

A NEW INSCRIBED FUNERARY MONUMENT FROM AIGINA

ABSTRACT

This article presents an ancient monument discovered on Aigina in 1999. The monument is remarkable for its unusual shape: a rectangular slab with a pyramidal top, a two-line inscription, and a deep niche with dowel holes in the floor and back walls. I argue that the monument is funerary in function, and that its peculiar features are related to its primary use. The inscription gives a male name and a patronymic, Aristoukhos Aristomeneos, and can be dated to the 4th century B.C. It is possible that Aristomenes, the father of Aristoukhos, is the hero of Pindar's *Pythian* 8.

An ancient monument discovered in 1999 on the island of Aigina merits attention for two reasons.¹ First, it displays an unusual combination of architectonic features: a pyramidal top crowning a rectangular monolithic slab, and a deep narrow niche cut in the face of the slab. Second, the monument bears an inscription, which could be the first epigraphic evidence on Aigina for the clients of Pindar's Aiginetan odes.

1. I would like to thank many friends and colleagues at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens who have lent their time and expertise to the discussion of this monument: A. Ajootian, N. Bookidis, W. Closterman, C. Gray, J. Grossman, M. Langdon, C. Lawton, J. Morgan, M. Richardson, D. Romano, R. Stroud, M. Sturgeon, and C. Williams. I owe special thanks to M. H. Jameson and H. Kritzas, whose helpful comments and suggestions saved me from many errors. I would also like to thank the 2nd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, and especially its director, George Steinhauer, for granting me permission to study and publish this monument. Finally, I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers of *Hesperia* for their recommendations, which I have taken to heart.

2. There is no source of marble on Aigina, so the stone would necessarily have been purchased and brought from the outside.

THE MONUMENT

The monument was found in the church of Agios Nikolaos in the area of Kavouropetra, on the northern coast of Aigina, about 2.5 km northeast of the town of Aigina. It is set flush with the edge of the threshold inside the church and is 1.5 m high, 0.48 m wide, and 0.24 m thick, including a pyramidal top that begins 1.29 m from the bottom of the block (Figs. 1–2). The stone of the monument is a medium-grained marble, grayish in color.² A two-line inscription on the smooth front face extends from left to right below the top (Fig. 3). A rectangular cutting 0.08 m below the base of the pyramidal top and roughly centered between the long sides of the monument (0.115 m from the left edge and 0.12 m from the right) measures 0.66 m in length, 0.245 m in width, and 0.225 m deep. The bottom edge of the monument is broken off front to back at the left and right. The tip of the pyramidal top is cut off, leaving a flat rectangle (L. 0.08 m, W. 0.065 m) with a circular hole in the center (Diam. 0.015 m). The hole



Figure 1. Funerary monument of Aristoukhos inside the church of Agios Nikolaos, Kavouropetra, Aigina. Photo author

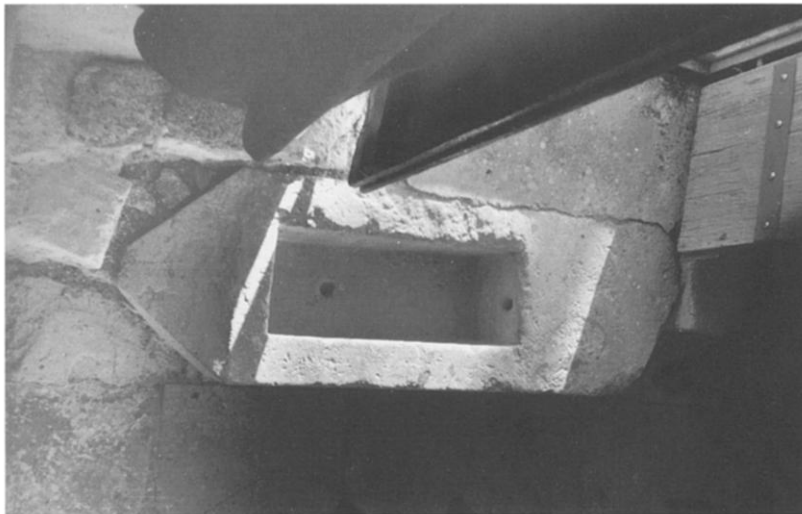


Figure 2. Funerary monument with cleaned niche. Photo author

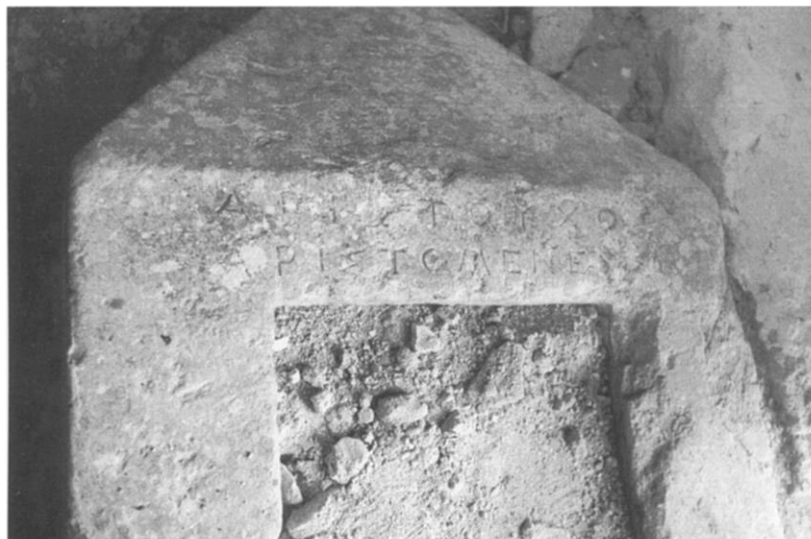


Figure 3. Inscription on the funerary monument. Photo author

is filled with debris and whitewash, so that it is impossible to determine its original depth.

The left and right walls of the cutting are worked smooth surfaces, but the floor is somewhat rougher. In the back wall of the niche is a circular hole with chipped-off edges that presumably goes through the stone. The hole (Diam. 0.02 m) is centered vis-à-vis the sides, and is located 0.2 m below the ceiling of the niche. Another hole, elliptical in shape (L. 0.065 m, W. 0.035 m, D. 0.06 m), is cut into the floor of the cutting, 0.05 m from the front surface of the monument and slightly off center, 0.093 m from the left, and 0.117 m from the right wall of the cutting. The edges of this hole slope inward and look worn. In addition, the remains of two iron nails can be seen in the walls of the niche, close to the bottom.

