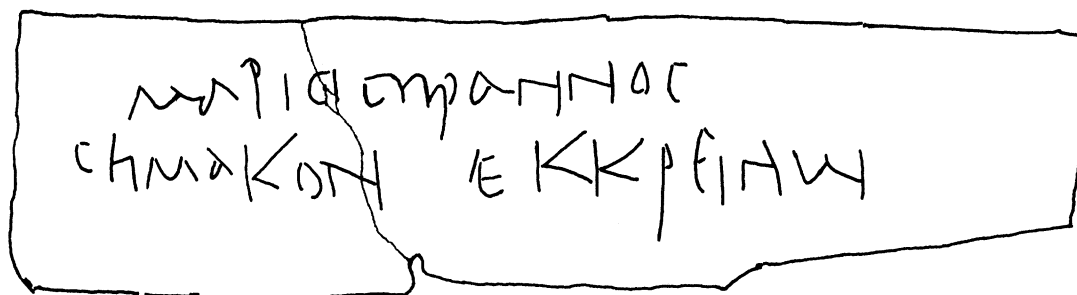


A NEW DOCUMENT FROM THE ISTHMIAN GAMES

IN THE BELIEF that its text may be of some interest to students of the Greek games, we publish here an inscribed lead tablet found in 1958 in no datable context at the bottom of a reservoir in the West Water Works at Isthmia.¹ The letters have been lightly scratched into the surface with a sharp, pointed instrument. The back is blank. The tablet was separated into two pieces in being excavated but is easily reassembled:



(Scale 1:1)

Isthmia inv. IM 3263

H. 0.036, W. 0.141, Th. 0.001 m.

Roman Imperial

Μάριος Τύραννος
Σήμακον ἐκκρέινω.

I, Marius Tyrannos, disqualify Semakos.

The text shows routine informal phonetic spellings: ἐκκρέινω for ἐκκρίνω and Σήμακον for a name whose root is elsewhere attested as Σιμ- or Σειμ-.² As for the date of the tablet, its

¹ We should like to thank O. Broneer and E. R. Gebhard, former and present directors of the excavations at Isthmia conducted by the University of Chicago on behalf of the American School of Classical Studies, for permission to publish the tablet, and S. G. Cole and M. B. Wallace for improving an earlier draft of this note; if mistakes remain, they are our own. The part of the reservoir where the tablet was found is shown in O. Broneer, *Isthmia*, II, *Topography and Architecture*, Princeton 1973, Plan III, at the letter A in the label WEST WATER WORKS. Professor Gebhard asks us to mention here that the reservoir and the drains that led to it lay in an area that was used for religious events; if we are correct in thinking that the tablet's presence in the reservoir was accidental (see below), then Professor Gebhard's observation opens the possibility that the accident may have had some connection with such activities.

² For the interchange of εἰ and ι see F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, I, *Phonology*, Milan n.d., p. 160; for that of η and ι (ει), Gignac, pp. 235–242. Without pretending to offer a complete list of Σίμακοι, we cite three examples from Epeiros: *IG* IV², 95, line 26 (4th century B.C.); 99, line 19 (2nd century B.C.); and *SEG* XVI, 387 (Hellenistic?). Cognate names in inscriptions include Σημάκων (e.g. *IG* VII, 1386 [Tanagra, Hellenistic?]; Δελτ 19, 1964, B' [1966], p. 203, no. 18 [Thebes, 2nd or 3rd century after Christ]), Σιμακάς (e.g. *IG* IX 1², 531 [Palairos, 3rd century

letter forms imply the Roman period, but its text is too short to admit of greater precision. Nomenclature offers at least a possible *terminus post quem*, for the name Marius Tyrannos suggests that its bearer was a Roman citizen; if he was also a citizen of colonial Corinth, where both his *nomen* and *cognomen* were borne by men of prominence,³ the text was necessarily inscribed after 44 B.C., when the colony was founded. It happens that the only securely dated Corinthian bearers of the *nomen* or the *cognomen* all lived in the 2nd century after Christ, but this does not imply any chronological limit for the names at Corinth, given the incompleteness of our prosopography of the colony.

