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Studies in Greek Gravestones

Christoph W. CLAIRMONT

Dear friend and colleague,

I feel very honoured that I may contribute this modest study to your anniversary. I do it with the greatest pleasure. Two of the gravestones here discussed are in the *Musée d'Art et d'Histoire* in Geneva, the third is in the National Museum in Athens. Thus, the homes of the monuments are two cities dear to you and which are like the poles around which revolved important stages of your career and life.

Geneva, your home town, remembers you as teacher and scholar. It was to Geneva you always returned faithfully — whether from such distant regions as Palmyra, or the much closer, but not less beloved, quarters of Roma aeterna. Athens matured and made blossom many of your designs and there the dreams of the humanist and Hellenist were fulfilled. May all good spirits continue to be as kindly disposed to you in the future as they have been in the past.

1. Inv. no. 11562. From Athens. Gift of W. Deonna.* H. 20 cm. W. 21 cm. Th. 9 cm. White marble, probably Pentelic (Fig. 1).
Bibl.: *Genava*, 4 (1926), p. 12, fig. 1; *Genava*, 11 (1931), p. 114, no. 3 (non vidi).

The gravestone is crowned by a very low pediment. Its horizontal geison is broad. Although the sloping geisa are now very battered, the remains suggest that the pediment may not have been strictly symmetrical. The apex of the pediment lies in a direct vertical line above the letter E of the inscription. It is likely that small akroteria rose at the corners of the pediment as is suggested especially by the horizontal upper break in the right corner from which point the sloping geison departs. If the restoration of lateral akroteria is acceptable, a central one was hardly missing.

A narrow fascia forms the transition from the pediment to the horizontal upper frame of the stele. On the former is inscribed the name ΘΕΟΔΟΤΗ — Θεοδότῃ. This is obviously the name

* I owe the photographs of the gravestones in Geneva reproduced in this article to the kindness of Miss Christiane Dunant, keeper of the classical collections in the *Musée d'Art et d'Histoire*. She also provided the references to the vols. of *Genava* cited in the bibliographies.

Abbreviations:

<i>Billedtavler</i>	<i>Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Billedtavler til Kataloget over antike Kunstveerker</i> (Koebenhavn, 1907).
Clairmont	Ch. W. Clairmont, <i>Gravestone and Epigram</i> (Mainz, 1970).
Conze	A. Conze, <i>Die attischen Grabreliefs</i> , I-IV (Berlin, 1893-1922).
Diepolder	H. Diepolder, <i>Die attischen Grabreliefs des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.</i> (Wien, 1931).
Dohrn	T. Dohrn, <i>Attische Plastik vom Tode des Phidias bis zum Wirken der grossen Meister des IV. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.</i> (Krefeld, 1957).
<i>Phoros</i>	G. Daux, "Notes d'Epigraphie Attique", <i>Phoros. Tribute to B.D. Meritt</i> (Locust Valley, New York, 1974), p. 40-46.



Fig. 1: Grave stele of Theodote.

of the young woman whose head is the only remains of the figured scene. The head touches the frame and the join around the crown of the skull is only roughly finished. The hair is rendered with wavy strands. Above the forehead, encircling the entire head and covering also the left ear (except the summarily indicated lobe of the ear), the hair formed a roll, now much chipped, with the individual strands sculpted perpendicularly to the mass of the hair above¹. The face of the young woman is of oval shape with these characteristic features: a low forehead, heavy upper eyelids, and the lower eyelids also full so that the surface of the eye itself is oblong and relatively small². The tip of the nose is broken, and the left wing of the nose is summarily rendered. In the bud-like mouth both lips are thick and strongly modelled with the corners of the mouth dropping³. Between the lower lip and the small rounded chin there is a pronounced depression. The head which is rendered in profile view is bowed with the glance of the eyes directed diagonally downward. There may be several reasons for this attitude. A second, seated adult figure or a small standing figure, most likely a girl, could have been represented on the left, facing the deceased. The size of the stele does not *a priori* exclude either of the two possibilities. However, since the preserved head comes very close to the central vertical line which divides the gravestone into two halves, a seated adult is less likely on the basis of comparison with other gravestones comprising a seated and a standing adult figure. The deceased could also have been shown all by herself, holding in one of her hands a pet bird or perhaps a toy-puppet upon which her looks are concentrated. The main reason which favors a second girl-like figure on the left is the fact that the head of the deceased is *not* turned in three-quarter view towards the beholder which is common in the representation of single figures whatever the objects which they may hold in their hands. But it is also obvious that one must beware of trying to make up a composition on the basis of some standard compositions in which, in fact, the variation of details is endless. Only if our gravestone were fully preserved, could we understand these details.