A single glance at this monument is enough to recognize its unusual form. To distinguish its primary design and possible secondary alterations we need to consider the five major elements of the monument's design: the rectangular shaft, the pyramidal top, the cutting, the holes inside the cutting, and the inscription. Leaving aside the holes for the moment, the strongest argument for the originality and contemporaneity of the other four elements is their architectonic relationship to each other. The position of the rectangular cutting, which I identify as a niche (see below), is determined by the baseline of the pyramidal top and the sides of the rectangular shaft: the top edge of the niche is parallel to the baseline of the pyramidal top, and the niche is centered between the sides of the monument.

The placement of the inscription at an equal distance between the baseline of the pyramidal top and the top edge of the niche is another indication that all three elements (the pyramidal top, the niche, and the inscription) were designed together. The hole in the floor of the niche can be explained as a dowel hole for the attachment of a three-dimensional object. It is possible that the hole in the back of the niche is a later addition. Circular holes are often found on reused grave stelai and are usually identified as conduits for a water pipe of a fountain head.³ If this were the case with the Aeginetan monument, however, one would expect to find dark stains or marks of water wear, none of which are present on the inner wall of the niche. If this hole is original, it can be explained as an additional dowel hole for the securing of an object in the niche. Thus, there are strong grounds for viewing all the elements of the monument as parts of the original design.

INSCRIPTION

The inscription on the stone (Figs. 4–5) can be described as follows:

L.H. 0.015–0.018 m, *omicron* Diam. 0.013–0.014 m. Spacing between the letters of the first line is 0.02–0.025 m; between the letters of the second line, 0.01–0.015 m, except between the first *alpha* and *rho*, which is 0.02 m. The length of the first line is 0.31 m, of the second, 0.30 m. The distance between the two lines is 0.015–0.02 m.

3. E.g., Clairmont, *CAT* 2.382c [= Conze 1893–1922, II, cat. no. 658, pl. CXX]; Conze 1893–1922, IV, cat. no. 1871, p. 37.



Figure 4. Squeeze of the inscription.
Photo author

saec. IV a.

Ἀριστοῦχος
Ἀριστομένεος

The two words together, Ἀριστοῦχος Ἀριστομένεος, give us a personal male name and a patronymic, which in the absence of any additional words (e.g., those that could suggest a votive stele) most likely indicate that our monument is funerary, honoring and preserving the memory of a deceased person.

In general, the lettering of the inscription is very carefully executed, with a slight widening of the ends of some hastae. All but one of the eleven letters that appear in the inscription are familiar from Archaic and Classical examples on Aigina.⁴ The form of *nu* (straight vertical strokes of equal length) is unattested on Aigina in the Archaic and Early Classical periods. During the Peloponnesian War, the Aiginetan population was in exile, and Athenian settlers occupied the island (Thuc. 4.56.2). Thus, we have no evidence of Aiginetan writing from this period, and the examples of post-war inscriptions are extremely meager.⁵ Under these circumstances, we cannot determine whether the *nu* on the Aiginetan block was a regular form used in that period. Although it appears to be a *hapax* in the known Aiginetan usage, there can be little doubt that the inscription is Aiginetan. The dialect of the inscription is Doric, as the uncontracted genitive of Ἀριστομένης (Ἀριστομένεος instead of Ἀριστομένους) demonstrates.⁶ Without indications of a foreign origin, due weight must be given to the

4. *LSAG*², Aigina, α4, ε4, ι, μ2, ο, ρ1, σ2, τ, χ. The letters of our inscription display some stylistic variations of the known forms: *alpha*—the right leg is slightly shorter than the left and ends above baseline; *epsilon*—the middle stroke is shorter than the upper and lower, and not touching the vertical; *mu*—perceptible, but very slight inward curving of outer hastae; *sigma*—shorter central strokes of the 4-bar sigma. The *upsilon* is found in the inventory of the Sanctuary of

Aphaia (*IG* IV 39, second half of the 5th century B.C.). The unattested letter form is *nu*.

5. Only one published inscription on a sarcophagus dates to the 4th century B.C.; see *ArchDelt* 32 (1977) B'1 [1984], p. 43 = *SEG* XXXIV 270. Already in the second half of the 5th century, some of the known Aiginetan inscriptions may not be reflecting purely Aiginetan letter forms. In 457 B.C., Aigina was defeated by Athens and forced into

the Delian League (Thuc. 1.105.2–4, 108), and the island was occupied by Athens during the Peloponnesian War. A number of the *horos* stones and inventories of the sanctuaries date to the second half of the 5th century on Aigina, and could be seen as the product of Athenian presence on the island. They pose many problems in identification of scripts (Barron 1983; Figueira 1991, pp. 115–120).

6. Buck 1955, p. 40.

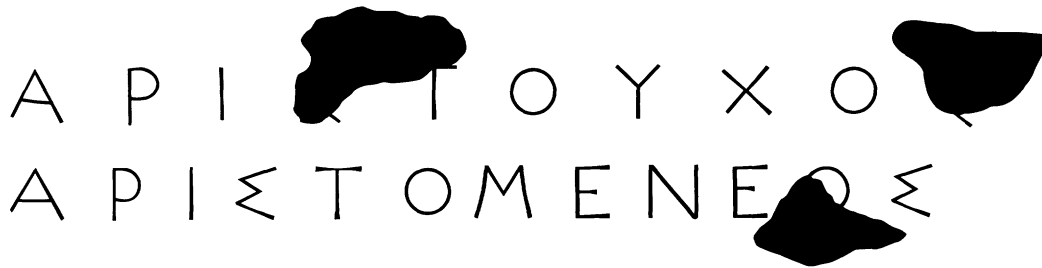


Figure 5. Drawing of the inscription.
I. Polinskaya and G. Lavoie

stone's place of discovery on Aigina. In sum, the dialect of the inscription, the presence of most of the letters in the Aiginetan alphabet, and the provenance of the monument strongly suggest that it is an Aiginetan product.

