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‘Neither in contests (...) nor under arms’ An unknown inscription on Zakynthos

During the 2017 study season of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project¹ an attempt was made to locate a stele with an unclear inscription (*IG IX 1², 4, 1745*) in the fields of *Μαυρογένεια* (Mavrogenia).² Unfortunately, this mission was unsuccessful.

However, the search reminded V. Sarris (of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Zakynthos) of another inscribed stone, that was recently recorded in the village of *Άλικανός* (*Alikanas*), some 5,5 kilometers north of *Σκουλικάδο* (*Skoulikado*). This stele is currently incorporated into the wall above the main entrance of a little church devoted to Saint Nikolas, which was built after the devastating earthquake that hit the Ionian islands in 1953. The charming, blue interior is filled with adornments and painted panels of prophets and saints, which probably belonged to one or more ruined churches nearby. No further ancient *spolia* are visible.

The inscribed stele (?) of presumably limestone³ is more or less rectangular in shape and broken on all sides, except possibly the left one. Figs. 1-3.

Height 0.18 m. (left side) - 0.20 m. (right side); width 0.175 m. (top) - 0.22 m. (bottom).

Height of letters 0.011-0.032 m. (the *omega* of line 3 is quite flat; *upsilon* and *phi* are the tallest). The interlinear space varies from 0.02 to 0.016 m.

It is impossible to ascertain the exact outline of the original stone. Some pieces of mortar can be observed along the ragged edges (especially on the left side). Additionally, mortar applied on top of the inscription in some cases completely obscures the reading of the letters. The stone has no further decorations, nor traces of colour.⁴

The inscription on the basis of letterforms could be dated to the second half of the 5th century BC. The archaic form of *chi* (+) must be underlined, but this alone cannot push back the date of the inscription. On the other hand, one should also stress the peculiar form of omega, which is an indication for a lower date.

1. The Zakynthos Archaeology Project is directed by Dr. G.J.M. van Wijngaarden, University of Amsterdam and Ch. Merkouri (until 2018) of the EAZ. For a description of the project in general and preliminary reports on the various campaigns, see Van Wijngaarden (et al.) 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2015. For a complete list of publications, see the project's website at: www.uva.nl/archaeology-zakynthos.

2. Wijngaarden (et al.) 2019 (in press).

3. Samples for scientific analysis could not be taken from the block. We do know that marble does not occur naturally on Zakynthos, see also: Geological Map of Greece, Institute of Geology and Mineral Exploration: Zakynthos Island, 1980.

4. The squeezes and photos are kept in the archive of *Inscriptiones Graecae* in Berlin.

It is unclear how many lines are missing; however, the words or partial words on the left seem to mark the beginning of each line.

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | οὐκ ὀλίγο[ν - - - - -] | Not small [- - -] |
| | ἀρετῆς ἵπ[πο- - - - -] | Virtue Hippo[- - -] |
| | οὔτε ἐν ἀγῶ[σι - - - -] | Neither in contests [- - -] |
| | οὔτε ἐν ὀπλοί[ς - - - -] | Nor under arms [- - -] |
| 5 | κεῖμαι ἐγὼ ΕΥΝ[- - - - -] | I am buried [- - -] |
| | [ἀ]μενφῆς δὲ χρόν[ος - - -] | Blameless, whom time [- - -] |
| | [.]ν ἀνθ' ὧν μοι γ[- - - -] | In return for these [- - -] for me |
| | [-]υ[- - -]ν ἵπποσ[- - -] | [.]u[.]n Hippos[...] |

L. 6: + = X

Commentary

1 οὐκ· the letter before the *upsilon* is just visible and most likely an *omicron*.

ὀλίγο[ν]: the letter before the *lambda* is barely preserved (due to mortar) and may be an *omicron*, the last visible letter appears to be a *gamma* (it looks like the smaller gamma in line 3), then another unclear *omicron*. Though the inscription's right edge is broken, the next letter may be a *nu* (this is most common), or also a *sigma* or an *upsilon*. (Line 1 is badly preserved; another option: if *pi* instead of *gamma*, and an *epsilon* before the *lambda*. In that case the transcription would be οὐκ ἔλιπο[ν]).

2 ἀρετῆς· the word refers to an excellent quality of a person, or it can also be a (female) personal name in the genitive, although this is not common. In other inscriptions the virtue ἀρετή is often combined with ἔνεκα, ἔνεκεν (which takes the genitive), but in this case the first letter after ἀρετῆς is certainly not the *epsilon*.

