

The Salamis Epigram

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HERODOTOS (8.94) reproduces and deplores an Athenian canard that Adeimantos led the Corinthians in craven retreat from Salamis. Plutarch sees malice in its mere reproduction, and in repudiating the story says that the Athenians let the Corinthians bury their dead from that battle, since they had acted as brave men, by the city of Salamis. He adds that the following epigram was inscribed on the grave monument:

᾽Ω ξένε εὐνδρόν ποτ' ἐναίομεν ἄστν Κορίνθου
νῦν δ' ἄμ' Αἴαντος νᾶσος ἔχει Σαλαμῖς.
ἐνθάδε Φοινίσσας νῆας καὶ Πέρσας ἐλόντες
καὶ Μήδους ἱερὰν Ἑλλάδα ῥύομεθα.

[Plutarch, *De Herodoti Malignitate* 870E]

Favorinus, in an address to the Corinthians ([Dio Chrysostom] 37.18), found reason to quote the same two distichs, drawing, he said, not on Herodotos but on the grave monument and on Simonides, who wrote the epitaph. There are slight variations in Favorinus' version but none that affects the present discussion.

The Archaic Inscription from Ambelaki

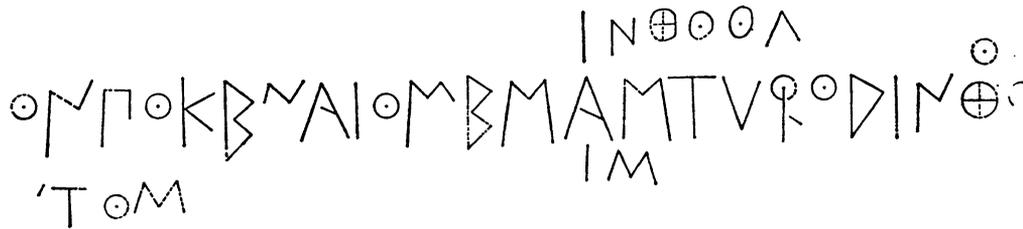
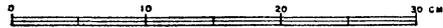
In April, 1895, Stephanos N. Dragoumes found a marble plaque which he duly recognized and published as the gravestone of the Corinthians.¹ It had been originally found by the owners and builders of a new house in Ambelaki on the island of Salamis when they were digging the cellar. They used the plaque as building material in a stairway that led from the courtyard to the house, and it was there that Dragoumes first saw it. The house was near the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin, *i.e.* near enough the remains of the ancient city to justify the assertion that when the stone was found it was still, as Plutarch had described it, *παρὰ τὴν πόλιν*. It is now on display in

¹ "Σιμωνίδου ἐπίγραμμα καὶ ὁ ἐν Σαλαμῖνι τάφος τῶν Κορινθίων," *AM* 22 (1897) 52ff.

the Epigraphical Museum in Athens. I print the text that I have been able to read, with full restorations.²

[*Ο ξένε εϋηυδρ]όν ποκ' έναίομες ἄστν Κορίνθο,
 [νῦν δ' ἡμὲ Αἴα]ντος [νᾶσος ἔχει Σαλαμῖς]
 [ἐνθάδε Φοινίσσας νᾶας καὶ Πέρσας κελόντες]
 [καὶ Μέδους ἡιάρᾶν κελλάδα ρηνόμεθα]

In the discussion that follows, details concerning certain letters on the stone will be noted, and then some observations on the stone itself. These observations will lead to reconsideration of the arguments by which students of classical antiquity have been persuaded that the second distich of the epigram is a forgery. The facsimile (figure 1) will be useful as a reference. The photographs (figures 2, 3 and 4 on PLATES 5 and 6) will serve as a partial control.

IG. I² 927

1965

FIG. 1. LETTERS ON THE STONE

Dragoumes printed *Κορίνθου*. What seemed to be a *qoppa*, he believed to be actually an *omicron* that had been inscribed prematurely. The inscriber, he reasoned, did not trouble to remove it because *kappa* inscribed over it was clear. Or he may have wanted to give the impression of *kappa* and *qoppa* combined. A. Wilhelm, however, offered an explanation which has been adopted by subsequent editors, namely that it is a *qoppa* which has been turned into a *kappa*.³ But Wilhelm's explanation is not consistent with the marks on the stone.

