

THE GRAVESTONE OF SOCRATES' FRIEND, LYSIS

(PLATE 68)

PLATO'S *LYSIS* stands out as one of the great philosopher's more friendly minor dialogues. In a most cooperative and gentle manner Socrates and two young boys search together for a definition of *φιλία*, and, although the discussion is finally broken off by the rude intervention of the paidagogoi and their brothers come to fetch the two boys home, the dialogue ends on a jocular note with Socrates' admission that although all three believe that they are *φίλοι*, they have not yet been able to discover what a lover is.

In a lengthy and detailed opening section (203A–207B), Plato sets the scene of his dialogue at a newly constructed palaistra outside the north city wall of Athens, opposite the gate where the spring of Panops was located.¹ While walking from the Akademy straight to the Lykeion along the road which passed under the wall, Socrates is hailed by Hippothales, Ktesippos, and a group of young men who invite him to join them in the palaistra for discussions. The sophist Mikkos, a companion of Socrates, is said to teach there. On the way in, Socrates ascertains that Hippothales is helplessly in love with one of the young boys who frequents the palaistra. Hippothales is chided by his companion Ktesippos, who complains of the many poems and prose eulogies which Hippothales has written for the boy. Especially dreadful is the appalling voice in which he sings his beloved's praises. When he is first told that the young boy's name is Lysis, Socrates does not recognize him, but upon learning that Lysis is the eldest son of Demokrates of Aixone, he praises Hippothales for loving such a noble youth.

We learn from the dialogue that Lysis' homonymous grandfather and his father, Demokrates, are very wealthy and had won victories with their four-horse chariots and their colts at Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea. In Hippothales' songs the family is praised as having ancestral ties with Herakles. Socrates moves into the palaistra eager to meet the young Lysis. It is a festival day of Hermes; youths and young boys mix freely in the gathering. They are all in fine dress, and the sacrifices have just ended. In a corner of the dressing room some boys are playing with astragaloi, while others stand around watching. "One of these was indeed Lysis," Socrates narrates, "and he was standing among the boys and young men wearing a crown, and he stood out by reason of his appearance as someone who deserved a fair reputation not merely for his beauty but because he was *καλός τε κ' ἀγαθός*" (207A).

When Socrates and the young men sit down to begin their discourse, Lysis at first hesitates to join them, although he keeps turning around to look in their direction. He gains courage, however, when his friend Menexenos comes in, and the two young boys then sit together near Socrates and the others. Socrates begins to question them both about their ages

¹ For the spring and sanctuary of Panops see W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen*, 2nd ed., Munich 1931, pp. 49, 415; W. Aly, *RE* XVIII, iii, col. 653, s.v. Panops. For the palaistra, J. Delorme, *Gymnasion*, Paris 1960, pp. 59–60.

and then their good looks, but when Menexenos is conveniently called away, the dialogue proper begins between the old philosopher and the beautiful young Lysis.

In Socrates' opening questions about Lysis' respect for his parents, Plato refers again to the racing chariots, the mule carts, the slaves, and the wealth of the household. The young boy is revealed as properly respectful of his elders and quick to respond in a lively manner to the old philosopher's questions. He is skilled enough at his grammata so that his parents turn to him first whenever they want something written or read, and he has reached a certain level of competence at playing the lyre (207E–209D). He recognizes quickly a line from the *Odyssey* (xvii.218) and is familiar with those treatises of the learned men who argue that "like must be dear to like" (214A–B). His fondness for discussion is clear throughout the dialogue, and at the end he almost has to be dragged away from Socrates and the others by his paidagogos.

