

AN INSCRIPTION FROM MYCENAE

A SMALL, thin slab of poros stone was found in 1933 by the *phylax* Aristoteles Tsetsekos on his property in the locality known as "Asprochoma"¹ near Mycenae. It is broken at the left and below, and it has been chipped in places at the right. The top and right side are smooth, while the back is rough-picked. The smooth front face bears the inscription shown in Fig. 1.

Maximum preserved height, 0.11 m.; maximum preserved width, 0.15 m.; thickness, 0.02 m.

Height of letters, 0.01-0.015 m.; spacing of lines, 0.01-0.015 m.

Nauplia Museum inventory number, 2907.



Fig. 1. Inscription from Mycenae

¹ Steffen, *Karten von Mykenai*, Blatt 1.

τάδε ἀνέθεσαν ?] τοὶ Ἱερομνάμονες
 τοὶ ἐς Περσῆ· Δυ?] ρέας Σφοραδεὺς ἀσ<σ>
 πίδα, ῥυνίαν, ἀφό] ντιον· Βύτιος Ἴασ...
^{ca. 6} ἀσπίδα, ῥυ] νίαν, ἀφόντιον· ^{ca. 2-3}.....
 5^{ca. 8} ἀσπίδα, ῥυ] νίαν, ἀφόντιο[ν· .]
^{ca. 12} ἀσπί] δα, ῥυνίαν, ἀφό[ν]
 τιον·^{ca. 13}.....] ἐς ἀσπίδα, ῥυν[ί]
 [αν, ἀφόντιον· -----]

It is not possible to determine how many lines the inscription originally had, because, as already stated, the stone is broken away below. There are now preserved on the stone the right-hand parts of seven lines, each of which originally had approximately 27-29 letters, as can be deduced from line 3 in which the number of missing letters can be fixed with relative certainty at 13, thus giving a line of 29 letters.

The shapes of the letters allow us to date the inscription in the first quarter of the fifth century B.C. (and in any case before 468 B.C., the year in which Mycenae was destroyed), that is, contemporary with or slightly earlier than *I.G.*, IV, 517 (from the Heraeum) with which it has the following characteristics in common: M and N with legs of approximately equal length, the letter V, and finally A with widely spreading legs and with the cross-bar placed more than half way down. It is, however, later than *I.G.*, IV, 493 (from Mycenae), which dates from the end of the sixth or the beginning of the fifth century B.C., and in which the right leg of the M and the N are shorter than the other legs and the A has its legs closer together as in the earlier inscriptions of the Argolid.

A peculiarity of our inscription is the shape of the omicron. Instead of simply indicating the outline of the circle, the entire center is cut out. This is the only example from the Argolid of this kind of omicron.

Line 1. The restoration of the first part of this line is difficult. We should expect to find here the reason for the listing of the weapons. It is certainly not a case of listing weapons which are being handed over by one Hieromnemon to another, for in such an event the form would have been different. In other words, a restoration such as *παρέλαβον] τοὶ Ἱερομνάμονες...* is excluded because the same list of weapons is repeated under each Hieromnemon, and only if we assume that they represent an equal number of successive years could this interpretation be correct, and even then they should not all have been written on the same stone. And were no new weapons dedicated in the course of the years? It seems more probable that here, as in *Jahreshefte*, 1911, Beiblatt, p. 141, and *I.G.*, IV, 517, we have to do with votive offerings of the Hieromnemones. There they dedicate as a group, whereas in our inscription each one dedicates the same things separately to the deity or hero to whose worship they were devoted.

Why, however, do the Hieromnemones dedicate the weapons? Their office has no very close connection with military matters, and the first thought that occurs to one is that we perhaps have to do with booty which they are dedicating to the gods, a circumstance which is very common in antiquity. It would be very rash to attempt to carry this line of thought further and try to connect these dedications with victories won by the people of Mycenae. Their only known victories at this period are those over the Persians which they shared with the rest of the Greeks, and we know that they took part in the battles of Thermopylae and Plataea² as an independent city. It seems better, however, to interpret it in the light of a passage in Polyaeus, *Strategica*, III, 8. According to this, at the time when Archinus was tyrant in Argos the old weapons were dedicated to the gods after new ones had been issued by the city, “καὶ γὰρ οὕτως ἦν τοῖς Ἀργείοις δεδογμένον.” Perhaps this was an old custom in the Argolid, and if so it may be that our inscription should be connected with it.