² The second distich is not elsewhere regarded as a possible restoration but see pp. 184ff *infra*. Publications of the inscription (IG I² 927) are numerous. An adequate sampling of collections in which the inscription is included can be obtained by consulting the bibliographies in the publications listed by L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) 132 no. 29.

³ "Simonideische Gedichte. II," *JOAI* 2 (1899) 227.

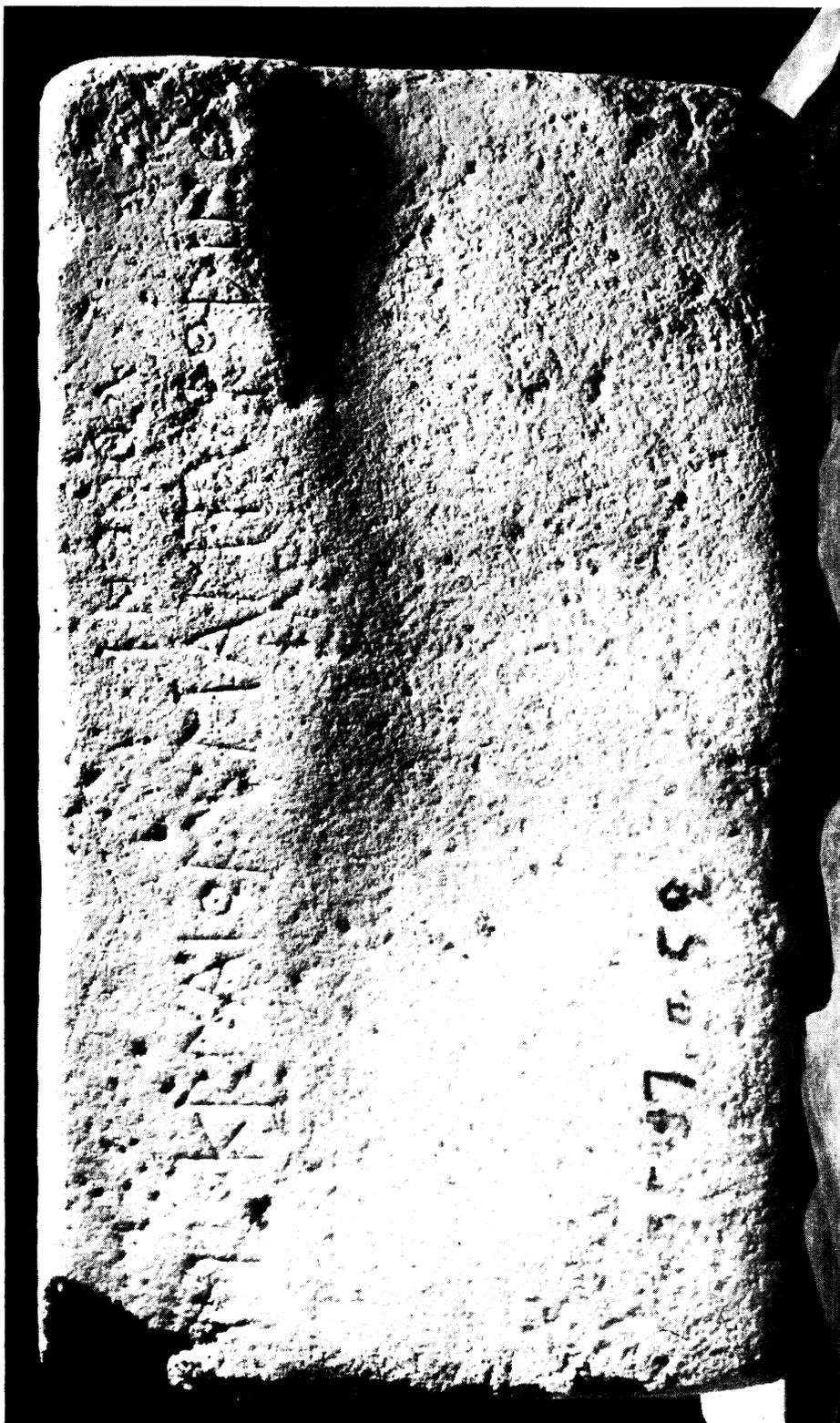
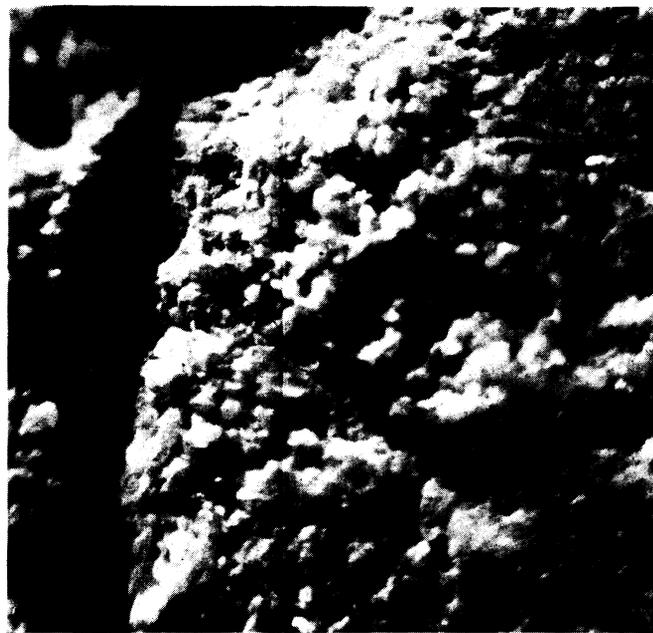