The precise date of the inscription is difficult to determine. The absence of the diagnostic Archaic Aiginetan letter forms rules out an Archaic date.⁷ At the same time, the absence of the prominent characteristics of the Hellenistic and Roman letter forms, such as straight parallel upper and lower bars for sigma, lunate curves, and pronounced serifs, militates against a Hellenistic or later date.⁸ Since the number of Classical inscriptions on Aigina is small,⁹ the chronology of developments in the local script in this period is not established. We thus may be justified in using outside comparanda for the purposes of approximate dating. Comparison with Attic examples suggests that some special characteristics of the letter forms in the Aiginetan inscription might be indicative of a date following the Peloponnesian War. The shorter middle bar for *epsilon* and the slight curving of the vertical strokes of *mu* in this inscription are familiar from Attic examples of the first quarter of the 4th century B.C.¹⁰ The widening of the free ends of the letter strokes (as in the *tau* and *epsilon* here) can be seen in Attic funerary inscriptions dating from ca. 350 to 325 B.C.¹¹

These and earlier observations suggest a date some time in the 4th century B.C. A more precise date would require a larger sample of local inscriptions to draw on, which we lack at the present time.

7. *LSAG*², Aigina, α2, v1, v2, v3, v4, p. 109.

8. Woodhead 1959, p. 64.

9. Classical funerary inscriptions are especially infrequent, and all but one date to the 5th century B.C.: *IG IV* 50, gravestone of Antistates the Athenian, ca. 450 (*SEG XXV* 332, *XXIX* 295); *IG IV* 49, gravestone of Gleukitas the Salaminian, 5th century(?) (*SEG XXV* 323, *XXIX* 296); *IG IV* 47, gravestone of Hermaios, ca. 475–450 (*SEG XI* 30, *XV* 187, *XXIX* 297); *ArchDelt* 34 (1979) B1 [1987], p. 69, graffiti on a potsherd and on a complete pot from a grave, 5th century

(*SEG XXXVII* 254 and 262); Welter 1938a, p. 58, fig. 49, and 1938b, pp. 521–523, names of the deceased painted or carved in the chamber tombs.

10. Funerary stele of Chrysallis, Phaidrias, and Myrta, *IG II*² 5649, 390–365 B.C., Athens, Nat. Mus. 750 (Conze 1893–1922, I, cat. no. 392, p. 91, pl. XCVI); funerary stele of Menekrateia, *IG II*² 12086, 390–365 B.C. (Conze 1893–1922, I, cat. no. 161, p. 40, pl. L); funerary stele of Tito, *IG II*² 10231, first half of the 4th century; funerary stele of Artemisia, *IG II*² 10840, beginning of

the 4th century. See also the later funerary stele of Epithales, *IG II*² 9157, 350–340 B.C., Ker. 4857 (*Kerameikos* II, pp. 40–41, pl. 11).

11. Funerary monument of Damasistrate, *IG II*² 11037, 350–330 B.C., Athens, Nat. Mus. 743 (Conze 1893–1922, I, cat. no. 410, pp. 94–95, pl. XCVII); funerary stele of Symmachia, *IG II*² 9337, slightly before ca. 317/316 B.C., Athens, Nat. Mus. 1728. See also *IG II*² 6942, first half of the 4th century, Athens, Epigr. Mus. 2674 (Clairmont, *CAT* suppl., no. PE or RSE 33, fig. p. 130).

PROSOPOGRAPHY

The name Ἀριστομένης is well attested throughout the Greek world.¹² The name Ἀριστοῦχος is much more rare. An Ἀριστοῦχος is known from Epidauros (*IG IV² 187*, 4th century B.C.; note the variant -στῶχ-). Seven persons of this name are known from the Aegean islands, of which the earliest two are dated to the 4th century B.C. No Ἀριστοῦχος is known from central Greece, and the only Ἀριστοῦχος in Attica was apparently a metic from Kythnos.¹³

Nor is any other Ἀριστοῦχος known from Aigina. The only Ἀριστομένης attested on Aigina is the hero of Pindar's *Pythian* 8. This *epinikion* is considered to be the last written by Pindar and is usually dated to 446 B.C., "the only poem, so far as we know, that Pindar wrote for Aegina after she had lost her independence as a result of the Athenian victory at Oenophyta (Thuc. 1.108)."¹⁴ The Aristomenes of *Pythian* 8 was the son of Xenarkes, from the clan of Meidyldai.¹⁵ Other relatives mentioned in the *epinikion* are his maternal uncles, Theognetos and Kleitomakhos (Pind. *Pyth.* 8, lines 36–38). Aristomenes is honored with an *epinikion* for a victory in wrestling at the Pythian Games. He won other victories at home in the pentathlon of Apollo,¹⁶ and abroad, at Megara, Marathon, and Argos (lines 78–80).¹⁷ In 446 B.C., Aristomenes could be described as being "on the verge of manhood,"¹⁸ a description reinforced by the prominent place given to the figure of his father in the poem (lines 71–75), as well as by the direct addressing of the athlete as "a child," ὦ παῖ (line 33). If Aristomenes was fifteen years old in 446, he would have been thirty in 431, when his family was forced into exile. A hypothetical son of this Aristomenes could still have been alive in the third quarter of the 4th century B.C. Although it would be dangerous to insist on the identity of the Meidyldid Aristomenes, the son of Xenarkes, with Aristomenes, the father of Aristoukhos, at least the dates for the *floruit* of the former Aristomenes' hypothetical son and the dating of the Aiginetan funerary inscription are fully compatible.

12. In the Peloponnese, western Greece, and Magna Graecia, the name Aristomenes is attested 65 times. On the Aegean islands and Cyrenaica, there are 108 attestations, of which 27 are 4th century or earlier. In Attica, there are 58 attestations; in central Greece, 43, of which all but two are later than the 4th century (*LGPNI*, II, IIIA, IIIB, s.v. Ἀριστομένης).

13. *LGPNI*, II, IIIA, s.v. Ἀριστοῦχος. For the metic, see Meritt 1954, p. 271, no. 110 (*SEG XIV 207*), a 4th-century gravestone; I would like to thank John Traill for bringing this inscription to my attention.

14. Burton 1962, p. 174.

15. *Pyth.* 8, line 38, πάτραν Μειδυλάδαν, Pind. fr. 190, ἄ Μιδύλου δ' αὐτῷ

γενεά. Burton 1962, pp. 181–182; Figueira 1981, pp. 311–313.