Ἀνέθεσαν]: I have restored this form rather than the shorter ἀνέθειν because approximately 12 letters are required to fill the vacant space.

Ἱερομνάμονες: There is no aspirate. This is clearly not a stonecutter's error since we find the word written in the same way in other contemporary or earlier inscriptions of the Argolid. See *I.G.*, IV, 493, and 517, line 3: *Jahreshefte*, 1911, Beiblatt, p. 141.

Line 2. Τοὶ ἐς Περσῆ?]: I have restored this from the inscription *I.G.*, IV, 493, from Mycenae. There, as in our inscription, the Hieromnemones appear as more than a single person, and since we do not know of any other Hieromnemones from Mycenae, the proposed restoration may stand. It is unlikely, however, that these Hieromnemones can be the same as those mentioned in inscriptions from the Heraeum³ because the latter are always four in number and are chosen from the three Dorian tribes and the fourth tribe Hyrnathia, whereas in our inscription the names of at least five Hieromnemones appear belonging to divisions smaller than the phyle (phratries?). It may be noted that the stone seems to have been found *in situ*. One can see on the spot foundations made of large, solid blocks belonging to a building with which our inscription was probably connected. Further, our inscription belongs to a period when Mycenae could have had influence over the Heraeum, but Argos could not have had influence over Mycenae. It is the period after the disaster suffered by the Argives at Sepeia at the end of the sixth century B.C. when the city's power was severely crippled.

Δυ]φίας or Νι]φίας.

Σφοραδεύς. The name of one of the political (?) subdivisions of the Mycenaeans.⁴

² Herodotus, IX, 28, 4, and 31, 3: *Syll.*³, 31, line 19.

³ *I.G.*, IV, 517, 516, 521, line 6: *Jahreshefte*, 1911, Beiblatt, p. 141, no. 11.

⁴ Unfortunately, the name of only one phratry (?) has been preserved; of another (line 3) we have the first letters, and of a third (line 7) we have the last letters. The name of another

It seems to be derived from the plant of the same name, *σκόροδον*, which was called *σκόραδον* in the Doric dialect. Compare *σκοραδᾶν* (genitive plural) in *Docum. Ant. dell' Africa Italiana*, I, 1933, p. 139, no. 40, line 22 (= *S.E.G.*, IX [1938], p. 43). On the derivation of the names of the clans in the Argolid, see M. Guarducci, *Mem. Linc.*, 1938, pp. 124 ff.

Lines 2-3. Ἄσ<σ>[πίδα]. The second sigma is probably due to carelessness on the part of the stonecutter, for the word appears below with only one sigma.

Line 3. Βύτιος. The first letter of the word is Β and not Α as one would think. We find it with the same shape in other inscriptions from the Argolid, namely, *I.G.*, IV, 514, line 1; *ibid.*, 554, lines 2, 6; *Hesperia*, 1939, p. 167, line 6; *B.C.H.*, 1910, p. 331, lines 21, 23, 25; *ibid.*, 1913, p. 281, line 16. The name, a parallel form to Βύτις,⁵ appears here for the first time in this form. Compare also the name Κίθιος,⁶ and contrast Γνάθις,⁷ on roughly contemporary inscriptions from the Argolid.

Lines 4-5. Here we seem to have an exception: That is, whereas in the other lines we always find the name of the dedicator and the phratry to which he belongs written before the thing dedicated, here the name alone and not the phratry was written. Since the space that remains vacant for this cannot contain more than 9-11 letters, we can only suppose that it is a stonecutter's error. It is possible, of course, that the word ἄσπίδα was left out, in which case there would be room for the name of the clan.