Unlike Ktesippos and his nephew Menexenos, who were with Socrates in the prison at the time of his death (*Phaidon*, 59B) and who appear in other Platonic dialogues (*Euthydemos*, *Menexenos*), Hippothales, son of Hieronymos, and Lysis, son of Demokrates, are found only here in extant Greek literature. (Brief notes in Diogenes Laertius, II.29 and III.46 claim Lysis as a follower of Socrates and Hippothales as a student of Plato but tell us nothing more.) Such particular care was taken by Plato, however, in presenting these two characters in the *Lysis* that it is difficult not to conclude that they were real young men of late 5th-century B.C. Athens.²

Of Hippothales we hear no more; he is the only person with this very rare name listed in J. Kirchner's *Prosopographia Attica*.³ More can be said, however, about the namesake of Plato's dialogue from the evidence of inscriptions. In 1912 G. P. Oikonomos found built into the Dipylon Gate a re-used gravestone of about the middle of the 4th century B.C. which probably marked the tomb of the daughter of Lysis. She was apparently buried with her husband, Euegoros, son of Philoinos of Paiania, and her name is recorded as Ἰσθμονίκη Λύσιδος Αἰξωνέως.⁴ Whether her name was taken from one of the victories for which her father's family was famous⁵ or from the Isthm(i)onikos who was active in the last quarter of

² The dramatic date of the dialogue, a topic seldom discussed by students of the *Lysis*, is uncertain. The Socratic *terminus ante quem* of 399 B.C. could be pushed back to 406 B.C. if we could press Socrates' claim in 211E that he would rather win a companion than "the gold of Dareios, . . . more than Dareios himself." The reference would then be to the contemporary Dareios II, 424–406 B.C. On this point see D. Bolotin, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship*, Ithaca 1979, p. 56, note 33; V. Schoplick, *Der platonische Dialog Lysis*, Augsburg 1968, p. 28. For helpful discussion of the *Lysis*, with earlier bibliography, see R. G. Hoerber, "Plato's Lysis," *Phronesis* 4, 1959, pp. 15–28; A. W. Begemann, *Plato's Lysis*, Amsterdam 1960; D. N. Levin, "Some Observations Concerning Plato's Lysis" in J. Anton, G. Kustas, *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Albany 1971, pp. 236–258; W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 4, Cambridge 1975, pp. 134–154; L. Versenyi, "Plato's Lysis," *Phronesis* 20, 1975, pp. 185–198; D. K. Glidden, "The Lysis on Loving One's Own," *CQ*, n.s. 31, 1981, pp. 39–59. I have not been able to consult F. de Oliveira, *Lysis*, Coimbra 1980.

³ For another possible Athenian Hippothales in the late 2nd century after Christ see *IG* II², 1798 (*The Athenian Agora*, XV, *The Inscriptions. The Athenian Councillors*, Princeton 1974, no. 420) line 4.

⁴ G. P. Oikonomos, "Aus dem Dipylon," *AthMitt* 37, 1912, pp. 226–229, with photograph; *IG* II², 7045.

⁵ As suggested by Oikonomos, *loc. cit.*; cf. Plato, *Lysis*, 205C, 208A.

the 5th century B.C.,⁶ the discovery of Isthmonike's gravestone gave welcome support to the identity of her father as the demesman of Aixone who was the *pais* of Plato's dialogue.

In 1971 J. K. Davies, in a detailed study of the family of Lysis, made the attractive suggestion that his father may have been the Demokrates who is known to have been a lover of the young Alkibiades in the 430's (Plutarch, *Alkibiades*, 3).⁷

We can now add more information, for in 1974 Dr. Olga Alexandri, conducting a salvage excavation for the Greek Archaeological Service, discovered the gravestone of Lysis himself and of a hitherto unknown son. I am most grateful to Dr. Alexandri for permission to study this important monument and to publish the following description of it. I am also indebted to Dr. Basileios Petrakos who has very generously provided me with photographs and squeezes. I studied the stones in the Piraeus Museum in October 1982; subsequently the two parts of the monument were joined together, and the whole was placed on display in the same museum. It bears the inventory number 3281.

