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A New Funerary Epigram from Kibyra

During the 2016 excavation campaign conducted at ancient Kibyra by the Department of Archaeology at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, a stone block was recovered as a stray find, which has six inscribed lines and a relief on adjoining faces.¹ The stone was found at the Hellenistic (Southern) Necropolis of the city, in the stream bed of Kanlıdere and to the south of the Roman Bridge, ca. 150 m southwest of the stadium. It is now at the depot of the expedition house.

Stone

The block is almost rectangular and measures 80x78x40 cm. It is of a local limestone known as Burdur Beige, and has been hollowed out to form a basin for re-use either as a wine press or a fountain (diameter of the basin: 60 cm; **figs. 1, 2**). The upper surface of the block preserves two overflow channels (**fig. 2**) and, at the right corner in relation to the inscription, traces of the bedding of another block that once rested upon this one (**fig. 1**). The inscription is on one of the narrow sides of the block. The inscribed face retains the upper and lower edges but has some damage at the top left and at the lower right corner (**fig. 3**). One overflow channel conducted water, possibly, from the bowl to the left edge of the inscribed face, thereby largely wearing away the beginnings of the inscribed lines. On the adjoining face to the right of the inscription there is a relief showing a round shield in the middle with two greaves on either side (**fig. 4**). Water from the other overflow channel ran between the shield and the left greave and has eroded part of that greave. The

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented by Özge Acar in the 3rd Greek-Turkish Epigraphical Symposium, in June 29th-July 2nd, 2017, which was organized by the School of History and Archaeology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the School of Historical Studies of the Institute for Advanced Study of Princeton University, and took place at The Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. We thank Assoc. Prof. Şükrü Özüdoğru, the site director of the excavations at Kibyra, for permission to present and to study this inscription, as well as the participants in the symposium for their invaluable comments.

lower right corner of this face is broken. The adjoining face to the left of the inscription is smoothly polished and partly eroded (fig. 5). The (back) face parallel to that of the inscription is roughly picked (fig. 2).

The preserved bedding on the upper surface may suggest that the stone belonged to a statue base made of at least two layers of stones. Alternatively, it may have supported a larnax (*ostotheke*).

Relief

The round shield has a shallow curved domed body and a broad flat rim. It therefore appears to be of the Argive type, which was used widely by soldiers in Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere.² Although a typical Greek *hoplon* or *aspis* would normally be larger in relation to the greaves than the one depicted here, the size of the three objects in the relief was likely adjusted to aim for symmetry of the composition and should not be taken as a guide for determining the type of shield represented. Lacking a boss (*umbo*), it is not a Roman cavalry shield or the shield used by the *hoplomachus* and *eques* types of gladiator.³ It is, rather, similar to a shield that was carved out of the rock on the side face of the famous tomb of Hellenistic date at Pisidian Termessos known as the tomb of Alketas;⁴ the two shields on the fragment of a funerary stele from Mesembria on the Black Sea coast, probably dating from the 3rd century BCE;⁵ the round shields from Lycaonian Amblada found as spolia in Kavak Köy.⁶ Finally, a shield of this type was given as a trophy in the Heraia games of Argos.⁷

2. Persians and Etruscans also used such shields; see Pekridou 1986, 52-54 with previous literature. They are also carried by the Numidian horsemen depicted on Trajan's column. On the Greek *hoplon*, see Snodgrass 1967, 53; 117; Jarva 2013, 397-400.

3. Roman cavalry shield (*parma*): Sekunda 2007, 352. A *parma* depicted on the grave monument of a Roman equestrian officer from Mainz (Mogontiacum): Devijver 1991. On the gladiatorial *equites* and their small round shields, see most recently Nankov 2021.

4. Pekridou 1986, 52-54 with plates 1,2; 3; 5,2 and drawing 10 on p. 128; the relief is now destroyed for the most part.

5. Pfuhl-Möbius, *Ostgr. Grabreliefs* 2268.

6. Baldiran 2006, fig. 4.

7. During the 1st-3rd centuries CE, these ancient games were even named after that shield-trophy (ἡ ἐξ Ἀργους ἀσπίς); see Amandry 1980; Amandry 1983.

