An Inscription in Kythera

George Huxley

While clearing a barn at Kastri in the island of Kythera in July 1964 for use as a storeroom during excavations nearby, Dr. R. Hope Simpson discovered a pile of light greyish-brown blocks. One of the stones proved to be inscribed with archaic Greek letters (see Plate 1, Figure 1). The inscription, which is published here by kind permission of the Ephor of Antiquities of Laconia, Dr. Chrestou, is now stored in the Museum at the Chora in Kythera.

Excavation Catalogue No. 504 of 1964. Length of stone 0·68 m. on inscribed face. Width of stone: maximum, 0·45 m., minimum 0·25 m. Height of stone: 0·20 m. Average height of letters 0·07 m.

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The inscribed face is pitted in places, notably at the top of the left-hand stroke of the mu, in the middle of the alpha, and in the centre of the omicron. There is no sign of cutting on the upper surface of the stone, for instance for the feet of a statue; and the block, together with the others stored with it in the barn, may perhaps have formed part of a wall.

In a place so remote as Kastri full agreement with Laconian letter-forms is not be be expected. In the classification of Miss Jeffery the mu resembles the symmetrical Laconian μ1, but with the difference that the strokes are not approximately equal in length. The alpha is closer to Argive α1 than to Laconian α1. The labda is like Laconian λ1. The omicron is a quadrilateral, as in some Laconian bronzes and in Argive ο3. The pitting in the middle of the omicron does not entail that there was a central dot. The sigma is like Laconian ο3. The

1 After studying a photograph of the inscription my colleague Alwyn Williams, Professor of Geology in the Queen's University, suggested that the stone may be a massive calcareous tufa or a calcareous siltstone. Either type is common in the tertiary rocks of the general area of Kythera. I was unable to ascertain from what part of the neighbourhood of Kastri the blocks were taken. The owner of the barn had emigrated to Australia many years ago.

Laconian four-barred sigma replaced the three-barred about the middle of the fifth century B.C., but is known earlier. The uppermost bar is not visible in all lights, but can be clearly seen in Plate 1, Figure 2. It is impossible to date the inscription more closely than to the period ca. 525 to 400 B.C., as Miss Jeffery has kindly confirmed after seeing a photograph.

The word \textit{MAALOS} may have several meanings in Greek. 1. It may mean the Dorian island. It is also a place name in Pisidia and Galatia-on-the-Halys. 2. In Theocritus (Epigram 1.5) it means “white”: \(\beta\omega\mu\omicron\upsilon\delta'\ \alpha'\mu\alpha\acute{\epsilon}i\ \kappa\epsilon\rho\alpha\omicron\delta\\tau\rho\acute{\acute{\alpha}}\acute{o}\sigma\upsilon\dot{o}\\delta'\ \mu\alpha\lambda\omicron\omicron\sigma\). Compare \(\mu\alpha\lambda\omicron\omicron\pi\acute{a}r\alpha\omicron\sigma\), “of the white cheeks,” in Theocritus, \textit{Idyll} 26.1, with Gow’s comment. 3. \textit{M\alpha\lambda\omicron\sigma} is a son of Amphiktyon or of Amyros a Boeotian according to Stephen of Byzantium \textit{s.v. MAAL\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\sigma}. 4. A Malos is claimed by Isyllos as founder of the cult of Apollo M\alpha\lambda\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\sigma. In the Paean of Isyllos it is said that Zeus gave the Muse Erato to Malos for wife. Their daughter Kleopheuma married Phlegyas, who dwelt in Epidaurus. The daughter of Phlegyas was Aigla, who was also called Koronis; in the halls of Malos she lay with Apollo and became the mother of Asklepios. 5. Melos or Malos was a son of Manto (Steph. Byz. \textit{s.v. MAAL\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\sigma}).

None of these identifications looks cogent, but the fourth is the least implausible, since the hero Malos is Peloponnesian. A cult of the hero could even have been introduced from the Argolid to Kythera by the Argives when they ruled the island [Herodotos 1.82.2]; but by the time our inscription was cut Kythera had almost certainly become a Spartan possession, and it is worth noting that Apollo Maleatas was worshipped in Sparta as well as in Epidaurus. At the sanctuary of Asklepios in Peiraeus offerings were made to Apollo and Maleatas separately, a fact which suggests that Maleatas was originally a distinct god or hero, but that the name Maleatas and its use as an

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{8}] \textit{ibid.} 183.
\item [\textsuperscript{4}] \textit{Theocritus}, ed. A. S. F. Gow, II (Cambridge 1950) 476.
\item [\textsuperscript{6}] \textit{Thucydides}, ed. A. S. F. Gow, II (Cambridge 1950) 476.
\item [\textsuperscript{8}] \textit{ibid.} 183.
\end{itemize}
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Figure 1. Photograph by R. Watson

Figure 2. Photograph by Mrs. J. Hope Simpson
epithet of Apollo should be linked with the Epidaurian hero Malos, as Isyllos claimed, is by no means obvious. Malos of Kythera therefore remains unidentified: he need have nothing to do with Malos of Epidauros.

The Queen's University of Belfast

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