16. Scholia to these lines of *Pyth.* 8 indicate that the pentathlon was part of the Delphinia festival in honor of Apollo on Aigina (Drachmann 1910, p. 215). A temple of Apollo in the town of Aigina and a stadium nearby are mentioned by Pausanias (2.29.11–2.30.1).

17. Contrary to most current opinions (e.g., Simon 1980, p. 44), I identify Ἡρας ἄγων ἐπιχώριον as the Argive Heraia, not as a local Aiginetan festival in honor of Hera. Modern interpreters rely on the lone scholiast who says that there was a local Heraia on Aigina (Drachmann 1910, p. 217), yet it is likely that the scholiast

himself misunderstood the reference. The "local agon of Hera" appears in the list of Aristomenes' foreign victories, and serves as a paraphrase for the festival and place name (Heraia at Argos, the most well known "local" agon of Hera), which is a common practice in Pindar (cf. *Ol.* 9, lines 98–99). When prompted about athletic contests on Aigina, the scholia provide two names of festivals: Delphinia and Aiakeia. If the Heraia were another competition on Aigina, one might expect to find that other athletes celebrated in Pindar's twelve Aiginetan odes would be mentioned as victors in these allegedly local games, but *Pyth.* 8 remains the sole reference.

18. Burton 1962, p. 174.

It is likely that Aristoukhos and Aristomenes were members of a noble family,¹⁹ as were the Meidyliid Aristomenes and his father, Xenarkes. While it is possible that the Aristomenes on the present monument was not the one celebrated in *Pythian* 8, he could have been a member of the same extended family. Whether a relative of the Pythian victor or not, Aristoukhos son of Aristomenes lived in the period of lost glory in the history of Aigina. Though restored to their homeland in 404 B.C., the Aiginetans would never again achieve the prominence in the international arena that they had held before 457, the period of their independence. Both textual and material evidence from the 4th century are very poor on Aigina. Perhaps one reason lies in the vicissitudes of exile: the returning population was not as numerous as the one that had left two and a half decades earlier.²⁰ If we are to imagine that Aristoukhos son of Aristomenes was one of the returning exiles, he may well have been returning to a looted house and an empty coffer.

If we compare the monument on Aigina with the large monumental tombs of the 4th century in Attica (e.g., the Dexileos monument, the monument of Aristonauates, and the Kallithea monument),²¹ we might assess its value as modest. Yet it must be conceded that the acquisition and transportation of marble from outside the island, and the commission of the design and execution of the monument, required some financial expenditure. It is possible that such a relatively modest monument may be a reflection of the reduced fortunes of the Aiginetan aristocracy in the 4th century B.C. At the same time, we should note that even in the time of prosperity, in the 6th and early 5th centuries B.C., it was not an Aiginetan custom to set up ostentatious grave markers.

Typical burials on Aigina throughout antiquity were underground chamber tombs or shaft graves with stairways.²² Rarely were grave markers erected above ground over tombs.²³ Two surviving gravestones of the 6th century B.C. (*IG IV* 47, 48) are undecorated pillars made of trachyte. The only three known 5th-century grave markers are common relief stelai.²⁴ After the interruption of local burial practices during the Athenian occupation of the island from 431 to 404 B.C., chamber tombs are again used;

19. It must be granted that while names in Ἀριστο- are appropriate to aristocrats, they hardly guarantee that status.

20. Xen. *Hell.* 2.29.9: Λύσανδρος δὲ ἀφικόμενος εἰς Αἴγιναν ἀπέδωκε τὴν πόλιν Αἰγινήταις, ὅσους ἐδύνατο πλείστους αὐτῶν ἀθροίσας. See also Figueira 1993, p. 323; Plut. *Lys.* 14.4.

21. Dexileos monument, 394/3, Ker. Mus. P 1130 (Clairmont, *CAT* 2.209; Stewart 1990, p. 172, fig. 482); Aristonauates monument, *IG II²* 5462, second half of the 4th century, Athens, Nat. Mus. 738 (Clairmont, *CAT* 1.460; Rolley 1994, p. 378, fig. 397);

Kallithea monument (tomb of Nike-ratos and Polyxenos of Istria), 330–320, Peiraieus Mus., no inv. no. (Steinhauer 2001, pls. 458–459; Ridgway 1990, pp. 31–32, 64, n. 15).

22. On Aiginetan burials: Welter 1938a, pp. 55–62; 1938b, pp. 495–524; Papastaurou 1990, pls. 7–14. Tombs of the 6th–5th centuries: *ArchDelt* 18 (1963) B1 [1965], p. 52; *ArchDelt* 21 (1966) B1 [1968], pp. 100–102; *ArchDelt* 33 (1978) B1 [1985], p. 53; *ArchDelt* 34 (1979) B1 [1987], pp. 68–71.

23. The only grave markers found in situ: *IG IV* 47, 48; *ArchDelt* 36 (1981) B1 [1988], p. 67, at Leophoros

Agias Paraskevis 174 in Chalikaki-Meristos (*SEG XXXVIII* 289); *ArchEph* 1986 [1990], p. 58, n. 61 (*SEG XXXIX* 331).

24. Aigina Mus. 733, ca. 450 B.C. (*Alt-Agina* II.2, no. 55, p. 82, pl. 43). Aigina Mus. 729, early 5th century B.C. (*Alt-Agina* II.2, no. 54, pp. 80, 82, pl. 42), is sometimes identified as funerary: Hiller 1975, p. 72, n. 20. A funerary stele of a young man, Athens, Nat. Mus. 715, 430–420 B.C. (Fuchs 1993, pp. 487–488, fig. 571), dates to the period of the Athenian occupation of Aigina, and was probably an Athenian commission.

surviving examples date from the second half of the 4th century.²⁵ Aside from the present monument, no grave markers are known from 4th-century Aigina. The inscribed marble monument with a niche thus appears to have been exceptional in the context of Aiginetan burial practices, and although modest in comparison to contemporary Athenian grave markers, it represents an effort to produce a distinctive and respectable memorial for the dead.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Three features of the monument define its peculiarity: the pyramidal top, niche, and dowel holes, presumably indicating the points at which an object was secured in the niche (Fig. 6).

