

An Inscription in Kythera

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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 stones¹ 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.

ΜΑΛΛΩΣ

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 to be expected. In the classification of Miss Jeffery² the *mu* resembles the symmetrical Laconian $\mu 1$, but with the difference that the strokes are not approximately equal in length. The *alpha* is closer to Argive $\alpha 1$ than to Laconian $\alpha 1$. The *labda* is like Laconian $\lambda 1$. The *omicron* is a quadrilateral, as in some Laconian bronzes and in Argive $\omicron 3$. The pitting in the middle of the *omicron* does not entail that there was a central dot. The *sigma* is like Laconian $\sigma 3$. 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.

² L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) 183.

Laconian four-barred sigma replaced the three-barred about the middle of the fifth century B.C., but is known earlier.³ 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 *ΜΑΛΙΟΣ* 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": *βωμὸν δ' αἰμάξει κεραὸς τράγος οὗτος ὁ μαλός*. Compare *μαλοπάρανος*, "of the white cheeks," in Theocritus, *Idyll* 26.1, with Gow's comment.⁴ 3. *Μᾶλος* is a son of Amphiktyon or of Amyros a Boeotian according to Stephen of Byzantium *s.v.* *Μαλιεύς*. 4. A Malos is claimed by Isyllos as founder of the cult of Apollo Maleatas.⁵ In the Paean of Isyllos it is said that Zeus gave the Muse Erato to Malos for wife. Their daughter Kleophema married Phlegyas, who dwelt in Epidauros. 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.⁶ 5. *Mēlos* or Malos was a son of Manto (Steph. Byz. *s.v.* *Μαλόεις*).

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 Epidauros.⁷ At the sanctuary of Asklepios in Peiraius offerings were made to Apollo and Maleatas separately, a fact which suggests that Maleatas was originally a distinct god or hero,⁸ but that the name Maleatas and its use as an

³ *ibid.* 183.

⁴ Theocritus, ed. A. S. F. Gow, II (Cambridge 1950) 476.

⁵ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Isyllos von Epidauros* (Berlin 1886) 11. C1-2.

*πρῶτος Μᾶλος ἔτευξεν Ἀπόλλωνος Μαλεάτα
βωμὸν καὶ θυσίαις ἠγάλασεν τέμενος.*

A. Burckhardt, *RE* 14A (1928) 919-920 *s.v.* *ΜΑΛΟΣ*, proposes to identify this Malos with the Malos in Steph. Byz. *s.v.* *Μαλιεύς*.

⁶ Wilamowitz, *op.cit.* 13. D 5-21.

⁷ Pausanias 2.27.7 and 3.12.8. *IG* V(1) 213.57 (V B.C.).

⁸ Wilamowitz, *op.cit.*, 100. There is no obvious tie between Maleatas and Cape Malea near Kythera. For Maleatas as a distinct (apple?) god see H. K. Usener, *Götternamen* (Bonn 1896) 146.



Figure 1. Photograph by R. Watson

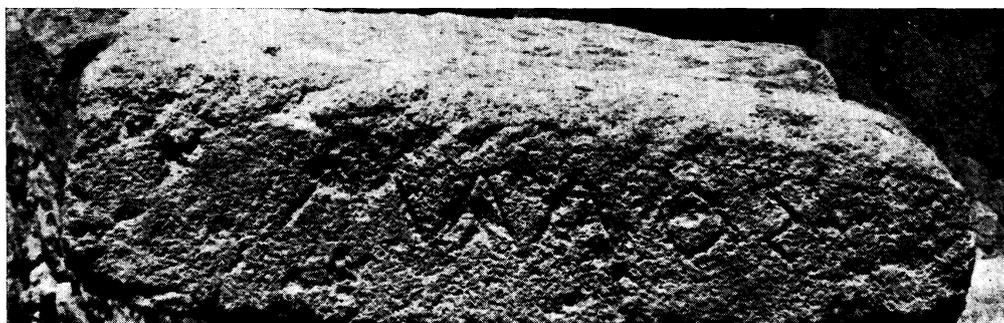


Figure 2. Photograph by Mrs. J. Hope Simpson

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.

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