Figure 2. THE ARCHAIC INSCRIPTION FROM AMBELAKI (IG I² 927)

PLATE 6 BOEGEHOLD



*Figure 3. DETAIL OF IG 1² 927
(Photograph by W. K. Pritchett)*



*Figure 4. THE DIAGONAL STROKE NEAR QOPPA
(Photograph by W. K. Pritchett)*

PLATE 6, figures 3 and 4 show that no top diagonal stroke was ever cut for a *kappa*, and that the line which might seem to be a lower diagonal stroke for a *kappa* does not join the vertical stroke of *qoppa*. Someone (the idle hand discussed *infra*?) may have started to change it into a *kappa*, but only one short diagonal stroke was added near the tail of *qoppa*, and so the putative change, if indeed the stroke is not accidental, was never effected. On the other hand, if *kappa* had been intended originally, the circle of *qoppa*, added as an afterthought, would surely have crowded the *upsilon* to its left. The single, visible, diagonal stroke is consequently an irrelevance.

Rho, if its full form has been preserved,⁴ is idiosyncratic and does not identify any particular epichoric alphabet. Dragoumes noted its unusual form (ϱ) and cited as a parallel an inscription found near Megara which contained the word or name, ΕΥΦΡΟΝΕΣ, written in letters of an epichoric, presumably Megarian, alphabet.⁵ *Rho* in ΕΥΦΡΟΝΕΣ has the same form and has long been regarded as distinctively but not uniquely Megarian. Dragoumes concluded that the similar *rho* in the Salamis inscription only showed that this form of the letter was not alien to Corinth, and his conclusion finds abundant support in later publications.⁶ Nor is the triangular, tailless *rho* a stranger elsewhere in the Greek world. It is found scratched into potsherds, painted on vases, and cut into stone at Athens, on Chios, and possibly on Crete.⁷

⁴ Certainty is impossible. A tail would have extended below the line formed by the bottoms of letters in line 1 (*cf. qoppa*) and into an area that is today a shallow depression. See PLATE 6, fig. 3.

⁵ Jeffery, *op.cit.* 136, 138 no. 9.

⁶ H. Payne, *Necrocorinthia* (Oxford 1931) 160 said that the form is found early and late on Corinthian vases. I note in *Necrocorinthia* the following: p. 161 no. 4; p. 163 no. 11; p. 165 no. 37; p. 167 no. 61. *Cf.* Jeffery, *op.cit.* 142, and in T. J. Dunbabin *et al.*, *Perachora II* (Oxford 1962) 397 no. 55; 398 no. 109; and perhaps 401 no. 167.