According to the brief report of her discovery which Dr. Alexandri published in 'Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον 29, 1973-74, B' [1979], pp. 156-157, the gravestone of Lysis was found in a construction trench at a depth of 2.20 m. below the level of Odos Taxiarchon, near its intersection with Odos Thessalonikes, in the modern district of Moschaton, which lies northeast of Piraeus.

If the gravestone was found in or near its original position, which is far from certain, we could tentatively suggest that Lysis was not buried in his own deme, Aixone, which has been plausibly placed at Pirnari near Glyphada,⁸ but in or near the deme of Xypete, which was located in the vicinity of Moschaton.⁹

The grave monument, which was found broken into two pieces, consists of a loutrophoros of fine-crystallized, white marble, bearing a sculptured relief of three figures, and a low cylindrical base of bluish gray marble which carries an inscription in four lines (Pl. 68:a). Only the lower part of the neck and the volutes of the two handles are preserved at the broken top of the loutrophoros. At its bottom there is a small piece missing where the loutrophoros was mounted into its base. Although loutrophoros and base do not actually join, it is clear from the fact that both pieces were found together and from the texts of the inscriptions on them that they belong to the same monument.

The surface of the body of the loutrophoros is smoothly polished on all sides and bears no other decoration except on the front. Here the relief of a dexionis scene consisting of three

⁶ Either because her father had married a daughter of Isthm(i)onikos or the latter too belonged to the family, as suggested by J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 B.C.*, Oxford 1971, p. 360.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 359-361, with a helpful stemma. Less happy, perhaps, is Davies' suggestion that Lysis' homonymous grandfather (Lysis I) "is very likely the Λ. καλός of many Rf. vases (ARV² 1597-8) seemingly from the 470s and 460s," for, if the vases are correctly dated, this youth's period of popularity would then have coincided with the birth of his putative son, Demokrates, which Davies places 470-460 B.C.

⁸ C. W. J. Eliot, *Coastal Demes of Attika*, Toronto 1962, pp. 6-24.

⁹ On the location of Xypete in the vicinity of present-day Moschaton and Kallithea see the excellent article by Ernst Meyer in *RE* IX, i, cols. 2178-2182, s.v. Xypete. Cf. S. Karusu, "Der Grabnaiskos des Alexos," *AthMitt* 96, 1981, pp. 192-194.

figures, whose bare feet rest on a raised ground line, is very well preserved (Pl. 68:b). At the left stands a bearded man wearing a himation draped over his left shoulder with his chest and right shoulder bare. In his left hand he holds the vertical folds of his himation at chest level. He faces right and stretches forward his right hand to clasp the right hand of the central figure, who is an older man, seated, facing left, in a high-backed chair. He too is bearded and is clad in a himation which is draped over his left shoulder, leaving his chest and right shoulder bare. His left arm rests in his lap. Standing immediately behind (i.e. to the right of) the chair is a woman who looks considerably younger than the two men. She faces left and gazes across at the figure on the left, over the head of the old man. The thick folds of her garment are only roughly indicated. Her left arm is held across the front of her body; her right is bent up and back, so that her right hand holds a fold of drapery at the level of her right shoulder. Like the two male figures, her head is seen in profile. Unlike them, she is not identified by an inscribed label. To the left of the standing male figure, however, and at the level of his head, is the inscription Τιμοκλείδης. At the same level, well above the head of the old man in the center, is the inscribed label which identifies him as Λῦσις. The height of the letters in both names is ca. 0.01 m., and, to judge by the shape of the lambda and sigma, the two names were inscribed by the same cutter. The height of the relief is 0.30 m. The preserved height of the loutrophoros is 0.95 m.; its diameter is 0.41 m.