Fragmentary as this funerary monument is, it is a precious small relic which dates from around 400 B.C. or shortly thereafter. Though the Parthenon sculptures were finished a full generation earlier, the proportions of the head of the deceased and the characteristic features of

¹ The hairdo just described is found very commonly on Attic gravestones.

² The right eye, which was invisible for the beholder, is not rendered with any detail.

³ Cp. Athens, NM 726, Conze, 69, pl. 31; Diepolder, pl. 26; Athens, NM 1858, Conze, 1178a; Dohrn, pl. 16a.

her face are clearly reminiscent of the "Pheidian style" such as we encounter it, in one of its phases, in the youthful figures of the friezes. It is this reminiscence, this touch of great art, which makes it a delight to behold this unpretentious fragment.

2. Inv. no. 9311. From Athens, the vicinity of the stadium of Herodes Atticus. H. 88 cm. W. 40 cm. Th. 10 cm. Pentelic marble (Fig. 2).
Bibl.: W. Deonna, *Catalogue des Sculptures Antiques* (Genève, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 1924), p. 121, no. 152; *Genava*, 2 (1924), p. 47, fig. 10.



Fig. 2: Grave stele of Prokles and Glykera.

Gravestone composed of two large and one small fragment (upper body of the seated figure). The main fracture runs through approximately the middle of the stone. The monument is surmounted by a pediment. The central akroterion is preserved; faint traces remain of the lateral akroteria. The architrave, supported by pillars, is slightly recessed from the horizontal geison. On the architrave are inscribed two sets of names. Of poor quality, these inscriptions have suffered additionally from the cleaning which the sculpted figures have also undergone. What now appears on the horizontal geison and the architrave as a very shiny and smoothly polished surface must be the result of intensive cleaning with acid and sandpaper (or some similar

means) to remove a heavy whitish incrustation which is still visible in corners and such spots where access is difficult for the cleaning tool. Before commenting on the inscriptions we shall first describe the figures.

A young female stands in three-quarter view on the left. Her body overlaps the left hand pilaster except for her head which is to the right of it, just below the crudely cut capital. The sculptor has taken pains not to make the hair at the back of the head overlap the pilaster which results in a vertical groove that gives the hair a rather awkward cut-off contour. The figure has curly hair, details of which are very lightly engraved. Forehead and nose form a distinct continuous concave line. There is some light modelling for the eyelids. The upper lip has a curious swell giving the mouth a rather distorted look. The proportions of body and neck are heavy and pudgy; the inarticulate treatment of the folds in the chiton and the mantle enhance the volume of the figure. The rendering of the fingers of her right hand including the lower arm is very poor. Nor is the rendering of the left hand any better in its somewhat distorted combination of three-quarter view of the lower arm and an attempt of a more spatial rendering of the hand and its fingers. And what about the gesture? It is equally poorly handled because the sculptor was probably familiar with other gravestones depicting the gestures of touching another figure's chin or simply a gesture of concern, sympathy, and pity for the fate of the deceased. Surely, it is the latter gesture which the sculptor meant to represent. However, since he sculpted the hand too close to the seated figure's chin, he missed the very meaning and effect of this gesture as becomes clear when comparing other gravestones⁴.

