

ANASTASIA AGGELOPOULOU – SOPHIA KRAVARITOU

A Hellenistic dedication of naval crews from Tenos*

In 2014, the private Collection of Antiquities owned by the late Charalampos Kritikos, sculptor and former Director of the Preparatory School of Fine Arts of Tenos, passed by testament into the possession of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades, and was eventually transported from the House of Kritikos to the Archaeological Museum of Tenos. The Kritikos' collection contains 161 terracotta, stone, metallic and glass objects of local origin dating from the 8th cent. BC to Late Antiquity.¹ The inscribed monuments include a block of Rhodian lartios stone (inv. no A542), which belonged to a votive monument that was originally erected in the sanctuary of Poseidon and Amphitrite at Kionia, on Tenos island.² In October 2014, we inspected the stone, and took photos and squeezes, which made it possible to produce a new text. Parts of the lower left and right vertical sides of the squared stone are missing, and the edges of all sides have been heavily worn. The top and bottom sides were carefully worked with a flat chisel, while all vertical surfaces including the inscribed one were polished. Figs. 1-2.

Height: 0.23 m. Width: 0.25 m. Letter height: 0,010-0,012 m.

Interlinear space: 0.050 m.

2nd century BC (before 167)

[‘Ο] ναύαρχος Μητρᾶς [-3-4]-
[.]οδήμου καὶ οἱ στρατευσά-
[μ]ενοι ἐν ταῖς ἡμιολίαις Χάρ[ι]-
[τι], Νίκη, Βρομιάδι, Στρατ[η]γίαι,
5 [Ἀ]θηναῖ, καὶ μνηθέντες ἐν τῆ[ι]
[Σα]μοθράκη καὶ Λήμνωι καὶ Ἐ-
[λευ]σίνοι, Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Ἄ-
[μφι]τρίτηι χαριστήριον.

vacat

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1. A first overview of the Collection's objects, in Aggelopoulou, Kravaritou forthcoming.

2. Sotirios G. Raptopoulos in the revised edition of his PhD published a preliminary text of the inscription, with photo and a sketch of the inscribed face of the stone, dating it to the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 2nd cent. BC.; see Raptopoulos 2014, 141-142, fig. 8, and 145.

Restored by Kravaritou. 1 ναύαρχος: lower slanting strokes of an A are preserved before Y; of the presiding N only the vertical is preserved.

Translation

“The nauarch Metras, son of [-]odemos, and those who have served during wartime at the *hemioliai* named Char[is], Nike, Bromias, Strat[e]gia and Athena, and who have been initiated in Samothrace, Lemnos and Eleusis, (dedicated) to Poseidon and Amphitrite, as token of gratitude.”

Commentary

1 [‘Ο] ναύαρχος Μητρᾶς [-.]οδήμου. For other nauarchs in Tenos, see a mutilated inscription in Dumoulin 1902, 436, 32.2: [να]ΥΑΡΧ[ος] (undated); also, a nauarch leading a private group of men, in *IG XII 5*, 912.2-4: ἐπὶ ναυάρχου | Ἀπολλωνίδου τοῦ | ἀγγέλου Πρωτίωνος (List of members of a private group, Imperial era).

The nauarch is otherwise unattested. The personal name Μητρᾶς is a *hapax* for Tenos, and it is known twice in Delos in the 3rd and 1st cent. BC and once in Lemnos in the 1st cent. AD; it is also known in Attica, Thebes of Boiotia, Demetrias, Myrina and Temnos of Aiolis in Hellenistic and Roman times, but particularly in Ionia and Lydia from the 4th cent. BC to Roman times.³

1/2 Many restorations of the patronymic are possible, e.g. Κριτόδημος, Πειθόδημος, etc. The absence of ethnic implies that the nauarch was a local citizen.