On the top of the low cylindrical base there is a circular cutting in the center, 0.28 m. in diameter, which still contains much of the lead used to anchor the loutrophoros in position. There are no other cuttings on the base. Its surface is fairly smoothly finished all over, but on the front, where the inscription was cut, the surface is more smoothly polished. The base is 0.34 m. in height and 0.635 m. in diameter. The first of the four lines of the inscription (Pl. 68:c) lies 0.03 m. below the top of the base; line 4 is 0.11 m. above its bottom. Between lines 2 and 3 there is an uninscribed area 0.05 m. in height. The text reads as follows:

<Λ>ῦσις : Δημοκράτος
 Αἰζωνεύς
 Τιμοκλείδης
 Λύσιδος : Αἰζωνεύς

The first letter in line 1 was cut as alpha in error.¹⁰ The letters were not arranged in the stoichedon order, but the first letters in each line were vertically aligned. In lines 3 and 4 the letters are roughly the same size and shape as those in lines 1 and 2, but they are not as carefully cut. This may indicate that they were inscribed by a different hand or, more likely, that Timokleides' name was added later when the monument had already stood in place for some time. Clearly we have a tombstone which served both father and son. We should expect the former to predecease the latter and his inscription to have been cut first.

That the old Lysis on the loutrophoros was the namesake of Plato's dialogue is made clear by both his patronymic and his demotic in lines 1–2, which correspond to Hippothales' designation of his young friend as Δημοκράτους . . . τοῦ Αἰζωνέως ὁ πρεσβύτατος υἱός

¹⁰ In the text printed in Δελτ 29, 1973–74, B', [1979], p. 157, line 3 was omitted. Cf. SEG XXIX, 203.

(*Lysis*, 204E). The possibility that this could be some other member of the same deme and the same family bearing the same name as Socrates' interlocutor seems to be ruled out by the dramatic setting of the dialogue and the probable date of the grave monument. If Lysis was a *παῖς* in the last quarter of the 5th century B.C. and lived long enough to have had a married daughter, Isthmonike, who died *ca.* 350 B.C., we should expect him to have lived into the second quarter of the 4th century B.C. We now know that he had a son, Timokleides, and that in choosing a gravestone for their father, Lysis' family selected one with a sculptural relief which showed him as an old man. In funerary sculpture of such undistinguished style as the dexiosis scene on the loutrophoros, prosopographical inferences are particularly dangerous, but it is safe to conclude that Lysis, son of Demokrates of Aixone and father of Timokleides, did not die young.

A date in the second quarter of the 4th century B.C. for the death of Lysis would probably not be at odds with the style both of the lettering in the inscription and of the sculptured relief,¹¹ although it is doubtful that either can be dated with much more precision than the suggestion of *ca.* 350 B.C. made by the excavator. I do not believe that we know enough yet about letter forms on gravestones, even in Attica, to use them as criteria for dating inscriptions to the quarter century. The stylistic dating of the dexiosis scene on the loutrophoros I leave to the experts.¹²

Timokleides, son of Lysis, of Aixone is apparently an addition to Attic prosopography. The name is not common in Athens, and I have not found any other bearers of it who can possibly be identified as our man.¹³

The discovery of the gravestone of Lysis has helped to bring to life a character from Greek literature and from the circle of Socrates. Among the thousands of Athenians whose names survive on the tombstones in *Inscriptiones Graecae* and on the numerous grave monuments which continue to be found each year in the city and throughout the Attic countryside, it is gratifying to come across someone we know. The modest nature of Lysis' loutrophoros and its re-use by his son are perhaps surprising, however, in light of the status and the great wealth of the family in the late 5th century B.C. As the eldest son of the affluent, horse-breeding Demokrates, Lysis should have enjoyed a healthy inheritance. The rather mediocre quality of his gravestone may be an indication, then, of considerable restraint on the part of a rich man who may have followed his early passion for philosophy into later life

¹¹ On the spelling of *Δημοκράτος* see L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions*, I, *Phonology*, Berlin 1980, p. 258, "Private texts contain no convincing examples of O for OY later than *ca.* 330."