ἵπ[- -]· at first sight, the first two letters seem to be 'glued together'. The right vertical stroke of the second letter seems to be slightly shorter than the left, like the *pi* in line 4. The letter before the *pi* is most probably an *iota*. We might restore ἵπ[πο- -]·, cf. line 8. Since this stone is most likely a stele this may be the proper name of the deceased man. The most common would be ἵππόστρατος (a name that would also fit the metre – in case of a hexameter). He was named after his grandfather (line 8) who commissioned the memorial. (Another option: the fragmentary word combined with ἀρετή and the words οὔτε ἐν ἀγῶ[σι] and οὔτε ἐν ὀπλοί[ς] is an indication that it could be restored as ἵπποσ[ύνη]⁵).

3 οὔτε· the third and fourth letter are slightly damaged but identifiable: the left part of a horizontal stroke and a trace of a vertical bar underneath might belong to a *tau*, followed by an upper and middle horizontal bar of an *epsilon*.

ἐν· next to the clear *epsilon* we see the left vertical stroke and connecting diagonal of the *nu*.

ἀγῶ[σι]· the first letter is not fully visible, due to mortar, but consists of two diagonals. Although a middle bar is not visible (mortar), it is probably an *alpha*, given that it is followed by a *gamma* and *omega*.

5. A suggestion by Dr. Georgia E. Malouchou; cf. *Anth. Gr.* 7, 254 (Simon.), also *IvO* 170.6.

4 οὐτῆ· the letter before the *upsilon* is partly preserved and is probably an *omicron*. The two letters after the *upsilon* are partly legible (due to mortar), but the comparison to line 3 helps to identify the unclear letters as a *tau* and an *epsilon*.

Both lines 3 and 4 begin with οὐτῆ ἐν and a dative; as ὄπλοις is plural, we also suggest ἀγῶ[σι].

5 κεῖμαι· the first letter (straight underneath the first *omicron* of line 4) is partly broken and covered by mortar, but may well be *kappa* – the photo shows a tip of the lower diagonal that hints that it is a *kappa*, although this may also be a break in the stone. Κεῖμαι and ἀρετή also appear together in one Attic verse inscription, a funerary epigram, from the middle of the 4th century BC.⁶

ΕΥΝ[- -]· after the *upsilon* comes a left vertical and a connecting diagonal, probably forming a *nu*. The letters follow just after the verb and the personal pronoun: a strong indication that they belong to a personal name⁷ like Εὐνους, Εὐνικός or Εὐνομος, (the most popular names in *LGPN*). Although we do not exclude the adjective εὖν[ους]; at least, it is a fine quality like ἀρετή in line 2, and with κεῖμαι ἐγὼ a nominative is expected.

6 [ἀ]μενφής· the first letter (underneath the first *omicron* of line 4 and *kappa* of line 5) is entirely lost, but may well be the *alpha* – space for one letter is available here. This nominative is, with κεῖμαι ἐγὼ (and εὐνους), an option.

ὄν· is plainly visible and could be a relative pronoun.

χρόν[ος]· when ὄν is accusative, this word may be nominative.

7 before *alpha* we see a vertical bar and part of a diagonal of a *nu* (?) – space for one letter is available here. Another, but problematic option is that this letter belongs to the previous line.

ἀνθ' ὧν· or could it be the last part of a male personal name (nominative), for example [Ξ]άνθων?

γ[- -]· at the end of the line a left vertical and upper horizontal bar of a *gamma* is recognizable, or maybe a *pi*, although the right vertical stroke does not seem to be visible. However, not enough remains – the stone's right edge is broken – for a plausible reconstruction. Nevertheless, a speculative suggestion is, in case of a *gamma*: γενεά; or, in case of a *pi*: πατήρ?

8 [-]υ[- -]ν ἱπποσ[- -]· the left and right side and part of the bottom side of the stone are broken and most of the letters are chipped off. After the *omicron*, there may be a hint of the upper bar of a *sigma*. In front of the two *pi*'s, we see traces of an *upsilon*, then space available for two letters, followed by an unclear *nu* and *iota*. This could well refer to the personal name Ἱππόστρατος, the grandfather of the deceased (see line 2).