2-3 καὶ οἱ στρατευσά[μ]ενοι ἐν ταῖς ἡμιολίαις: navy crews having served during wartime (στρατευσάμενοι) in ἡμιολία ships. Two Hellenistic dedications of Rhodian navy crews and ship commanders are known from Tenos, *IG XII 5*, 914: [‘Ρόδιοι] | οἱ στ[ρατευσάμενοι] | μετὰ ἄρχο[ντος - -] | Δεινοκλεῦς τοῦ Φιλίππου] | καὶ τριηράρχ[ου] | Τιμοξένου τοῦ [- - -] | Σαράπι Ἴσ[ι] (2nd cent. BC); *IG XII Suppl.* 317.1-4: ‘Ροδίων οἱ στρατευσάμενοι | μετὰ ἄρχοντος τῶν ἀφράκτων | Τιμακράτεος Δαμοκράτεος | καὶ τριηράρχων. ... (l. 9) ... καὶ ἀγεμόνος τῶν ἡμιολιᾶν ... (l. 16) Διοσκόροις καὶ Ἐλένοι (2nd/1st cent. BC). Similar dedications of naval crews and officers are known in other Aegean islands, e.g., at Rhodes, *IG XII 1*, 701.5 mentions Aristokrates [στρατευ]σαμένου ἐν τοῖς ἀφράκτοις, a navy officer in undecked ships (Dedication to Hestia and Zeus Teleios; Kamiros, 1st cent. BC?); also, *Lindos II*, 707.4-5 for Pausanias στρατευσάμενον ἐν τε τοῖς ἀφράκτοις καὶ | [τ]αῖς καταφράκτοις ναυσί (Rhodes, 40-30 BC). In Paros, *SEG 33*, 684.1-2: οἱ στρατευσάμενοι ἐν τῷ δ[ι]κρότῳ (Dedication to Demeter Paria; Roman Imperial period), on crews in warships with two rows of oarsmen. At Nisyros, in *IG XII 3*, 103.11-12: [στ]ρατευσαμένου κατὰ πόλεμον | [ἐπὶ] ναυάρχων... (Dedication to Poseidon Argeios and Ares; after 153 BC).⁴

3. *LGPV II*, 45510-45513 (Attica); V3b-14458 (Demetrias), 30467 (Thebes); VI, 43625 (Lemnos), 80530 (Delos); V5a, 37132 (Myrina), 39286 (Temnos).

4. Cf. the variant συνστρατευσάμενοι commonly employed in Rhodian honorific inscriptions, e.g. in *IG XII 1*, 75b.6-7, Pugliese Carratelli 1939-1940, 153, 13, 4 (Rhodes, 1st cent. AD), *IG XII 4.5*, 4022.17-8 (Kalymnos, Sanctuary of Apollo, after 203 BC), *IG XII 4.2*, 1025.4 (Kos, 2nd cent. BC), *IDelos* 1855.3-5, *IDelos* 1857.1-2 (both c. 69 BC), *IG XII 4.2*, 567.1-3: Μιλησίων οἱ | στρατευσάμενοι | ἐν τοῖς ἀφράκτοις from Kos (Dedication to Apollo Didymeus, c. 150-50 BC).

ήμιολία: ήμιολία, type of undecked (ἄφρακτος) light warship.⁵ From ήμιόλιος – ‘one and a half’, the term describes a ship with ‘one-and-a-half’ banks of oars aside at two levels.⁶ On this type of vessel being traditionally ascribed to the pirates, see for example Arrian’s testimony on ήμιολίας ληστροκαῖς.⁷ However, it is largely known that from the second half of the 4th cent. BC ήμιολία also appeared in non-pirate contexts; naval powers, such as Athens, Rhodes, Alexander the Great and the Successors, and many others also possessed them, as they frequently augmented their fleets by recruiting the ships and seamanship skills of the pirates;⁸ e.g. Astypalaia, in *IG XII 3*, 201.3: ἄρχοντος τᾶν ήμιολιᾶν (dedication of the Astypalaians to the Gods; 2nd cent. BC) mentioning local navy commander Pytheas.