The greaves are not well preserved but they seem to imitate the anatomy of the legs and might be comparable to the greaves depicted below the shield at the tomb of Alketas.⁸

Inscription

The letters are 1,5-2,5 cm high. Forms:

Α (1.4) Γ (1.5) Δ (1.5) Ε (1.5; 1.3) Ζ (1.6) Θ (1.3) Ι (1.5) Κ (1.5) Λ (1.5) Μ (1.4) Ν (1.2)
Ο (1.4) Π (1.5) Ρ (1.5) Σ (1.2) Τ (1.2) Υ (1.4) Φ (1.3) Χ (1.5) Ψ (1.4) Ω (1.6)

The carving is somewhat irregular, with some fluctuation in letter size. The text of this inscription was composed in elegiac distichs. Roughly the first 5-6 letters of each verse in ll. 1-4 have been rendered partly or wholly illegible by the overflowing water. By contrast, the letters in the beginnings of ll. 5-6, although faded, are still legible. Line 5 is thus entirely preserved and l. 6 is preserved save for a damaged spot where the second syllable of a word was carved that began with ΑΞ. Judging from ll. 5-6 and other parts that are reasonably well preserved the metre was correct and needs to be observed when attempting to restore the lost parts. Another notable feature is a preference for Doric forms: ἀρετά, κλεινᾶς, μνᾶμα.⁹

- [Δοιούς] | σοι στεφάνους Ἄρε|τὰ πόρεν | ὅς?Ι[-²⁻³-]Α[-¹⁻²-]Ε[-⁴⁻⁵-]
2 [παγ]κράτι|ον κλειν|ᾶς | Ἀσί|δος | ἐν σταδ|ίοις
[τᾶ? νύ?]ν | θαρσαλέ|ας φρα|χθεῖς χέρας | ἔσχε|ς ἐν | ἀστο|ίς
4 φ[ύγαδ]ε | δυσμενέ|ων | Ἄρε|α | τρεψάμεν|ος
τοῦ|νεκ' ἐ|πεὶ γοργ|ὸν δέμας | ἐν|λαχε | Μοί|ρα δυ|σαίω|ν
6 μνᾶμα σε | εἷς ζω|οὺς | ΑΞ|ν?Ι ἀ|ιθαλέ|α.

- [Two kinds] of wreath Virtue gave to you, who(?) [once? (won) --]
2 the pankration in the stadia of famous Asia,

8. Pekridou 1986, 61-62, with the reconstruction drawing on p. 53. On greaves, see Kunze 1991; Jarva 2013, 408.

9. On the use of dialect by later Hellenistic epigrammatists as a means to recall a literary model, see Coughlan 2016. On the –sometimes puzzling– choice of Doric in epigrams, see Bowie 2016; usually, the theme or the recipient of the epigram “had a Dorian connection” (ibid. 15).

- [she who now?] fortified you to be brave¹⁰ among (your fellow) citizens
 4 and to turn to flight a horde of enemies.
 Because a dismal fate took¹¹ your vigorous body,
 6 (your) tomb [honors?] you (with) everlasting youth among the living.¹²

L. 1: Δοιούς: the word is attested several times in funerary epigrams. In an epigram from Rhodes it apparently refers to crowns/wreaths; *IG XII,1 842*, l. 5, δοιοῖς βριθομέν[ου στεφάνοις]. || Ἀρετή could mean both virtue and valour. Here, the word refers to an acting figure, therefore probably to the personification of virtue (and valour). Cf. the Aristotelian *Hymn to Virtue*, which also uses the Doric form Ἀρετά.¹³ || After an omicron that is the last letter preserved in this line there was probably a sigma and after that a vertical stroke. These letters may have belonged to a relative clause that is frequently attested in funerary epigrams: ὅς ποτε.¹⁴ The lost final part of this line must have included a reference to winning (the pankration-contest mentioned in the next verse).

L. 2: Ἀσίς, next to being an adjective (“Asian”), was also used as a substantive, meaning Ἀσία (“Asia”). Ἀσία was usually Asia Minor but it could include Persia; *DGE Ἀσία II.1*.

L. 3: If our supplement is correct, this verse opened with a demonstrative pronoun in the dative, τῷ, which referred to Ἀρετά. Verses starting with a demonstrative pronoun followed by νῦν were recurrent in Homer; *Il.* 1.407: τῶν νῦν μιν μνήσασα; *Il.* 2.254: τῷ νῦν Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι ποιμένι λαῶν; *Il.* 5.129: τῷ νῦν αἶ κε θεὸς πειρώμενος ἐνθάδ’ ἵκηται; *Il.* 5.410: τῷ νῦν Τυδεΐδης etc. || θαρσαλέας χέρας ἔσχες: “you had courageous hands” should be understood as “you were courageous”; see *LSJ* χεῖρ II.III: “the hand often receives the attributes of the person using it”; especially in connection with using the hands in a fight: *LSJ* χεῖρ II.IV.