For several reasons there can be no doubt that the deceased on our funerary monument is the seated female on the right. This is confirmed also by the addition of her name in the inscription. The deceased wears a sleeved chiton, a second sleeveless garment with a narrow belt encircling the upper body just below the breasts, and mantle⁵. Her totally inarticulated right hand shakes hands with the female already described⁶. Her left hand is invisible — (perhaps we can deem ourselves happy that it is!) — underneath a pan of the mantle which, passing underneath the left arm, falls over the left thigh, pillow, and seat. The deceased has her feet on a footstool which is most summarily rendered. Since the figure is seated, the proportions of the body are somewhat improved as compared with the standing figure, but the head is now almost too small. The hairdo is interesting and not commonly attested on gravestones: the melon coiffure is topped, at the back of the head, by a double braid (now chipped) and both overlap the pilaster as do the left shoulder and arm, the back of the figure, and her seat. The profile rendering of the legs is combined with a slight three-quarter rendering of the upper body, while the head is seen in profile. It is bent barely backwards, the glance of the poorly carved left eye being directed slightly upwards at the standing female. We can note again the concave contour line for the forehead and the nose. A rather faintly smiling countenance is visible on the face.

A rather successful element in the funerary monument is the bearded head, the left arm and shoulder, and a portion of the upper body of a very old man in the background between the two females. His hair and beard are curly. The mantle is draped over the right shoulder leaving some portion of the chest bare. Judging from some folds below the chest, which run horizontally and slightly diagonally, we may conclude that the right arm crossed in front of the body; the right hand was very likely placed on a staff which it held as support for the old man. Whether or not the left elbow rested on the right hand — an attitude commonly found with old men on gravestones — can no longer be determined.

The gesture of the man's left hand, held against the forehead, expresses not only dismay and sadness about the death of the female, but also intimates perhaps a note of surprise at so untimely a death⁷. The physiognomy renders a fairly realistic portrait⁸. The very low relief in

⁴ For these gestures cp. the following: hand touching chin of a figure, Athens, NM 763, Conze, 763, pl. 176; Athens, NM 3486; Athens, Keramicus, Conze, 1131, pl. 238. Hand near chin, about to caress, Athens, NM 870, Conze, 320, pl. 78; Diepolder, pl. 47; Athens, NM 968, Conze, 150, pl. 43. Hand in free space between two figures, from among many examples, Athens, NM 826, Conze, 1087, pl. 222; Athens, NM 840, Conze, 443, pl. 103; Athens, NM 933, Conze, 763, pl. 120; Athens, NM 961, Conze, 1145, pl. 196; Athens, NM 1029, Conze, 440, pl. 103; Athens, NM 1036, Conze, 146, pl. 43; Athens, NM 2043, Conze 76, pl. 35; Athens, NM 2559, Conze, 429, pl. 101 (servant); Athens, NM (Iutrophoros); Copenhagen, NyCG 219, *Billedtavler*, pl. 16; Copenhagen, NyCG 207, *Billedtavler*, pl. 15; Koropi, Schoolhouse (inv. no. 7); Liopesi, inv. no. 13, *ArchDelt*, 10 (1926), Parartema, p. 78, fig. 26.

⁵ There are numerous parallels on gravestones for this combination of garments.

⁶ It is very often the case that the gesture of the clasping of hands is not convincingly represented: the hands merely lie in each others palms without being clasped. See Athens, NM, Conze, 145, pl. 44; Piraeus, Museum 386, Diepolder, pl. 23; Trachones, Komninos, Conze, 207, pl. 55.

⁷ Cp. Athens, NM 848, Conze, 385, pl. 92; Athens, NM 871, Conze, 1054, pl. 210; Athens, NM 1026, Conze, 728, pl. 130; Athens, NM 1055, Conze, 309, pl. 75; Athens, Keramicus I 183, 44, 1965, p. 358, fig. 45; Athens, Keramicus P 290, I 174, *Kerameikos* II, no. 25, pl. 6; Athens, Private, Conze, 928, pl. 184.

⁸ Cp. Athens, NM 2688, Conze, 1117, pl. 229.

which this male figure is rendered is remarkable and rarely found. Background figures in gravestones are usually carved in lower relief as compared with figures standing in the front, but only on gravelekythoi is the very low relief commonly attested. This would suggest that our sculptor has applied this latter technique to his gravestone in which it appears to be a somewhat alien element⁹. Another alternative is that the old man was added in a "last minute" decision when the marble in the background was already mostly removed so that only a figure in very low relief was possible.