3-5 Χάρ[ιτι], | Νίκη, Βρομιάδι, Στρατ[η]γία, | [Α]θηναῖ: the names of five ήμιολία ships, in which the navy crews in question served.

Χάρις (‘Grace’) is registered as ship-name rather early, in the 4th-century BC *Naval Inventories of Athens* (*IG II² 1604-1632*);⁹ see e.g. *IG II² 1629*, 896: τριήρης Χάρις (325/4 BC).¹⁰

Νίκη (‘Victory’) is a frequently attested Hellenistic ship name - e.g. *IG II² 1611.81-82* (357/6 BC): Νίκην.¹¹ As regards Tenos, a late Hellenistic-early Roman *graffito* mentioning Νίκη was incised next to the image of a ship, at the Karika quarry.¹²

Βρομιάς (‘Noisy’) is an otherwise unattested name for a ship. Βρομιάς, Βρομία and the masculines Βρόμιος and Βρόμις are well-known Late Classical and Hellenistic anthroponyms.¹³ Βρόμιος also forms a literary and cultic epithet of Dionysos, and thus Βρομιάς in l. 4 might relate to the divine epithet and allude to the initiation of the crews in question to the Eleusinian mysteries, as attested to in ll. 5-7.¹⁴ A local cult and mysteries of Dionysos Bromios is evidenced in Tenos, in the funerary epigram of the Imperial era set up by a local group of Dionysiac initiates: *IG XII 5*, 972.1-3: θυσσάδος ἀγροτέρου Βρομ[ίου θέσαν εἰκόνα μύσται] | ἐν τελεταῖσιν Ἄγηνορίδ[ων - -] | μεσσατίων Βάχχοιό τ[ε καὶ Δημήτερος ἀγνής] (Tenos, 2nd cent AD).

Στρατηγία is otherwise unattested as a ship name; on the variant Στρατηγίς which was attributed to 4th cent. BC Athenian triremes, see e.g. *IG II² 1613.210*: [τριή]ρης Στρατηγίς (353/2 BC); *IG II² 1629.479-481*: τριήρους, ἧς ὠμολόγησεν καινήν ἀποδώσειν, ἧ ὄνομα Στρατηγίς (325/324 BC).¹⁵ Στρατηγίς and ναῦς στρατηγίς indicated the flagship of Greeks fleets, used by kings, nauarchs

5. Casson 1958, 14-18; Morrison 1980, 121-126.

6. Liddell-Scott, sv. ήμιόλιος· περιέχων τὸ ὄλον καὶ τὸ ήμισυ αὐτοῦ. Diod. Sic. 19.65: ναῦς ήμιολίας. Morrison 1980, fig. 1.

7. Ἄρρ. Ἀνάβ. 3.2.4: ἐσπλεύσαντα ἐς τὸν λιμένα τῆς Χίου ζὺν ήμιολίας ληστροκαῖς πέντε. Cf. Casson 1958, 15. Morrison 1980, 122.

8. Casson 1958, 16-17; Morrison 1980, 121-122; Gabrielsen 2001, 230-233.

9. Apeitos 2025, 177-199 with earlier bibliography.

10. Cf. Casson 2014, 351.

11. Casson 2014, 352. Apeitos 2025, 191-192, 195.

12. Aggelopoulou, Kravaritou, in preparation.

13. Özenir, Riel 2023, 105-106.

14. Διοδ. Σικ. 4.5: βακχεῖον μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν συνεπομένων βακχῶν ὀνομάσαι, ... Βρόμιον δ’ ἀπὸ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτοῦ γενομένου βρόμου. Δίων. Χρυσ. Ὀλ. 27.

15. Casson 2014, 354. Apeitos 2025, 192.

and other high-rank navy officers.¹⁶ Thus, Στρατηγία in l. 4 implies that this was the flagship used by nauarch Metras to command the squadron of the five *hemioliai* vessels.