PYRAMIDAL TOP

The pyramidal top of the monument was originally fitted with a finial, which is indicated by a small round hole on the flat area created by the leveling of the tip of the pyramid. Parallels for the use of attachments on top of funerary monuments, however, are hard to find.²⁶ No other monuments with pyramidal tops are known from Aigina. A pyramidal top in general is a rare element in the design of ancient Greek funerary monuments.²⁷ One unambiguous Classical example of the use of a pyramid as a grave marker is the 5th-century B.C. monument of Parthenia, the daughter of Nadys the Carian, from Sinope. The three-sided pyramid probably represents only the top part of the monument, the rest of which has not survived.²⁸ A grave marker of unknown date with a four-sided stepped pyramidal top is known from the cemetery of Canalicchio in Syracuse, and representations of four-sided stepped pyramidal roofs crowning what might be *heroa* are found on Apulian vases of the 4th century B.C.²⁹ Apart from the visual resemblance, no stylistic links can be established between these monuments and the Aiginetan example.

Nor, outside a funerary context, can two other types of Greek monuments incorporating pyramidal shapes into their design be considered

25. Welter 1938b, p. 498.

26. Although not numerous, examples are known of round holes, as well as rectangular dowels, for architectural attachments on top of the so-called *Totenmahrelief* stelai, at least from the Hellenistic period (Fabricius 1999, pp. 138–143, fig. 19:c–k).

27. Two examples of three-sided pyramidlike funerary monuments of the Roman period are known from the Kerameikos: P 673 (*Kerameikos* II, p. 50, no. 47, pl. 14) and P 210 (*Kerameikos* II, pp. 50–51).

28. Istanbul, Arch. Mus. 3868,

local Asia Minor marble; H. 0.33 m, second quarter of the 5th century B.C. (Pfuhl and Möbius 1977–1979, I, p. 16, no. 22, pl. 6; Clairmont 1970, no. 10, pl. 36). All three sides of the pyramid were inscribed, and these epigrams twice refer to a stele, indicating, as Clairmont (1970, p. 34) noted, that the pyramid surmounted a stele. Clairmont (1970, p. 34, n. 119) identifies this pyramidal monument as unique, but refers to additional evidence for the use of pyramids as grave markers in classical antiquity. In addition, Nakayama (1982, pp. 43–

45, fig. 4:a), on the basis of vase paintings, identifies a type of grave marker (GB-I) in the shape of a “blockförmige Monumente mit pyramidalem Oberbau,” the pyramid of which is of stepped construction, and topped with a stele.

29. Grave marker from Syracuse: Mus. Naz. 40089; Apulian amphora, *CVA* Karlsruhe 2 [Germany 8], pl. 60. Another potsherd is in the personal collection of N. Neuerburg, who published an illustration of this sherd without assigning it a number (Neuerburg 1969, pp. 111–112).

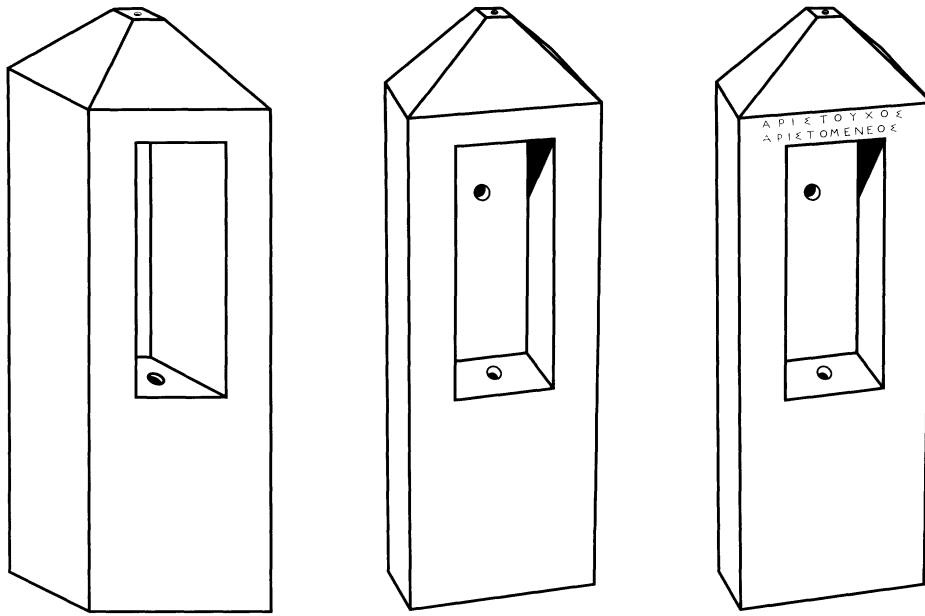


Figure 6. Reconstruction drawing of the funerary monument of Aristoukhos, without finial and sculpture. Drawing M. Kapgan

stylistic parallels or inspirations, as they display many differences from the monument considered here. For example, pyramidal tops (with concave sides) that crown votive pillars from Arcadia are separated by single or double bands of molding from their pillar shafts, which are square in plan.³⁰ Neither concavity, nor moldings, nor the square plan are part of the design of the monument from Aigina. *Kyrbeis*, “freestanding, stele-like objects of bronze or stone, having either three or four sides, and crowned at the top by a pyramidal cap,”³¹ were used in Athens as monuments on which official regulations were inscribed.³² The only archaeological evidence that supports this definition of *kyrbeis*, however, consists of bases with triangular cuttings that indicate that the shafts of the inserted pillars were of triangular shape. This feature differs significantly from the design of the present monument. Thus, in spite of the common pyramidal elements, neither the *kyrbeis* nor Arcadian votive pillars are closely related to the Aiginetan block.

NICHE

The deep rectangular cutting on the face of the monument should be identified as a niche, an enclosure for the placement of an object. The proportions of the niche (H. 0.66 m, W. 0.245 m, D. 0.225 m) suggest that it is too deep and narrow to have been used for a relief. The almost square floor of the cutting (L. 0.245 m, W. 0.225 m) with a large, deep hole somewhat off center suggests that the niche was made for a three-dimensional and

30. These votive pillars come from Tegea, Mantinea, and Pallantion, the earliest dating from the first half of the 5th century, and bear votive

inscriptions on one of the four sides of the shaft (Arvanitopoulos 1906, pp. 63–66, nos. 16–17; Rhomaïos 1911; Papachatzes 1967, p. 408). These

references are collected in Stroud 1979, p. 47, n. 148.