The commonest type of inscribed lead tablet is the defixio or curse tablet, but the text of the Isthmian tablet is clearly not that of a curse; equally clearly, it does not conform to any other known type of inscription on lead.⁴ The document is unique, but a clue to its nature lies in its verb: *ἐκκρίνω* and its congeners *κρίσις*, *κρίνω*, *ἐγκρίνω*, *ἐγκρισίς*, *ἐγκριτής*, and *ἐγκριτήριος* are technical terms referring to one phase of the public games, the preliminary examination of athletes to determine whether they were qualified to compete. *Κρίσις* has the technical sense of “age category in the competitions”.⁵ For most of the gymnastic events

b.c.]), and the possible feminines *Σιμάκα* (*IG IX* 1², 331 [Tyrrhoei, 3rd century B.C.]) and *Σειμακώ* (*IG VII*, 2682 [Thebes?, Roman Imperial]). If we are correct in interpreting the text as we do below, its meaning excludes the possibility, in itself unlikely on onomastic grounds, that the letters ΣΗΜΑΚΟΝ represent a second *cognomen* of Marius Tyrannos, i.e. *Σιμάκων*.

³ As for the *nomen*, in about A.D. 135 a local family of L. Marii, L. Marius Piso and his two sons, the L. Marii Florus Stlaccianus and Piso Resianus, together set up at Corinth a statue, its dedication in Latin, of a proconsul of Achaia (A. B. West, *Corinth*, VIII, ii, *Latin Inscriptions*, Cambridge, Mass. 1931, no. 56; see the remarks on lines 7–8 by E. Lommatzsch, review of A. B. West, *Corinth*, VIII, ii, *Gnomon* 9, 1933, p. 420, and E. Groag, *Die römischen Reichsbeamten von Achaia bis auf Diokletian*, Vienna/Leipzig 1939, col. 17, note 274); and about A.D. 160–175 a Λ. Μάριος Ἀντίοχος Κορίνθιος, ποιητής and ὑποκριτής of New Comedy, won victories at a festival at Thespiai (P. Jamot, *BCH* 19, 1895, pp. 341–343, no. 16 + A. Plassart, *Λαογραφία* 7, 1923, pp. 177–180, no. 1 = *SEG* III, 334, lines 40, 46, 52; the date is assigned by Jamot; see also the remarks by L. Robert, *Hellenica* II, Paris 1946, p. 12). We may note that the *nomen* Marius, in conjunction with (among others) the *praenomen* Lucius, is found among Italian businessmen active in the eastern Mediterranean during the late republic and early empire (in particular the L. Marius honored at Erythrai: *Die Inschriften von Erythrai und Klazomenai* II, H. Englemann, ed., Bonn 1973, no. 430; and L. Marius Grecinus in a Latin inscription of 14 B.C., *CIL* III, Suppl. I, 7301 [probably from Thespiai: see J. Hatzfeld, *Les trafiquants italiens dans l'orient hellénique*, Paris 1919, pp. 68–69]; Hatzfeld, p. 396, s.v. “Memmi”, a *lapsus calami* for “Marii”, lists other Marii in eastern trade, to which we may add Marius Severus Potiolanus from Syros: M. Šašel Kos, *Inscriptiones latinae in Graecia repertae, additamenta ad CIL III*, Faenza 1979, no. 35), as is the *nomen* Stlaccius, from which was formed Stlaccianus, the second *cognomen* of the Corinthian Piso's elder son (Stlaccii at Kyrene in 7/6 B.C.: V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, Oxford 1955, no. 311, § ii; other eastern Stlaccii: e.g. J. Hatzfeld, “Les Italiens résidant à Délos,” *BCH* 36, 1912, p. 82, and J. Anderson, “Augustan Edicts from Cyrene,” *JRS* 17, 1927, p. 39). The two *nomina* Marius and Stlaccius were probably introduced to Corinth through the settlement there of such businessmen or their freedmen. For the *cognomen* Tyrannos we may cite a [Pu]blilius Tyrannu[s] of uncertain date (J. H. Kent, *Corinth*, VIII, iii, *The Inscriptions. 1926–1950*, Princeton 1966, no. 324, fr. b) and a Π. Ὠκλάτιος Τύραννος of A.D. 137 (B. D. Meritt, *Corinth*, VIII, i, *Greek Inscriptions*, Cambridge, Mass. 1931, no. 15, face c, lines 28–29; for the reading of the last name see W. Peek, review of B. D. Meritt, *Corinth*, VIII, i, *Gnomon* 9, 1933, p. 417; for the date, Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 29, note 26).