⁷ Athens, ostraka: Kallias, son of Kratios in W. B. Dinsmoor, *Hesperia* Suppl. 5 (1941) 140 fig. 68; some of those prepared by hand K against Themistocles in O. Broneer, *Hesperia* 7 (1938) 239 fig. 68; another against Themistocles in O. Kern, *Inscr.Graec.* (Bonn 1913) pl. 13; painted on vases: Perichthonios, Hermes, Aristaios in Graef-Langlotz, *Die antiken Vasen von der Akropolis zu Athen I* (Berlin 1925) plates 33, 35 (Beazley ABV 107); Artemis in E. Gerhard, *Auserlesene griech. Vasenbilder I* (Berlin 1840) pl. 21 (Beazley, ABV 333); Paris, Patrokliia, Chiron, Gerhard, *op.cit.* III (1847) pl. 227, cut in stone: four times in IG I² 2 (see S. Dow, *AJA* 65 [1961] 352 and pl. 110); A. E. Raubitschek, *Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1949) nos. 53, 147, 283 (illustrated in J. Kirchner, *IIA*², no. 21; Chios, on stone: W. G. Forrest, *BSA* 58 (1963) 54f, pl. 15. Gortyna, on stone: *Inscr.Cret.* IV, p. 76 no. 22B (the tail is minimal). Eleutherna, on stone: *Inscr.Cret.* II, p. 147 no. 1. The radical changes proposed by R. Carpenter in *AJP* 84 (1963) 81ff for the date and origin of the Salamis stone rest in part on the shape of *rho* (*cf. n.4 supra*) and on the supposition that this particular shape of *rho* was totally unknown outside Megara. I have felt it necessary to enumerate

The *upsilon* of *Κορίνθου*, which Dragoumes printed, is not on the stone and has been left out by subsequent editors. There is, however, an *omicron* which has not been properly reported. Its center can be seen .025 m. above and a little right of the center of *theta*. Dragoumes included it in his account of the letters that were scratched into the stone by some idle hand, but the size of this *omicron*, identical with that of others in line 1, the skill with which it was cut, and its position associate it beyond question with the original letters of the inscription. Dragoumes noted its superior execution without further remark (*op.cit.* 53). It is, in fact, the final *omicron* of *Κορίνθο*. To the right of *theta* there are marks which have suggested the presence of *omicron* in the place one would normally expect, but close study of those marks reveals a high place on the stone that excludes the possibility of an *omicron* to the right of *theta*. If a start was made, the circle was never completed.⁸ The resulting genitive in -O is unusual in a Corinthian inscription. M. N. Tod in GHI 1² no. 16 prints *Κορίνθω* without comment, but a poet who was not himself a Corinthian could in fact have written *Κορίνθο* as a genitive since that form was generally acceptable in the early fifth century. It was only around Corinth that special care was taken to write such genitive endings in full, *viz.* -OY. But other explanations are also possible.

Of the second line of the distich, *tau*, although faint, is indubitable, and enough of it can be measured to give assurance that these letters were originally as large as those in the first line. The short, diagonal stroke from which one infers *nu* could also serve for *upsilon*. *Omicron* and *san*, to the right of *tau*, are legible under strong, raking sunlight, and then they are unmistakable. Where other letters to the right were once cut, there remains now only worn stone.

The other letters on the stone need a word. Dragoumes reported above letters 14–18 of line 1: *INΘOOA* (and above letter 23 a similar *omicron* which, as noted *supra*, really belongs to the original inscription). These six letters he correctly identified as attempts by an idle hand to copy the old letters of the monument. Two other letters,

(though without an exhaustive search) so many instances of tailless, triangular *rho* being written elsewhere because of Carpenter's own eminence and because the theory is buttressed by J. and L. Robert's approval ("hypothèse raisonnable sur les circonstances," REG 77 [1964] p. 130 no. 14); authorities so impressive could inspire general belief despite the fact that the theory is controverted by the data on which it is built.

⁸ The last two letters of the inscription on the base of a statue by Phaidimos can be compared. See Gisela M. A. Richter, *The Archaic Gravestones of Attica* (London 1961) fig. 200.

IM (presumably epichoric ΙΣ), which are barely visible just below letters 14 and 15 of line 1, he also saw were not genuine.⁹ It seems, however, more than coincidence that the person who scratched these last two letters on the stone chose a collocation of letters that occurs twice in the second line of the epigram that literary tradition has preserved, and it may be justifiable to regard them as testimony of a witness who saw the second line when it was still visible.¹⁰