¹² Of the dexiosis reliefs on Attic marble lekythoi illustrated by B. Schmaltz, *Untersuchungen zu den attischen Marmorlekythen*, Berlin 1970, the closest stylistic parallels to the loutrophoros of Lysis seem to me to be nos. A 80 and 108, which Schmaltz places *ca.* 380–370 B.C. In G. Kokula, *Marmorloutrophoren* (diss. Munich 1974), the closest illustrated parallel is her no. L 87 which she dates *ca.* 370–360 B.C.

¹³ The lack of full epigraphic indexes in many publications makes it difficult to give accurate figures, but this rare name seems to have enjoyed a vogue in the 4th century B.C. Of the nine other Athenians called Timokleides known to me, six belong to this period: *PA* 13720–13722; *Agora* XV, no. 42, line 254; no. 59, line 35 = no. 61, line 275; *IG* II², 1582, lines 118, 122–123. For each of these men a demotic (not Aixoneus) is preserved. For other Athenians with this name see *ABV*, p. 174:6; *IG* III 3, 46, line 2; II², 1322, line 34. I am indebted to J. S. Traill for help with this note.

or, more likely, that, by the second quarter of the 4th century B.C., this once wealthy family had fallen on bad times.¹⁴

RONALD S. STROUD

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
Department of Classics
Dwinelle Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720

¹⁴ If we could be sure that the use of the loutrophoros as a grave marker was restricted to those who died before marriage (Demosthenes, 44.18 and 30), it would be possible to suggest that this monument marks the grave of Timokleides. The son, then, might have died first, and Lysis himself could have been buried near by in a family plot of which Timokleides' loutrophoros formed a part. Lysis' name would then have been added to Timokleides' monument as the head of the family. Against this reconstruction (for which I am indebted to Dr. Petrakos) might be urged the apparent maturity of the bearded Timokleides in the relief, the fact that Lysis' name stands above that of Timokleides on the base, and the lack of agreement among scholars as to the exclusive use of loutrophoroi for gravestones of the unwed. See, e.g., D. Kurtz, J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, London 1971, p. 152, "we may . . . question whether all those whose graves were marked by the vase did in fact die unmarried. A more general use for the so-called *loutrophoros* is likely: a vase for the *loutra*, water for bathing. This broader interpretation corresponds better with the diverse iconography of the vases, on which battles, weddings, and funerals are most often represented, and with the many different purposes for which we see them being used in scenes on vases." See also C. Dehl, "Eine Gruppe früher Lutrophorestelen aus dem Kerameikos," *AthMitt* 96, 1981, pp. 173–178, for the use of loutrophoroi to mark the graves of old men in 4th-century B.C. Athens.

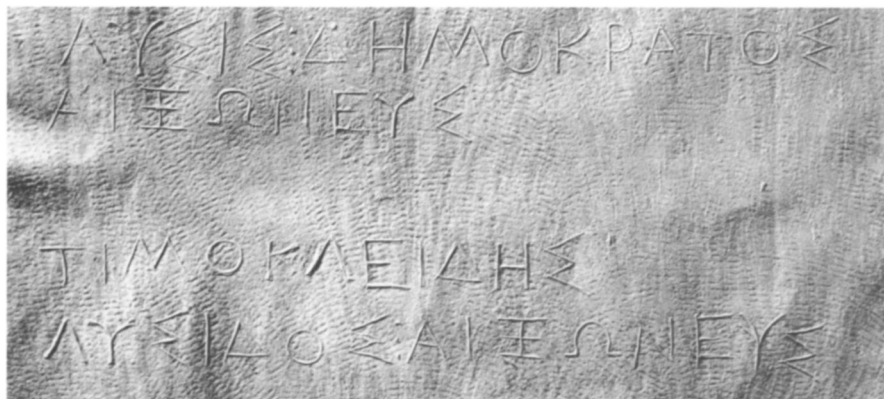
I am indebted to B. Petrakos and J. K. Davies for reading an earlier version of this paper.



a. Grave monument found at Moschaton



b. Detail of loutrophoros



c. Squeeze of inscription on base

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