10. Lit. that (virtue/valour), which now fortified you to have courageous hands.

11. ἔνλαχε = ἔλαχε (indicative aorist of λαγχάνω), therefore literally: received by lot or by chance; because a dismal fate happened to receive your vigorous body.

12. Lit. honors you, the everlasting young.

13. Arist. *Fr.* 675 (*PMG* 842), discussed in Coughlan 2016, 41-42 for its possible influence on epigrams by Asclepiades of Samos (3rd cent. BCE) and Antipater of Sidon (2nd cent. BCE), which have personified Ἀρετή as their central theme, in both cases in the Doric form Ἀρετά.

14. On this clause’s specific coloring and use as an encomiastic device, see Tsagalis 2008, 230-233.

L. 4: φύγαδε: used in several instances in Homer, as in *Il.* 7.157: Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας φύγαδε τράπε μώνυχας ἵππους. || Δυσμενής is used in our epigram substantively in the sense “enemy” as in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos*, l. 182: φάλαγγας | δυσμενέων “ranks of the foemen”.¹⁵ || The same passage of Callimachus also offers a parallel for the meaning of Ἄρης. The name of the god could be used figuratively to refer to a group or unit of warriors.¹⁶ Here it is used in a way similar to φάλαγξ in the Callimachus passage: Ἄρης δυσμενέων, “an enemy troupe”.¹⁷

L. 6: The stone is damaged between Ξ and Ι. Since the meter requires that the syllable beginning with Ξ be short, it is most likely that the damage to the stone was there when the text was inscribed and that there are no missing letters. The most plausible reading is ἀξί’ ἀειθαλέα, that is, ἀξιοῖ ἀειθαλέα, where the οἰ was brevis in longo and allowed elision.¹⁸

The name of the deceased does not seem to have been included in this epigram. It may have been inscribed on another element of the funerary monument to which this stone belonged, most likely a stone placed above this one and supporting a statue (cf. p. 110). By defining the spheres of activity in which its subject excelled as ἐν σταδίοις and ἐν ἀστοῖς (ll. 2 and 3), the epigram evoked the classical ideal of both physical and civic excellence.¹⁹ The subject died fighting as a citizen-soldier, serving his *patris* among his fellow citizens. We are not told who the “horde of enemies” were, but there was no shortage of conflict in Hellenistic Kibyratis, as epigraphic finds from the 2nd century BCE amply illustrate,²⁰ and brigand bands continued to pose a problem even under the *pax romana*. Clashes with brigand-bands are referenced as military action in two

15. Transl. A.W. Mair, *LCL*.

16. *DGE* s.v. II.4.: “conjunto de guerreros.”

17. This meaning should probably be preferred to those listed in *LSJ* and used to translate l. 6 of the epitaph of Sopolis and l. 4 of the epitaph of Antigenes by Élodie Cairon (Cairon 2009, nos. 64 and 74). In both cases it makes more sense to understand Ἄρες as an “enemy troupe”.

18. Elision of diphthongs: Allen 1888, 155.

19. Steiner 2001, 41.

20. See the inscription for Orthagoras, Bean 1948, 46-56 and a newly published sworn agreement between Moagetes, Kibyra, Boubon and Balboursa, Meier 2019, no. 3 (pp. 51-62), including earlier literature on military conflicts and pacts in the region.

funerary monuments from Kibyra, one of which includes a mention of Ἄρης (in that case in the sense of the God).²¹ Another important theme of this epigram is Virtue having secured both athletic and martial victories, which can be traced back to a commonplace idea in epinician poetry that “victory in an athletic event is not an external or casual blessing or good but is based on the existence of internal values”.²² In keeping with the circumstances of this athlete-citizen-soldier’s death in battle, the language of this epigram owes much to the *Iliad*. Less evidently maybe, the metaphor of a person, in this case the personification of Virtue, acting as a fence or bulwark to protect others (l. 3 φραχθεῖς), also evokes the *Iliad*, where Ajax is recurrently called ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν, “the Achaians’ bulwark”.²³ Tragic vocabulary is present too: δυσαίων is no Homeric word but is used by Sophocles and Euripides. The influence of Hellenistic poetry may also be detectable: in two Hellenistic epigrams, Virtue sits by Ajax’s tomb in mourning.²⁴ Further, the concept of “the bold hand” or “courageous hand” (l. 3 θαρσαλέας χέρας) may reflect the apparent popularity of an epigram in praise of the sculptor Lysippus by the third-century epigrammatist Posidippus of Pella, in which Lysippus is addressed with θαρσαλέα χεῖρ, and which is known both from the manuscript tradition and from papyrological finds.²⁵