Physical Characteristics

No detailed description of the physical characteristics of the stone exists elsewhere, and yet some are directly relevant to a proper reconstruction of the text, and an enumeration of others will make clearer the difficult problem of restoring the original design of the monument. The stone is rectangular, 0.455 m. high and at present 0.79 m. wide, although it must once have been *ca* 1.10 m. The ten or eleven letters that are missing from the first line would have required about another 0.31 m. Its thickness is 0.06 m. The break at the left side which took roughly a third of each of the (four) lines with it was not accidental, for marks of the chisel that broke the stone can still be seen. It follows that whoever shaped the stone to his own uses would not have scrupled to use the smooth, inscribed face where it would often be stepped on. And indeed a shallow, irregular depression, deeper on the right side than on the left, extends through the whole width of the stone from under line 1 almost to the bottom. A straight-edge, when laid on the inscribed face, perpendicular to the top, makes contact with the face 0.175 m. down from the top near the left edge of the stone, 0.124 m. down near the right edge. Below a line that passes with minor deviations between these two points, the hollow is deep enough to exclude any possibility of recovering letters that once may have been inscribed there. The meaning of this observation for the text of the epigram is elaborated *infra*.

⁹ Both are visible in the photograph (PLATE 5). Some editors have been led to print *san* as a dotted letter in the second line of the text, but it is patently not original. It crowds letters of the first line, while genuine letters of the second line are well separated (0.024 m.) from those of the first. W. Peek in *Griechische Vers-Inschriften* I (Berlin 1955) no. 7 and in *Griechische Grabgedichte* (Berlin 1960) no. 4 prints *vāσos εχ]ει Σ[αλαμύς*, but after the most painstaking examination, neither R. S. Stroud nor I have been able to find the faintest trace of any of these letters. The stone where they ought to be was worn away long ago. If Peek is reading later, added letters as genuine, he is mistaken.

¹⁰ Where the two letters can be seen, the stone makes contact with a T-square laid on the top edge and inscribed face. The copied letters consequently were not scratched into an eroded surface from which earlier letters had vanished.

The left side is broken; the right so chipped and worn that no original surface on the edge can be identified with confidence, although the last *omicron* would not have been inscribed above *theta* if *theta* were not very near the edge. Top and bottom edges are smoothly finished and original. The top edge meets the inscribed face at a right angle, the bottom edge meets it at an acute angle. The effect is that the stone, when standing on its bottom edge, cants imperceptibly away from a person who is facing it. The back is levelled to a rough, quarry finish. Along top and bottom, a band 0.06 m. wide has been chiselled, presumably to help the mason get true edges. Up the right edge (still on the back), there is another trimmed band, which is 0.04 m. wide. This band does not create a slight bevel as do those along top and bottom. It is level and can be interpreted as preparation of the back for a narrow, smoothly finished band which was once a resting surface but has now completely disappeared.

No taper in any dimension can be ascertained. There is no cutting or projection to show how the stone was secured, and it is this lack especially that makes difficult the most natural interpretation of what clues to its original setting the stone preserves. It could have been one of four or more similar plaques¹¹ which revetted a square or rectangular core of stones or rough masonry but for the absence of any traces of clamps or dowels, which should have fixed the revetment against its core. The stone does not seem thick enough to have stood by itself or to have borne weight without some form of fastening, yet another, more likely solution does not suggest itself.

The Authenticity of Lines 3 and 4

The second distich of the traditional epigram has been regularly denounced as false. Its quality may not excite admiration, but the purportedly objective data which have led to its condemnation need to be re-examined. G. Kaibel¹² quarreled with *Πέρσας* scanned as a trochee in Doric fashion, and with the distinction expressed between Persians and Medes, which he thought wrong for the years directly after the battle of Salamis. He, however, would consign the whole epigram *in subditiorum numerum*, an impulse that could no longer

¹¹ U. von Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin 1913) 193, thought there must have been other stones on which were inscribed the names of the fallen, but cf. F. Jacoby, *Kleine philologische Schriften I* (Berlin 1961) 476 n.64.

¹² "Quaestiones Simonideae," *RhM* N.F. 28 (1873) 442.

be indulged after publication of the venerable stone with its archaic letters. Eminent authorities then and thereafter welcomed the stone as unimpeachable evidence that the second distich was a forgery,¹³ although Simonidean authorship of the first distich must remain a question. There was space on the stone for two more lines, but the lines, they asserted, had never been inscribed there.