Finally, the theophoric Ἀθηνᾶι is evidenced as ship name in the 1st cent BC, in Miletos, Smyrna and Rhodes.¹⁷

5-7 καὶ μνηθέντες ἐν τῆ[ι | Σα]μοθράκη καὶ Λήμνῳ καὶ Ἐ[λε]υσίνι: the past participle μνηθέντες, from μνοῦμαι, is widely used – along with μύσται – in epigraphic documents to describe initiated individuals in mystery cults.¹⁸ Thus, μνηθέντες in l. 5, followed by the prepositional phrase ἐν τῆ[ι | Σα]μοθράκη καὶ Λήμνῳ καὶ Ἐ[λε]υσίνι which denotes multiple locations of initiation, indicates that the naval crews in question had been initiated to three prestigious mystery cults of the Greek world –namely those of Samothrace, Lemnos and Eleusis.¹⁹ The Samothracian records of initiates in the local mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman period attest inter alia to the presence of initiated naval crews from Rhodes, Knidos, Kizykos²⁰ and elsewhere; e.g. Knidian initiated (μνηθέντες) navy crewmembers (συμπλεύσαντες) and their commanding officers (ναύαρχος and τριήραρχοι), in *SEG* 29, 799.1-14: Κνιδίων | μύσται καὶ ὑπόπται | εὐσεβεῖς | ναύαρχος Εὐβουλος | Ἀρχιπόλιος | τριήραρχοι Ἀγάθινος Εὐβ[ούλου] | Ἴππόδαμος Ἀναξάνδριδ[ος] | καὶ ἐπίπλοι τριήραρχοι Κλεῦ[- -] | Νικασιβούλου Σωσθένης Θεῦ[- -] | γραμματεὺς Ἀσκληπιάδη[ς] | Διοκλέης | καὶ τοῖ συμπλεύσαντες | καὶ μνηθέντες | καὶ ὑποτεύσαντες (2nd cent. BC?).

As regards to supplementary evidence for corporate activity of naval crews from local contexts, Rhodian συνστρατευσάμενοι that had undergone the initiation and had eventually become fellow initiates (συνμύσται) were members of a local *koinon* named after the mystery cults of the Samothracian Gods, in Pugliese Carratelli 1939-1940, 153, 13.2-5: [τὸ κοινὸν] τὸ Σαμοθρα[ι]κιστᾶν | [Νικο?]τρατείων συνμυστᾶν | [συνστρα]τευσασμένων ὑπὸ τριήραρχον | [- -]ωνα Φ[ίλ]ωνος (1st cent. AD). Another Rhodian κοινόν of συνστρατευσάμενοι named after the mystery cults of the Samothracian Gods and those of Lemnos, but without reference to initiation, in *IG* XII 1, 43.7-21: ... καὶ εὐνοίας καὶ φιλοδοξίας | ἄν ἔχων διατελεῖ εἰς τὸ Σαμοθρακιστᾶν | καὶ Λημνιαστᾶν τῶν συνστρατευσασμένων | κοινόν· καὶ πρωρατεύσαντα τριηρέων | καὶ ἄρξαντα ἀφράκτων... (Honorific decree and dedication to the Gods; Rhodes, 100-50 BC).²¹ Moreover, κοινά of Σαμοθρα(ι)κιστᾶι are also recorded in the North-Eastern Aegean, but without any reference

16. Ἡροδ. 8.92.2: ὡς δὲ ἔσειδε τὴν νέα τὴν Ἀττικὴν ὁ Πολύκριτος, ἔγνω τὸ σημήιον ἰδὼν τῆς στρατηγίδος. Θουκ. 2.84.3: καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι προσπεσόντες πρῶτον μὲν καταδύουσι τῶν στρατηγίδων νεῶν μίαν. Casson 2014, 354. Apeitos 2025, 192.