Date

In the absence of other clues, the letter forms may serve as a tentative criterium for approximately dating an inscription, provided there exist firmly dated, well-preserved examples from the same geographical area, to help place an inscription within the evolution of the local epigraphic style. The letter forms of our epigram (see p. 111) are roughly comparable with those of the treaty of alliance between Rome and Kibyra that dates from 174 BCE, with

21. See Meier 2015.

22. Tsagalis 2008, 11.

23. *Il.* 3.229; 6.5; 7.211; cf. 1.184 where the same metaphor is applied to Achilles: ἔρκος Ἀχαιοῖσιν πέλεται πολέμοιο κακοῖο.

24. *Anth.Gr.* 7.145-146; cf. Harder 2007, 413.

25. That epigram’s first verse reads Λύσιππε, πλάστα Σικυώνιε, θαρσαλέα χεῖρ and is known from a) Planudes’ Appendix (*Anth.Gr.* 16.119) b) a papyrus collection (P. Freib. 4 = SH 973) c) the new Milan role (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309, ed. Bastianini, Gallazzi and Austin 2001, no 65). The first two sources have θαρσαλέη, the Milan role θαρσαλέα. See Obbink 2005, 109.

some important exceptions. Most notably, the pi has a short right hasta in the inscription preserving that treaty.²⁶ Further, in our epigram the middle stroke of the epsilon is sometimes connected and sometimes disconnected, whereas in the treaty it is always connected; the oblique strokes of the kappa are somewhat longer in our inscription; the xi has a vertical stroke in the treaty whereas in our inscription it has none. Other securely dated inscriptions from Kibyra with comparable letter forms include *I.Kibyra* 6 (41 CE) and 42B (ca. 72/73 CE). Firmly dated inscriptions from Kibyra of the 2nd century CE or later, by contrast, differ from our inscription particularly in what concerns the forms of the omega and the phi, best seen in *I.Kibyra* 40 from 171 CE (with a good photograph in p. 55); cf. *I.Kibyra* 11 (137 CE).²⁷ In addition, the sigma tends to be square in inscriptions from Kibyra of the 2nd and 3rd century CE. The irregularity of the carving is sometimes taken as evidence that an inscription is of late date, but this is a highly unreliable criterium. At Kibyra, this is amply demonstrated by public inscriptions securely dated in the 2nd century BCE, which differ remarkably in this respect; see Meier 2019, 48, who compares the very regular carving of the treaty with Rome (Meier 2019, no. 1) and that of an honorific inscription for a young athlete (Meier 2019, no. 9), with two other inscriptions, a treaty between Kibyra and Apollonia Salbake (Meier 2019, no. 2) and a sworn agreement between Moagetes, Kibyra, Boubon and Balboursa (Meier 2019, no. 2), both of which are irregularly carved. Taking into account the type of shield depicted on the relief, the parallels for such shields in other reliefs found in the wider region, which date mostly from the Hellenistic period (see p. 110), as well as the letter forms of the inscription, this funerary monument probably dates to the period between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE.

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26. Meier 2019, 29 and fig. 2, 3-6.

27. The photograph on p. 43 is not very good but the omega is nevertheless well visible in l. 14.

Summary

The Greek epigram published in this article was discovered in 2016 in modern Turkey, at Kibyra in southwest Asia Minor, during excavations under the directorship of Assoc. Prof. Şükrü Özüdoğru of the University of Burdur. Six lines preserving 3 elegiac distichs are carved on a stone that also features a relief showing a round shield with two greaves on either side. The epigram probably dates between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE and evokes the classical ideal of both physical and civic excellence in commemorating a man who died fighting as a citizen-soldier.

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A NEW FUNERARY EPIGRAM FROM KIBYRA



Fig. 1. Front (narrow) face with inscription; upper side with bowl and traces of bedding.



Fig. 2. Back (narrow) face; upper side with bowl and overflow channels.



Fig. 3. Inscribed face.

A NEW FUNERARY EPIGRAM FROM KIBYRA



Fig. 4. Relief: shield and greaves.



Fig. 5. Adjoining face to the left of the inscription.