⁴ D. Jordan, “Two Inscribed Lead Tablets from a Well in the Athenian Kerameikos,” *AthMitt* 95, 1980, pp. 226–228, lists, with bibliography, the various types of inscribed lead tablets known so far.

⁵ For *κρίσις* in this sense see the epigraphical examples adduced by P. Wolters, *Zu griechischen Agonen*, Würzburg 1901, p. 12, note 23, and L. Robert's helpful discussion of these and other texts in “Inscriptions

at Isthmia, there were three such categories, one for boys (*παῖδες*), one for youth (*ἀγένεοι*), and one for men (*ἄνδρες*),⁶ and for the partly gymnastic, partly equestrian event of acrobatics on horseback, a list of winners in A.D. 127 mentions four *κρίσεις* otherwise unidentified.⁷ The verbs meaning “judge to be fit to be admitted to compete” in a category are *κρίνω* and *ἐγκρίνω*, and the word for admission is *ἐγκρισις*.⁸ We do not know just what board of magistrates officiated at the admissions at Isthmia, but if the admissions system there was like that at Olympia, the magistrates were probably the Isthmian Ἑλληνοδίκαι;⁹ at any rate, inscriptions from Lebadeia and from Hierapolis in Kilikia tell us that the generic term for such magistrates was *ἐγκριταί*.¹⁰ An inscription from Isthmia, *IG IV*, 203, which has been assigned to the 2nd century after Christ on the basis of its letter forms, records in detail the reconstruction of the sanctuary’s gymnasium after an earthquake; the new building included *ἐγκριτήριοι οἴκοι*, rooms where athletes were examined before they were admitted as competitors.¹¹ The tablet’s verb *ἐκκρίνω* is the opposite of *κρίνω* and *ἐγκρίνω* in their technical senses; it means “eliminate, rule out, disqualify”.¹²

At the qualifying examination preliminary to an athletic competition, candidates for selection were paraded together before the judges. This much at least we may infer to have been true in the 2nd century after Christ, when Artemidoros of Daldis recounted, in his *Onirocriticum*, an aspiring young athlete’s dream that, *παροδεύων ἅμα τοῖς ἄλλοις παισὶν ἐν παρεξαγωγῇ*, he was judged by Asklepios himself and was rejected (5.13). The boy died—Artemidoros implies that the dream had predicted this—before the contest began. If

grecques d’Asie Mineure,” *Anatolian Studies Presented to William Hepburn Buckler*, W. M. Calder and J. Keil, edd., Manchester 1939, pp. 239–244, as well as his remarks in *Hellenica XI–XII*, Paris 1960, pp. 334–335.

⁶ Meritt (*op. cit.* [footnote 3 above], pp. 23–25) discusses the program of events at Isthmia.

⁷ W. R. Biers and D. J. Geagan, “A New List of Victors in the Caesarea at Isthmia,” *Hesperia* 39, 1970, pp. 79–93, lines 85–93 of the inscription.