17. Casson 2014, 354-355.

18. E.g. Δίων. Χρυσ. Ὀλ. 12, 33-34. Cf. Graf 2003, 3-24, esp. 4, 9. Clinton 2003, 50-52. 2021, 18, 36.

19. Clinton 2003; 2021 (Samothrace and Eleusis). Cole 1984; Blakely (Samothrace). Varro, *On the Latin Language*, 7.11; Φίλοστρ., *Ἡρ.* Beschi 2004 (Lemnos).

20. Dimitrova 2008, 137-144, no 57-58, fig. 45-46 (Cizykos, Rhodes); 145-147, no 61, fig. 48 (Knidos).

21. Gabrielsen 2013, 69-75; Zachhuber 2024, 350-355 (Rhodian *koina* of *Samothraikiastai*). For the presence of the Rhodians in the Late Hellenistic mystery cults of Samothrace and Lemnos, see also *IG* XII 1, 701.13-14: ἀποσταλέντος ἱεροποιοῦ εἰς | [Σαμοθράικαν? καὶ εἰς] Λήμνον καὶ Διδυμεῖον (Honorific decree for Aristokrates; Kamiros, 1st cent. BC) and Accame 1941-1943, 101, 19.8-9: ἐν Λήμνῳ τοῖς θεοῖς τ[οῖς] | [- - -]ε καὶ τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ῥοδίων (Fragmentary honorific decree from Kabeirion of Lemnos; late 2nd cent. BC).

to crewmembers and/or initiation.²² Since Rhodes and many other Aegean cities on the islands and Asia Minor hosted local cults of the Great Gods of Samothrace, the possibility that those *koïna* were just centered around the local cult of the Great Gods of Samothrace and consisted of non-initiated members is always open;²³ possible sailing interests of the members could explain the choice of the name since the Great gods of Samothrace were protectors of sailors from shipwreck, and securing prosperous voyages.²⁴

The dedication does not mention the term *koïnon* and/or does not imply other dense corporate activity of the navy crews in question. The text proudly declares their initiation to three of the most prominent mysteries of the Greek world. For the initiation of individuals into more than one mystery cults as major act of piety and social pride, see e.g. the funerary epigram for the Athenian Isidoros, an initiate in the mysteries of both Samothrace and Eleusis who ‘was loved by his friends, a just man, truthful to all, with reverent renown for the virtue in his soul. As an initiate, great-hearted, he saw the doubly sacred light of Kabiros in Samothrace, and the pure rites of Eleusinian Demeter’ (transl. Clinton 2021, 19) in *SEG* 55, 723.10-16: ἦν δὲ φίλοις ἐρατός, δίκαιος, πρὸς πάντας ἀληθής, | εὐσεβὲς ἐν ψυχῇ κῦδος ἔχ[ων] | ἀρετῆς· μύστης μὲν Σαμόθραξι ὕ Καβίρου διχ’ ἱερὸν φῶς, | ἀγνὰ δ’ Ἐλευσίνος Δηοῦς μεγάλυ[μο]ς ἴδεν (Amphipolis. 2nd/1st cent. BC).

7-8 Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Ἀ[μφι]τρίτηι χαριστήριον: the text indicates that this inscribed votive monument has been dedicated to the prominent sanctuary of Poseidon and Amphitrite at Kionia of Tenos, as a token of gratitude (χαριστήριον);²⁵ the act of dedication might have taken place after a naval victory of the naval squadron in question. Our block is made of Rhodian lartios stone, which was extensively used for monuments of different scale on Rhodes – e.g. statue bases, funerary altars, naval monuments – and abroad, in Rhodian-influenced islands such as Nisyros and Karpathos.²⁶ Lartios stone is particularly known for its use for the bases of prominent naval monuments dedicated to Aegean sanctuaries following victories in naval warfare – e.g. the inscribed votive prow from Lindos to Athena Lindia by Rhodian navy crews and their officers after a victory, and the base in the shape of a ship’s prow, which supported the famous Nike of Samothrace.²⁷ Our stone has good reasons to have originally belonged to a naval monument too; besides the use of lartios, its shape easily fits those used in the construction of the bases of such monuments, and it was dedicated by naval crews.