31. Stroud 1979, p. 47.

32. Stroud 1979, pp. 1–40, 49–50.

not a flat object. A rectangular niche is the only type known from Archaic and Classical Greece, and it is mostly used as an architectural element, a wall niche.³³ Niches in funerary contexts are also frequently wall niches, used for the placement of funerary urns.³⁴ The main peculiarity of the Aiginetan example, however, is that the niche is located within a free-standing monolithic monument. A survey of the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods on the Greek mainland, Asia Minor, the Pontus area, and some of the Aegean islands has thus far not revealed any other examples of freestanding monolithic funerary monuments with a deep niche for a three-dimensional object.³⁵

DOWEL HOLES AND THE OBJECT IN THE NICHE

If the holes in the floor and back wall of the niche were indeed associated with the original use of the monument, it seems most likely that they held dowels used to anchor an object. The shape of the niche, with the height roughly three times the width, suggests that it was designed to hold a tall and narrow object. Suitable objects for this shape and these proportions include a vase, such as a loutrophoros or lekythos,³⁶ stone versions of which were often used as grave markers in the Classical period (Fig. 7),³⁷ or a statuette.

A tall, narrow stone vessel would be an especially attractive candidate for the inhabitant of the niche.³⁸ Lekythoi and loutrophoroi are often represented on Classical Attic grave reliefs as standing on a shelf or ledge, illustrating the practice of setting up ceramic shapes of the same kind on tombs.³⁹ Sometimes these vessels are shown on grave monuments in a

33. Some of the earliest examples in the historical period are the so-called *Wandnischen*, wall niches from Thasos that were constructed in the walls of the city gates. They are usually considered cultic. Other examples of wall niches come from Magnesia, Ephesos, Priene, Messene, and Delos (Hornbostel-Hüttner 1979, pp. 33–48). It is quite clear from the surviving bases in the niches of Delian houses that statuettes and votive reliefs were placed in them; see Kreeb 1988, pp. 43–46, pl. 8.1 (an inscribed base in the niche in House E on the peribolos-street); pl. 8.2 (a base in the niche in House Th VI D); and also pl. 10 (reconstruction: statuette in a wall niche). For a niche intended for a lamp in the Erechtheion, see Palagia 1984.

34. In the Hellenistic period, niches were built inside tombs and used for the placement of funerary urns, e.g., in the Taurian Chersonesos, in the above-ground tombs built against the fortifi-

cation wall of the city (Koshelenko, Kruglikova, and Dolgorukov 1984, p. 52, pl. xix.8).

35. None are documented in Conze 1893–1922; Clairmont, *CAT*, and 1970; Diesantz 1965; Fraser and Rönne 1957; Papapostolou 1993; Pfuhl and Möbius 1977–1979; Cremer 1991; Firatli 1964; Kieseritzky and Watchinger 1909; Fraser 1977; or Schmidt 1991.

36. These ceramic shapes, imitated in stone, range in ratio of height to width between roughly 1.7 and 3.5; the most common ratios are about 3:1 (Caskey 1922, p. 19, diagram XXXIX, pp. 209–225).

37. Grossman 1995, p. 228: “The practice of using sculpted marble lekythoi as grave markers begins at the end of the fifth century B.C.” See also Vedder 1985, pp. 43–48; Kurtz and Boardman 1985, pp. 148–151. Although other vase shapes, e.g., amphoras, especially those of Panathenaic shape, served funerary functions (Neils 2000,

p. 130; Valavanis 2000), they are less likely candidates for the Aiginetan niche because of their unsuitable proportions; the ratios of height to width for amphoras range between 1.2 and 1.6 (Caskey 1922, p. 36).

38. A number of marble loutrophoroi and lekythoi of an appropriate size for the niche survive: e.g., the loutrophoros that surmounted the *trapeza* of Parthenios the Messenian in the Kerameikos (Fig. 7), MG 47, Ker. 11174, H. 0.52 m, Diam. 0.18 m, Diam. (base) 0.085 m (*Kerameikos* XIV, pls. 14.2, 23.2); and a lekythos from the Dipylon area, Athens, Nat. Mus. 851, H. 0.58 m (Clairmont, *CAT* 2.211; *IG* II² 13033).

39. Kokula 1984, p. 15: “Die erste Umsetzung der Lutrophore in Stein zeigt nach der Mitte des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. ein doppelseitiges Grabrelief aus Brauron (Athens, Nat. Mus. 4468), auf dessen Vorderseite eine Lutrophore und auf dessen Rückseite eine Lekythos



Figure 7. *Trapeza* of Parthenios the Messenian, surmounted by a loutrophoros. Kerameikos, Athens. Photo author

recessed frame (Fig. 8), as if intended to depict a niche with a vessel in it.⁴⁰ Yet I know of no examples or representations on vases of slab stelai with niches housing vessels. Stone loutrophoroi and lekythoi were usually set up as freestanding sculpture on stone bases. In most cases, a rough hole, more or less circular, would be made in the pedestal; the foot of the vase would be set into the prepared hole and the remaining gaps filled with lead.⁴¹ Accordingly, one might expect to find on the floor of the Aiginetan monument a roughly round hole somewhat larger than the circumference of a vessel's foot, centered between the sides of the niche. Although the hole we find is elliptical and somewhat off center, we should not rule out the possibility that the niche was nevertheless designed to accommodate a stone vessel. The cutting may have been for a dowel hole, which would not

dargestellt ist. Beide Vasen sind deutlich als Tongefäße auf die Stele gesetzt, so dass im Gebrauch befindliche Gefäße der Grabkults im Bild auf der Stele gezeigt werden." Other loutrophoroi on a ledge include Athens, Nat. Mus. 2319, Clairmont, *CAT* 2.267; Athens, Nat. Mus. 884, Clairmont, *CAT* 2.710.

40. Loutrophoroi: e.g., Athens, Nat. Mus. 985 (Clairmont, *CAT* 1.947); Paris, Louvre Ma 3119 (MNC 2279) (Clairmont, *CAT* 2.336); Athens, Nat.