Notes

The words κεῖμαι ἐγὼ of the inscription immediately attract attention as referring to a funerary context, especially in combination with qualities like ἀρετή and possibly ἀμενφής and εὐνους.⁸ The word ἐνθάδε, which often accompanies κεῖται or κεῖμαι, is not found on the fragment – although it could have been written in the missing part of the inscription. Within the extant of the corpus of funerary

6. See *IG* II² 12778: [οὔνομα Τηλεφάνης] ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα ἐνθάδε | κεῖμαι Τηλεφάνη[ς - -]; Peek 1955, no. 329: [πλεῖστον ἔπαινον ἔχων] ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα ἐνθάδε κεῖμαι. | Τηλεφάνη[ς - -].

7. Cf. *IG* II² 5768.7 and 12701.2-4.

8. Peek 1955, 83: ‘Τυγus: ἐνθάδε κείται (κεῖμαι) ὁ δεῖνα.’

inscriptions, we do not find parallels for the combination ἀγών and ὄπλον in such proximity to each other.⁹ However, this does not preclude an interpretation as a part of a funeral inscription.

Another interesting point is that οὐκ ὀλίγο[ν] and οὐτε ἐν ἀγῶ[σι - -] | οὐτε ἐν ὀπλοῖ[ς - -] give a sense of rhythm to this fragmentary text (hexameter/pentameter, two distichs?), but the metre cannot be determined with certainty.

The epigraphic dossier of Zakynthos is not very helpful for the interpretation of the inscription from *Alikanas*: it consists of a small and varied set of inscriptions on marble and other types of stone.¹⁰ A local script or dialect is hard to determine on the basis of such a small corpus (although Doric is generally accepted). Moreover, it is not always clear whether these inscriptions originally come from Zakynthos. A set of inscribed gravestones, for example, known as the Ρώμας (Romas) collection, initially came from the Cycladic island of Delos.¹¹ Another complicating factor is that during the 19th century Zakynthos was used as a transit island for the trade of Greek archaeological objects.¹² Therefore, the provenance of the Zakynthian inscriptions in IG and the recently discovered stone in *Alikanas* cannot be determined with certainty. It is not from Delos, since these gravestones go back to the 2nd and 1st century BC, and our stone is much older. Maybe the stone is epichoric, due to the presence of + = χ. However, one may expect the Doric dialect for Zakynthos, while the inscription is clearly Ionic.¹³

Conversations with local inhabitants at *Alikanas* suggest that, in the early 20th century, the little church devoted to Saint Nikolas was part of a bigger monastery, which was associated to the monastery of Ἀναφωνήτρια (*Anafonitria*), towards the northwest of Zakynthos, and devoted to the patron saint of the island, Dionysios (1547-1622/24). On occasion, he stayed at the monastery in *Alikanas* – his bed, gowns and censer were kept in this place until the early 1900's. Opposite to the entrance of the church the ruins of what used to be a block of some twenty monastic cells is still visible today.

After the earthquake of 1953, these buildings were destroyed and the (remains of the) inscription were transferred to the renovated church on the other side of the road. The church of Saint Nikolas is mentioned by Λ. Ζώης,¹⁴ and its Ἀναφωνήτρια (*Anafonitria*) connection is noted by Ν. Κονόμος.¹⁵ However, neither author refers to the inscription. The stone was placed above the main entrance door of the church. We can assume that it would have been clearly visible, since it was never covered with plaster. This suggests that the builders were aware of the aesthetic value of the block.

Unfortunately, the archaeological record of Zakynthos does not give many clues about the context of the inscription. Excavations near the village *Alikanas* in the 1930's revealed a Mycenaean tholos and a possible residential structure from the same period, but inscriptions are not mentioned.¹⁶ More recent surface surveys and excavations (test trenches) – within the framework of the Zakynthos Archaeology

9. Peek 1955; Hansen 1983 and 1989; Merkelbach/Stauber 1998, 2001, 2002.

10. *IG IX* 1², 4, 1730-1779.

11. *IG IX* 1², 4, 1757, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1765-1769, 1774-1777; Klaffenbach 1964; Versloot 2018.

12. The sculptures of the Aphaia temple of Aegina were sold on auction on Zakynthos, November 1st, 1812. Also, the reliefs and sculptures of the Apollo temple in Bassae were exhibited on the island between September 1812 and May 1814, prior to their public sale. Other antiquities arrived from other parts of Greece, for example the Delian stelae of the Romas collection, between 1824 and 1841 – currently in a private collection on Zakynthos.