⁸ *Κρίνω*: L. Robert, *Anatolian Studies* (footnote 5 above), p. 240. *Ἐγκρίνω*: e.g. Xenophon, *Hellenica* iv.1.40; *IG V* 1, 20 (Sparta, Trajanic); Artemidoros, 1.59, 1.60; Aristides, *Orationes* 29 (40).18; cf. also Pliny, *N.H.* xxxiv.72 and K. Jex-Blake, *The Elder Pliny’s Chapters on the History of Art*, London 1896, *ad loc.* *Ἐγκρισις*: e.g. Lucian, *pro imaginibus*, 11; Artemidoros, *loc. cit.* and 5.13; Aristides, *loc. cit.*

⁹ Hellenodikai are listed in agonistic inscriptions as over-all officials of the games at Isthmia, e.g. *Corinth VIII*, i, no. 14 (A.D. 13); nos. 15 + 18 = A. Spawforth, “The Appaleni of Corinth,” *GRBS* 15, 1974, pp. 297–299 (late 2nd century after Christ); iii, no. 223 (mid-2nd century after Christ); and the text published by W. R. Biers and D. J. Geagan, *op. cit.* (footnote 7 above). For their rôle at Olympia, see J. Oehler, “Hellanodikai,” *RE VIII*, Stuttgart 1913, cols. 155–157, with references to ancient authors given there. In particular, for the Hellanodikai’s being in charge of admitting candidates to the Olympic games, see, for the earlier period, Herodotos, v.22. Lucian (*pro imaginibus*, 11) suggests that they were still officiating when he wrote in the 2nd century after Christ.

¹⁰ Lebadeia: W. Vollgraff, “Inscriptions de Béotie,” *BCH* 25, 1901, p. 368, C, line 7, with the corrected reading by M. Holleaux, *Études d’épigraphie et d’histoire grecques*, Paris 1938, p. 134, line 40, and the comments by L. Robert, *Hellenica XI–XII*, Paris 1960, p. 335, note 6. Hierapolis: R. Heberdey and A. Wilhelm, *Reisen in Kilikien*, Vienna 1896, p. 30, no. 68.

¹¹ The adjective *ἐγκριτήριος* is elsewhere unattested. The definition that we give is based on A. Boeckh’s commentary (followed by LSJ) on *CIG* 1104, an earlier edition of the inscription. For a general discussion and a photograph of the inscription, see O. Broneer, “An Official Rescript from Corinth,” *Hesperia* 8, 1939, pp. 181–190; Broneer tentatively dates the text on the basis of its letter forms.

¹² L. Robert (*op. cit.* [footnote 10 above], pp. 334–335) has collected examples of *ἐκκρίνω* in its technical sense.

the dream is at all symbolic of the portentousness, in a candidate's waking thoughts, of the outcome of the examinations, they were times when emotions ran high; fear of failure must have been intense; and no doubt the *ἐγκριταί* could be subject to much pressure from the candidates, their families, and their friends. *IG IV*, 203 does not state why the *ἐγκριτήριοι οἴκοι* were thought necessary at Isthmia, but their effect would have been to ensure some relative privacy and order at the proceedings. A further precaution against pressure on the judges would be a system of secret ballots in these rooms. We consider this to be the likeliest interpretation of the inscribed lead tablet, that Marius Tyrannos was one of the *ἐγκριταί* and the tablet is the ballot recording his vote to disqualify the candidate Semakos.

If this interpretation is correct, the tablet provides new evidence—our only evidence, other than Artemidoros' phrase quoted above—for the mechanics of the preliminary judging at the games. If the voting was in fact kept secret, it is easy to explain why we have no other such tablets: the ballots were no doubt intended to be turned in to the secretary or the chairman of the board of magistrates for counting and, if secrecy was to be guaranteed, for defacement as well; the survival of Marius Tyrannos' tablet at the bottom of the reservoir must then be the result of some unusual and happy accident.

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