Mus. 984 (Clairmont, *CAT* 2.23); Athens, Nat. Mus. 879 (Clairmont, *CAT* 2.887); Athens, Nat. Mus. 899 (Clairmont, *CAT* 2.889); Athens, Nat. Mus. 2553 (Clairmont, *CAT* 3.406a). Kantharoi: e.g., from Cyzicus, Istanbul, Arch. Mus. 2215; from Mesambria on Pontos, Sofia, Nat. Mus. 4739; from Dionysopolis, Varna Mus. II1595; from Mesambria, Nessebar Mus., no inv. no. (Pfuhl and Möbius 1977–1979, II, nos. 2259–2262, pl. 319). Kraters: e.g., from Cos(?), Cos Mus.,

no inv. no.; from Linopoti, on Cos, Cos Mus., no inv. no. (Pfuhl and Möbius 1977–1979, II, nos. 2263, 2264, pl. 320).

41. E.g., the funerary *trapezai* of Philoxenos, Dion, and Parthenios, the Messenians, in the Kerameikos, ca. 340 B.C. (Ker. I 367, I 368, I 369; *Kerameikos* XIV, pp. 105–110, figs. 55–56, pls. 22.1–3; 23.2; 14.2) and the loutrophoros of Hegetor in the Kerameikos, 350–340 B.C. (MG 32; *Kerameikos* XIV, p. 81, pl. 19.2–3).



Figure 8. Funerary stele, National Archaeological Museum inv. 2553, Athens. Courtesy Museum

have needed to be round or centered if it was used to affix a stone base or plinth. The surface of the floor of the niche is not as polished (especially toward the back of the niche) as its walls, which suggests that the surface may not have been intended to be seen, which would be the case if a plinth were added.

Another candidate for the object in the niche is a statue in the round. On a much larger scale, funerary sculptures in high relief or in the round within architectural frames are well known from the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic periods.⁴² The proportions of the niche could accommodate a medium-sized statuette (H. 0.5–0.6 m). The cutting on the floor of the niche is located 0.05 m from the front of the monument, leaving 0.11 m between the back of the cutting and the back wall of the niche. One dowel would have been sufficient to hold a small statuette in place. The hole in the back wall of the niche, if it is original, could have served to

42. Fuchs 1993, pp. 496–498; Clairmont 1970, pp. 46–50, pls. 11–89 (Attic, Thessalian, Macedonian, Ionian, and Cretan monuments); Kurtz and Boardman 1985, p. 156. Classical vases that depict a grave monument

with a human figure or a group of figures on top (e.g., white-ground lekythos, Bonn, Akad. Kunstmus. 66, *ARV*² 1229, no. 15; *CVA* Bonn 1 [Germany 1], pls. 43.2, 4; 44.2, 4) do not find support in the con-

temporary archaeological record (Lohmann 1979, p. 40), and are not strictly comparable to the figural sculpture proposed to have been in the Aiginetan niche.

stabilize the statuette. The bottom hole by itself does not allow us to determine definitively the technique of the attachment, or the material of the sculpture.⁴³ Small elliptical holes similar to those seen on the Aiginetan monument were used with dowels to secure Archaic and Early Classical bronze statues, especially those produced by hollow casting.⁴⁴ Bronze, however, as far as we know, was not used for the production of funerary sculpture in the Classical period. Donna Kurtz and John Boardman mention Hellenistic epitaphs that refer to funerary sculpture made of bronze.⁴⁵

While a stone vessel or a stone or bronze statuette are not unlikely candidates for the object in the niche, we have to allow for the possibility that some other, perhaps unconventional, object was placed there as a memorial for the deceased. The object in the niche may not have been made specifically as a funerary piece, but was used instead during the lifetime of the person honored by the monument. It may be that the desire to commemorate the deceased with such an object called for the creation of an unusual shape for the monument, in particular the deep niche, if not the pyramidal top.

CONCLUSION

While the lettering of the inscription on the monument from the church of Agios Nikolaos on Aigina points to a date between ca. 400 and 300 B.C., the shape of the monument does not find close parallels in either the votive or funerary contexts of this period. The form of the inscription, consisting of a male name and patronymic, suggests a funerary function, and it is possible that the inscription honors the son of the Meidyliid Aristomenes, who was the hero of Pindar's *Pythian* 8. At the same time, the monument stands as an oddity in the context of local burial practices, as it was not customary on Aigina in the Archaic, Classical, or Hellenistic periods to erect elaborate grave markers. In spite of the lack of parallels, it is very unlikely that the present appearance of the monument is due to secondary remodeling. The monument, with its peculiar design and well-preserved inscription, is a significant new piece of archaeological data for the period on Aigina most lacking in material evidence. It is my hope that by bringing this unusual monument from Aigina to the attention of other scholars, its function and place will ultimately be better defined.

43. Marble was the material of choice for funerary sculpture and reliefs of the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods. When sculpture in the round was used, it was typically carved on a plinth that was then set into a cutting in the bottom of the naiskos frame of the monument. These cuttings were mostly wide and flat, and the plinths could be soldered onto the bases with lead.