13. If the inscription dates to the 5th century BC, then it is possible that it could have come from Athens. For Athens had close ties to Zakynthos during the Peloponnesian War, see Thucydides 1.47.2 and 2.9.4.

14. Ζώης 1898, 35-36.

15. Κονόμος 1979, 108.

16. Benton 1931-1932, 218; Souyoudzoglou-Haywood 1999, 122.

Project – show finds from prehistoric, Mycenaean and Archaic periods until Roman, Venetian and (Early) Modern times.¹⁷ All of them lack inscriptions. Only two observations from the 19th century are recorded: in the nearby area of *Mavrogenia*, west of *Alikanas*, the French archaeologist O. Riemann spotted some small inscribed stones and the German traveler B. Schmidt also saw several ancient gravestones in the fields.¹⁸

To conclude, the recently discovered inscription in *Alikanas* is most probably a funerary one and it is probably a verse inscription, a poem; it is an important piece because of its early date – a period for which there is very little archaeological and historical evidence on the island.¹⁹ Moreover, the preservation of this stone in a renovated church is of interest for the cultural biography of these types of objects.²⁰

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mathieu de Bakker (University of Amsterdam), Klaus Hallof (Inscriptiones Graecae) and Angelos P. Matthaiou (Greek Epigraphic Society), Georgia E. Malouchou (Archaeological Society at Athens), and Giorgos K. Papadopoulos (Archaeological Society at Athens) for their comments and helpful advices.

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17. Van Wijngaarden et al 2012.

18. Riemann 1880, 9; Schmidt 1899, 62.

19. Van Wijngaarden et al 2013, 144-147.

20. Versloot 2018.

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'Neither in contests (...) nor under arms'. An unknown inscription on Zakynthos



Fig. 1. The inscription.



Fig. 2. Drawing of the inscription.

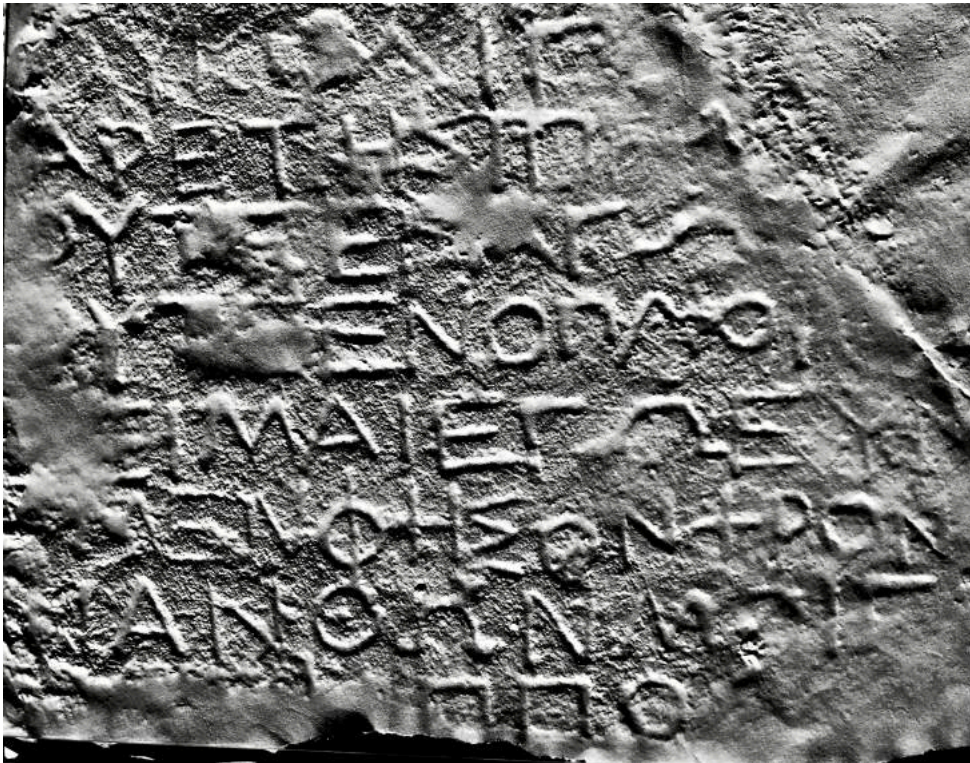


Fig. 3. Squeeze of the inscription.