Now the importance of the observations reported *supra* becomes apparent. By the time Dragoumes found the stone, a hollow had been worn where two additional lines could have been inscribed. Consequently the stone in no way proves that the original epigram consisted of a single elegiac distich. To the contrary, the text on the stone compromises the validity of Kaibel's objection to the scansion of *Πέρσας*. The Doric shortening of the second syllable could reflect a learned, or a Doric, poet's careful observance of a characteristic feature of Doric verse,¹⁴ and the stone makes it clear that the epigram on the gravestone on Salamis was written in Doric Greek. The Doric Greek of the first line preserved on the stone, therefore, far from proving line 3 a forgery, actually establishes a presumption that line 3 is genuine. An ancient editor changed *ποκ'* and *ἐναίιομες*, but for some reason not *νᾶσος*, to regular Attic-Ionic forms. Doric *Πέρσας* remained, intractable, jarring in Attic-Ionic, but quite at home in the original Doric lines.

The second distich cannot be judged false from the blank space on the stone. The quantity of the second syllable of *Πέρσας* is evidence for and not against the authenticity of line 3. What then of the assertion that Greeks shortly after Salamis were not aware of a distinction between Medes and Persians? No such pronouncement, regardless of how eminent or numerous the modern authorities who utter it, can be a positive criterion by which to judge the authenticity of an ancient text. We are not in a position to draw a map of the Greek mind as it existed during a given decade. Still less can we outline small islands on such a map and label them "Not Known." This is especially true in the present case, where information concerning the

¹³ Kaibel's objections to the second distich were accepted and repeated by e.g. U. von Wilamowitz, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.11), A. Wilhelm, *JOAI* 2 (1899) 227, and C. M. Bowra, *Early Greek Elegists* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1938) 189. T. Bergk, *PLG*⁴, Simonides no. 96 and T. Preger, *IGM* no. 6, had expressed reservations concerning them before publication of the stone. F. Jacoby, *op.cit.* I.458, spoke of the epitaph as "preserved on the stone and in an enlarged form by literary tradition." Cf. J. Geffcken, *RE* IIIA (1927) 194.

¹⁴ See D. L. Page, *Alcman: The Partheneion* (Oxford 1951) 132f.

sometime distinction between Medes and Persians had been accessible to Greeks for a decade and more. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe a modification of learned opinion concerning this question. F. Jacoby in his study of the Marathon Epigram (which refers to "Persians") noted "the superstition that really old epigrams always speak of them as *Μῆδοι*" but conceded that "the problem asks for special treatment."¹⁵ E. Lobel is willing, after necessary qualifications, to associate the name of Simonides with a fragmentary papyrus text which seems to name both Medes and Persians in succeeding lines,¹⁶ and C. M. Bowra¹⁷ agrees that the lines of the papyrus text may conceivably be the work of Simonides.

Conclusion

In summation: Plutarch and Favorinus knew the Salamis epigram as two elegiac distichs; Plutarch described the grave as being situated in the general area in which the gravestone was found; there is space for a second distich on the stone but no way to tell if it was ever engraved there or not; the epigram as written on the stone was in Doric Greek; the first line of the second distich, preserved only in literary tradition, has imbedded within its metrical scheme a characteristic Doric shortening. In the absence of other specific objective evidence, there seems little reason to reject the tradition that the epigram was originally composed of two distichs, those which are preserved in substance in Plutarch and Favorinus.¹⁸

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¹⁵ F. Jacoby, *op.cit.* I.489 n.107. For a recent discussion of *Μῆδος* in Aesch. *Persae* 765, see ed. H. D. Broadhead (Cambridge 1960) *comm. ad loc.* and pp. 278f.

¹⁶ POxy. 2327 fr. 27, line 13: *οφραπομενημηδ*[, line 14: *καιπερων' δωρονδ*].

¹⁷ *Greek Lyric Poetry from Alcman to Simonides*² (Oxford 1961) 344 n.4. Bowra's citation should be corrected.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Professors F. Mitchel, W. K. Pritchett, R. S. Stroud, and E. Vanderpool, who examined particular letters of the inscription and improved the present study with criticism and suggestions. Mr Joseph Shaw, who drew the facsimile, and Mr Charles Williams were helpful on architectural questions. Professors R. Carpenter and S. Dow have enlightened me in various ways *per litt.* A grant from the Howard Foundation and a grant-in-aid from the American Council of Learned Societies enabled me to do necessary work in the Epigraphical Museum in Athens.