44. See, e.g., Keesling 1995, pp. 146–147; Raubitschek 1938, p. 133; 1949, p. 61; Haynes 1992, pp. 100–105, fig. 8.

45. Kurtz and Boardman 1985, pp. 295, 315.

REFERENCES

- Alt-Ägina* II.2 = E. Walter-Karydi, *Die äginetische Bildhauerschule: Werke und schriftliche Quellen (Alt-Ägina II.2)*, Mainz 1987.
- Arvanitopoulos, A. S. 1906. "Ἀνέκδοτοι ἐπιγραφαὶ καὶ πλαστικὰ μνημεῖα Τεγέας," *ArchEph* 1906, pp. 23–66.
- Barron, J. 1983. "The Fifth-Century Horoi of Aegina," *JHS* 103, pp. 1–12.
- Buck, C. D. 1955. *The Greek Dialects*, Chicago.
- Burton, R. W. B. 1962. *Pindar's Pythian Odes*, Oxford.
- Caskey, L. D. 1922. *Geometry of Greek Vases*, Boston.
- Clairmont, CAT = C. W. Clairmont, *Classical Attic Tombstones*, 6 vols., Kilchberg 1993.
- Clairmont, C. W. 1970. *Gravestone and Epigram: Greek Memorials from the Archaic and Classical Period*, Mainz.
- Conze, A. 1893–1922. *Die attischen Grabreliefs I–IV*, Berlin.
- Cremer, M. 1991. *Hellenistisch-römische Grabstelen in nordwestlichen Kleinasien 1–2*, Bonn.
- Diesantz, H. 1965. *Die thessalischen Grabreliefs: Studien zur nordgriechischen Kunst*, Mainz.
- Drachmann, A. B. 1910. *Scholia vetera in Pindari carmina* II, Leipzig.
- Fabricius, J. 1999. *Die hellenistischen Totenmahlreliefs: Grabrepräsentation und Wertvorstellungen in ostgriechischen Städten*, Munich.
- Figueira, T. 1981. *Aegina: Society and Politics*, New York.
- . 1991. *Athens and Aegina in the Age of Imperial Colonization*, Baltimore.
- . 1993. "Four Notes on the Aiginetans in Exile," in *Excursions in Epicchoric History: Aiginetan Essays*, Lanham, Md., pp. 293–324.
- Firatli, N. 1964. *Les stèles funéraires de Byzance gréco-romaine*, Paris.
- Fraser, P. M. 1977. *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, Oxford.
- Fraser, P. M., and T. Rönne. 1957. *Boeotian and West Greek Tombstones*, Lund.
- Fuchs, W. 1993. *Die Skulptur der Griechen*, 4th ed., Munich.
- Grossman, J. 1995. "The Sculptured Funerary Monuments of the Classical Period in the Athenian Agora" (diss. New York University).
- Haynes, D. 1992. *The Technique of Greek Bronze Statuary*, Mainz.
- Hiller, H. 1975. *Ionische Grabreliefs der ersten Hälfte des 5. Jhs. (IstMitt-BH 12)*, Tübingen.
- Hornbostel-Hüttner, G. 1979. *Studien zur römischen Nischen-architektur (Studies of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society 9)*, Leiden.
- Keesling, C. 1995. "Monumental Private Dedications on the Athenian Acropolis, ca. 600–400 B.C." (diss. University of Michigan).
- Kerameikos* II = H. Riemann, *Die Skulpturen vom 5. Jahrhundert bis in römische Zeit (Kerameikos II)*, Berlin 1940.
- Kerameikos* XIV = W. K. Kovacovics, *Die Eckterrasse an der Gräberterrasse des Kerameikos (Kerameikos XIV)*, Berlin 1990.
- Kieseritzky, G., and C. Wachinger. 1909. *Griechische Grabreliefs aus Südrussland*, Berlin.
- Kokula, G. 1984. *Marmorlutrophoren (AM-BH 10)*, Berlin.
- Koshelenko, G., I. Kruglikova, and V. Dolgorukov, eds. 1984. *Antichnye gosudarstva Severnogo Prichernomorja* [Ancient states of the northern Black Sea coast], Moscow.
- Kreeb, M. 1988. *Untersuchungen zur figürlichen Ausstattung delischer Privathäuser*, Chicago.
- Kurtz, D. C., and J. Boardman. 1985. *Thanatos: Tod und Jenseits bei den Griechen*, Mainz.
- LGPN* = P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews, eds., *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, 4 vols., Oxford 1987–2000.
- Lohmann, H. 1979. *Grabmäler auf unteritalischen Vasen*, Berlin.
- LSAG*² = L. H. Jeffery, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1990.
- Meritt, B. D. 1954. "Greek Inscriptions," *Hesperia* 23, pp. 233–283.

- Nakayama, N. 1982. "Untersuchung der auf weissgrundigen Lekythen dargestellten Grabmäler" (diss. Universität Freiburg).
- Neils, J. 2000. "Panathenaics in the West," in *Panathenaika: Symposion zu den Panathenaischen reissamphoren Rauischholzhausen 25.11.–9.11.1998*, M. Bentz and N. Eschbach, eds., Mainz, pp. 125–130.
- Neuerburg, N. 1969. "Greek and Roman Pyramids," *Archaeology* 22:2, pp. 106–115.
- Palagia, O. 1984. "A Niche for Kallimachos' Lamp," *AJA* 88, pp. 515–521.
- Papachatzes, N. D. 1967. *Παυσανίου Ἑλλάδος Περιήγησις: Ἀττικά*, Athens.
- Papapostolou, J. A. 1993. *Achaean Grave Stelai*, Athens.
- Papastaurou, E. 1990. "Σύνολο ομαδικών τάφων στην Αίγινα," *ArchEph* 1986 [1990], pp. 49–59.
- Pfuhl, E., and H. Möbius. 1977–1979. *Die Ostgriechischen Grabreliefs I–II*, Mainz.
- Raubitschek, A. 1938. "Zur Technik und Form der altattischen Statuenbasen," *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique bulgare* 12.1, pp. 132–181.
- . 1949. *Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis*, Cambridge, Mass.
- Rhomaïos, K. A. 1911. "Ἀρχαῖοι Ἑρμῶϊ," *ArchEph* 1911, pp. 149–159.
- Ridgway, B. S. 1990. *Hellenistic Sculpture* 1, Madison.
- Rolley, C. 1994. *La sculpture grecque*, Paris.
- Schmidt, S. 1991. *Hellenistische Grabreliefs: Typologische und chronologische Beobachtungen*, Cologne.
- Simon, E. 1980. *Die Götter der Griechen*, Munich.
- Steinhauer, G. 2001. *Το Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο Πειραιώς*, Athens.
- Stewart, A. 1990. *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration*, New Haven.
- Stroud, R. 1979. *The axones and kyrbeis of Drakon and Solon* (University of California Publications, Classical Studies 19), Berkeley.
- Valavanis, P. 2000. "Panathenaische Amphoren auf Monumenten spätklassischer, hellenistischer und römischer Zeit," in *Panathenaika: Symposion zu den Panathenaischen Preisamphoren Rauischholzhausen 25.11.–29.11.1998*, M. Bentz and N. Eschbach, eds., Mainz, pp. 161–173.
- Vedder, U. 1985. *Untersuchungen zur plastischen Ausstattung attischer Grabanlagen des 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* (*Archäologie*, ser. 38, vol. 7), Frankfurt.
- Welter, G. 1938a. *Aegina*, Berlin.
- . 1938b. "Aeginetica XIII–XXIV," *AA* 1938, pp. 480–540.
- Woodhead, A. G. 1959. *The Study of Greek Inscriptions*, Cambridge.

Irene Polinskaya

BOWDOIN COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

7600 COLLEGE STATION

BRUNSWICK, MAINE 04011-8476

ipolinsk@bowdoin.edu