

CORRECTION OF AN INSCRIPTION FROM PHLIUS

In a group of archaic inscriptions from Phlius which I published in *Hesperia* in 1936 (vol. V, pp. 235 ff.) there is one, no. 2 in the publication, which is distinguished by a character resembling the figure 8. In my article I noted the possibility that this character was the result of an error on the part of the stonecutter, who intended to write only omicron, but by accident cut one circle out of line and engraved the other just above it. This view was preferred by Professor Buck among other distinguished philologists, but at the time I myself felt that in view of the superior quality of the carving, an error should not be assumed if any other explanation could be found, nor could I imagine how an error could have occurred. I therefore attempted to show that the figure 8 represented the letter eta.

In a recent conversation, however, Mr. A. Raubitschek, of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, pointed out to me how the figure 8 could be explained as a natural, although still egregious, error on the part of the stonecutter.

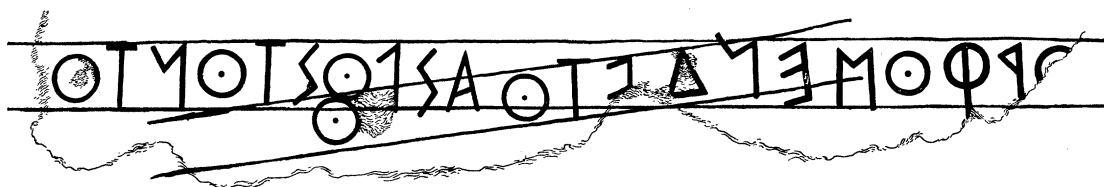


Fig. 1. Drawing of an Archaic Inscription from Phlius Showing Accidental Change in Direction of Writing.

The accompanying illustration will show how the mistake could have been made. The stonecutter, proceeding from right to left, came to the letter nu without incident, but at this point, through a lapse of attention, started to write the letters along a downward-slanting line instead of parallel to the top of the stone. Having gone as far as the omicron following the tau, with the compass still in hand, he cut a second omicron, allowing the right amount of space for three intervening letters, but in line with the descending series. As soon as he laid down the compass, however, he observed for the first time that the line of letters had fallen out of horizontal, and beginning with the alpha, iota, lambda, and so forth, he resumed the proper direction. It would thus be by pure coincidence that the omicron following the lambda, cut in its proper place, is so neatly tangent to the mistakenly cut circle below.

The text as given in my article may therefore be amended to read $\alpha\iota\lambda\omicron\iota$ instead of

$\alpha\iota\lambda\eta\iota$: the explanation being that of Professor Buck, that $\lambda\omicron\iota$ is third person singular optative with early contraction, on the analogy of *I.G.*, IV, 506, $\delta\alpha\mu\iota\omicron\nu\rho\gamma\omicron\iota$.

I would like here to refer to a note in the *J.H.S.* (LIX, 1939, p. 139, summarized in *A.J.A.*, XLIII, 1939, p. 686), in which Miss L. H. Jeffery compares the character in question to a figure-8 mark in a copy made by Ross of an inscription from Asprokampo near Perachora (*I.G.*, IV, 414), arguing that the character represents omega. Other copies of the Asprokampo inscription quoted by Miss Jeffery, however, show only a single circle or rectangular mark for the letter in question, and Ross's copy may for any of various reasons be unreliable. The inscription from Corinth to which Miss Jeffery refers is modern, the figure-8 symbol being part of the date 1811.

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