad loc.

**Line 1**

\(\text{ΙΩΣ}:\) these letters could be the end of a nominative singular noun/adjective, an accusative singular neuter noun, an accusative plural noun/adjective, or an adverb. Given the context, \(\text{δάμ]ός = δάμως = δήμους}\) seems a reasonable solution. Perhaps, therefore, something like \(\text{Θεβαίοι/Βοιστοί}\) as subject of \(\text{ἀνέθειαν}\), or \(\text{Ἀθαναίδου δάμ]ός Φοινός καὶ Φυλάζ}\).

\(\text{Φοινός, Φυλάς}\): these must be genitive singular, since Oinoe and Phyle are singular nouns.

**Line 2**

If the missing beginning of this line contained a reference to Hysai, then \(\text{ἡελόντες}\) might have governed \(\text{δάμ]ός Φοινός καὶ Φυλάς . . . [Ηυσιάς] . . . κέλευσίνα}\). On the other hand, there could have been a governing participle for each location (e.g. \(\text{λαβόντες, σινάμενοι}\)).

**Line 3**

\(\text{Αι}\): it is tempting to restore this as \(\text{κ]αί Χαλκίδα λυσάμενοι/λυσαμένοι}\). The participle could be dative singular, in which case it might have been linked to the recipient \(\text{μοι}\) in 1.4; however, it is more likely to have been a nominative plural, referring, like \(\text{ἡελόντες}\) (and possibly others) to the subject of \(\text{Ἀθαναίδου}\).

Either way, there is a problem in that \(\text{λύεσθαι—to ransom or redeem—normally refers to people rather than places. One apparent parallel—Demosthenes 50.28 ἱνα λύσωνται μοι τὸ χωρίον—is used in a completely different context. A possible solution might be something}\)
along the lines of ἐν Εὔβοιαν δὲ διαφάντες καὶ Χαλκίδα λυσάμενοι | δὲ φίλος vel sim. (that is, some expression referring to the Chalkidians and/or Boiotians taken prisoner by the Athenians and held for ransom).

**Line 4**

[Δ]ΜΟI: if this is the end of a word in the nominative plural, δᾶμοι or the poetic πρό]μοι would be possible. If it is dative singular, there are numerous possibilities, of which the following are but a sample:

(i) Κάδ]μοι (Κάδμοι): this would be the first incontrovertible example of Kadmos as a recipient of cult;
(ii) τοὶ δᾶμοι, presumably of the Thebans;
(iii) Εὐδόνυ]μοι, a Boiotian hero;
(iv) Εὐφά]μοι: Euphamos was an Argonaut connected with the foundation of Cyrene (Pindar, *Pythian* 4, passim); a Euphemos—perhaps the same, perhaps not—appears in a Hesiodic fragment as son of Poseidon and Mekionike of Hyrie in Boiotia;¹⁶ according to the Pindaric scholia, Euphemos married Laonome, daughter of Amphitryon and Alkmene, and half-sister of Herakles;¹⁷
(v) Ἐχεδά]μοι: Echedamos was, according to Dikaiarchos (fr. 66 Wehrli = Plutarch, *Theseus* 32) the Arkadian eponym of the Echedemia, i.e. the Akademeia, at Athens; a Theban Echedamos might have been associated with a gymnasion too.
(vi) One could even suggest an unnamed hero, e.g. τοὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δρόμοι.

None of these, however, can be taken as more than speculative.

Of equal interest are the questions of what purpose the monument was meant to serve, and how this fragment of it found its way into the stone chest where it lay untouched and unread for about 2,500 years. One wonders why the Thebans—or more likely the Boiotoi—felt able to celebrate what must have been a humiliating and expensive defeat, instead of simply letting the matter lie. It is unlikely to have been a riposte to the monument set up in Athens (would they even have known about it?). But perhaps they were simply putting the best face on the event that they could. It should be noted also, that, although the tone of the dedication is strident, the monument itself might have been relatively modest.

As for how this column drum came to be buried at the end of the fifth century, it seems most likely that there was a general clearing-up of the area at that time, when obsolete material was collected and buried. The monument itself might have been destroyed as early as the siege of Thebes which followed the battle of Plataia, which might explain why only part of it has survived (Herodotos ix. 86). It should also be noted that, at the very end of the fifth century BC, when the drum was buried, it was no longer fashionable in Thebes to be openly anti-Athenian.¹⁸

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| η ὑπ Υρηνι πωκνόφρων Μηκιωνικη, |
| η τεκεν Εὐφήμον γοιηχι Εὐνοσισιωι |
| μικητι εν φιλοτητι πολυχρυσοι Ἀφροδίτης. |


¹⁸ For the political situation at Thebes just after the end of the Peloponnesian War, see P. Cloché, *Thèbes de Béotie* (Namur, 1952), 96–9.
Altogether, therefore, the column fragment and the text which it contains not only elucidate an episode in the history of Athens and Boiotia, they also raise new problems for scholars to try to solve.

Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Thebes

Vassilis L. Aravantinos