Chronology

Paleography, in particular the combination of broken-barred *alphas* with *sigmas* and *mus* with outer hastae running straight, and *omicrons* and *thetas* being the same height as the other letters, point to a date within

22. *IG* XII 3, 6.1-2: [τ]ὸ κοινὸν Σαμοθρακι[α]στᾶν Ἀ[φ]ρο[δισιασ][τ]ᾶν (Syme, late 1st cent. BC); *IG* XII 2, 507.5: τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Σαμοθρακικαστ[ῶν] (Methymna, late Hellenistic); *SEG* 4, 168.7-8: Ἡροειστᾶν Σαμ[ο]θρακικαστᾶν (Aulai in Aiolis; 1st cent. BC/1st cent. AD); *I.Tenos* 242 (172-150 BC); cf. Constantakopoulou 2012, 315-316.

23. Cole 1984, 57-86; cf. van der Linde 2013, 86-87; Lala 2015, 209-210; Rabadjiev 2017, 11-25. Zachhuber 2024, 352-353.

24. van der Linde 2013, 82-84; Blakely 2016, 17-28; 2018, 114-115. Clinton 2021, 21-23.

25. Étienne, Kourou, Semantoni-Bournia 2013, 136-159.

26. Papavasileiou 2004, 129-136. Philemonos-Tsopotou 2013, 265-286.

27. *I.Lindos* 88; Blinkenberg 1938 (Lindos). Maniatis, Tambakopoulos, Dotsika, Wescoat, Matsas 2012, 270-271, fig. 8a, tabl. 3 (Nike).

the 2nd cent BC. This conforms with the presence of small serifs (*akremones*) at the end of the strokes, a feature that develops in the Cycladic texts from the late third century.²⁸ The first half of the century coincides with the period of Rhodian control in the Cyclades, the creation of the Second League of Islanders, and the period that Tenos became the League's headquarters and naval base, and the seat of the Rhodian fleet.²⁹ It is during this period that, besides the sanctuary of Apollo at Delos, the League's documents were also published in the sanctuary of Poseidon and Amphitrite at Kionia.³⁰ The material of the stone also points to a Rhodes-influenced monument, at the time the Rhodians were present on the island.

Concluding remarks

Our inscription was in every probability not inscribed on a Rhodian monument. The presence of navy crews, initiation to Samothrace, Lemnos and also Eleusis, paleography and historical context, Rhodian lartios stone and at the same time absence of the Rhodian dialect, denotes that the inscription is not a Rhodian dedication. The nauarch Metras, son of [-]odemus, of the text might be one of the high-rank official officers of the Second Nesiotic League originated from member states other than Rhodes; the absence of ethnic implies that he was a citizen of Tenos.

Honorific monuments for federal navy officers of Tenian origin were set up in the sanctuary of Poseidon and Amphitrite at Tenos; e.g. that for Chrysogonos, a *trierarch* of the League, in *IG XII 5*, 918: Εὐαντίδ[η]ς Ἀριστογένου καὶ | Ναύσιον Χρυσογόνου | τὸν αὐτῶν ὑὸν Χρυσόγονον | τριηραρχήσαντα τῶν Νησιωτῶν | Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Ἀμφιτρίτει. If this hypothesis is correct, then our text should be a collective dedication of a nauarch and the crews serving a squadron of *hemioliai* of the federal fleet, to the Tenian sanctuary of Poseidon and Amphitrite, where also federal decrees of the Islanders were published, at the headquarter of the League.

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28. Gabrielsen 2017, 16.

29. Étienne, Kourou, Semantoni-Bournia 2013, 54. Buraselis 2015, 363-366.

30. Étienne, Kourou, Semantoni-Bournia 2013, 137; Buraselis 2013, 176; 2015, 364.

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A Hellenistic dedication of naval crews from Tenos



Fig. 1. The inscription
(Photo: Archives of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 2. The upper side of the stone
(Photo: Archives of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)