Line 6. At the beginning of this line the upper part of a letter like ϑ or R is preserved. It cannot be ϑ, however, since it is followed by Α. If it be taken as ρ, then the word must be restored as [φάρετ]ρα, and we must assume that the stonecutter omitted the final ν, since there is no other name for a weapon whose accusative singular ends in -ρα<ν>. It is more probable, however, that here too the word ἄσπίδα

phratry is known to us from the inscriptions *I.G.*, IV, 497, lines 5-6, and 498, line 11. The preservation of others, in addition to their historical and linguistic importance, would perhaps have helped us in the question of the relations between the Dorians and the earlier inhabitants of Mycenae. For it is surprising that none of the three Dorian phylae is mentioned in any of the preserved inscriptions from Mycenae. In an inscription (*I.G.*, IV, 517) from the Heraeum, for example, where the whole administration was in the hands of the Argives, the Hieromnemones were chosen from the three Dorian phylae, and from the fourth phyle, the Hynathia, to which the earlier inhabitants of Argos belonged, whereas at Mycenae the Hieromnemones were chosen from the phratries. Perhaps, however, and this seems equally probable, our Hieromnemones are those of the Achaean hero Perseus. His worship and his Hieromnemones are attested for Mycenae, as has already been said, and perhaps along with his worship the old method of choosing Hieromnemones remained. The suggestion that the inscription comes from a period of political change at Mycenae and shows the influence of a democratic constitution seems unlikely, for we have no evidence for a change from oligarchy to democracy at Mycenae, although of course it cannot be excluded.

⁵ *Fouilles de Delphes*, III, fasc. 5, no. 9, II B, line 8.

⁶ *I.G.*, IV, 492, line 7.

⁷ *Jahreshefte*, 1911, Beiblatt, p. 141, no. 11, line 3. On an inscription from Attica of approximately the same date we read Γναθίος, Ἄρχ. Δελτιον, 1927-28, p. 132.

was written, since this is just what is required, and that the δ varied a little from the form of the other two (lines 2 and 7) just as these vary between themselves.

φ υνίαν. The form *κυνία* is Aeolian and is found only in Alcaeus (Frag. 137 [Reinach]: *πᾶσα δ' ἄρηι κεκόσμηται στέγα λάμπραισιν κυνίαισιν*. Frag. 58: *καὶ χρυσοπάσταν τὰν κυνίαν ἔχων*). It seems unlikely, however, that we have here a linguistic remnant of the earlier population. It is rather a case of the change of ϵ to ι before the vowels *a* and *o* (dunkle Vocale) and the diphthong *ou*, a phenomenon which is met with in other Doric dialects, for example that of Crete, Sparta, and the neighboring cities such as Corinth.⁸ In the very closely related and almost exactly similar dialect of Epidaurus we also find examples of the change of ϵ to ι , for example: *Θιάρης*,⁹ *Θιαίου*.¹⁰ And the change occurs in Argos: *Θιός*,¹¹ *Θιοδέκτας*,¹² *Θιοκρ*-,¹³ *Θιοφάν*-,¹⁴ and *Θίωv*¹⁵ in contrast to *Θεός*.¹⁶

MARCELLUS T. MITSOS

EPIGRAPHICAL MUSEUM, ATHENS

⁸ Bechtel, *Gr. Dialekte*, II, 221.

⁹ *I.G.*, IV² 1, 191, line 2, 192, line 1, 197, 102, line 49.

¹⁰ *I.G.*, IV² 1, 130, lines 107, 109, 112.

¹¹ *B.C.H.*, 1909, p. 451, line 11.

¹² *Mnemosyne*, 1916, p. 65, line 2.

¹³ *Mnemosyne*, 1919, p. 161, No. 6, line 6.

¹⁴ *I.G.*, IV, 530, line 18.

¹⁵ *Mnemosyne*, 1916, p. 220, line 32.

¹⁶ *Mnemosyne*, 1916, p. 220, line 5.