The old man's name reads ΠΡΟΚΛΗΣ ΠΥΘΟΔΩΡΟΥ, Προκλῆς Πυθοδώρου, Prokles, son of Pythodoros (Fig. 3). In Prokles, the O, K, Λ and Σ are lightly traced on the surface of the stone; the individual punch marks can clearly be seen in part of the O and the Λ. The Π, P, and H are more deeply engraved. The rounded letters seem to have caused the engraver the most trouble. Did he know at all what a P looked like in the fourth century B.C.? The father's name is written in a second line. Since the lower horizontal edge of the architrave is chipped, this caused damage to the lowermost portion of some of the letters, not to speak of the cleaning procedure which has all but erased them, lightly engraved as they were. This is notably true for the initial Π which was engraved lower(?) as compared with the other letters; moreover, the Υ (second letter) and first O (fourth letter) can barely be seen; the Δ (fifth letter) is faint and so is the second O (second but last letter). The P must have been engraved but was subsequently obliterated.

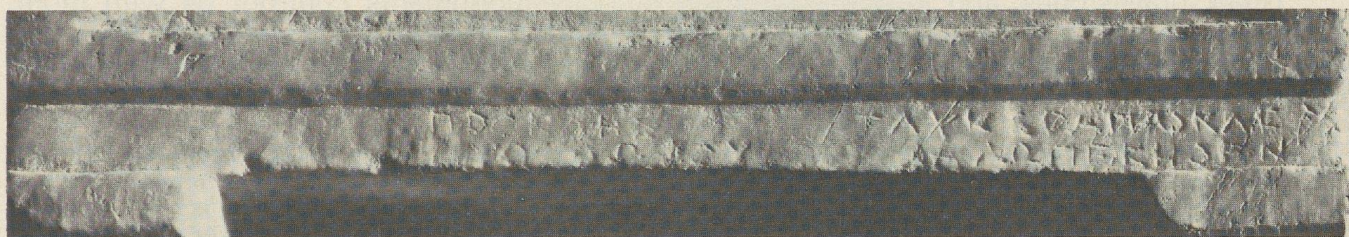


Fig. 3: Grave stele of Prokles and Glykera. Detail.

The name of the female is somewhat more readable: ΓΛΥΚΕΡΑ ΠΡΟΚΛΕΩΣ | ΑΛΩΠΕ-
KHΘEN, Γλυκέρα Προκλέο(υ)ς Ἀλωπεκῆθεν, Glykera, daughter of Prokles, from the deme of Alopeke.

There is again difference in the depth of the engraving of the letters and peculiarities such as the vertical of the K, barely continuing beyond the fork; in the following word, the P has only a vertical tip below the circle, and the following O not only overlaps the preceding letter but consists of only two crescents. There follows an even more clumsily rendered K as compared with the first K. The final two letters are difficult to read. Believing that the O was to consist of two crescents, we take a deep chisel mark to stand for one of the crescents while the second was never executed. The Σ comes close to the edge, the fourth bar being very short or missing(?). With the second line we get into smoother waters. We seem to have a normal K; the following letter, a Θ, is angular and open at one side; in E, the third horizontal bar has disappeared due to chipping(?) if it was there at all¹⁰.

Miserable as the inscriptions are, they give us the names of two figures, father and daughter. We believe that the stele was erected to honour foremost Glykera. Though the name of her husband does not occur, she was probably married. She is represented together with a younger sister or one of her friends.

Whenever more than one name occurs on a stele the interpretation becomes difficult: are we to think that both the named figures are deceased, or was the intention rather to give the members of the family their names with the understanding that only *one* of them had died and was honoured by the funerary monument? In many gravestones it can be shown that the latter of the two alternatives applies. However, there is no rule strictly speaking and, moreover, there are variations of the two basic possibilities which only complicate matters. Thus, each grave-stone must be judged individually.

⁹ Cp. Athens, Keramicus P 688, Conze, 411, pl. 98; Diepolder, pl. 42,2.

¹⁰ Deonna mistakenly parenthesized the A of Ἀλωπεκῆθεν and he transcribed Προκλέ(ους) in *Catalogue, loc. cit.*

For the gravestone in Geneva we would favour an interpretation which takes it that both Prokles and Glykera are "dead". Although we have intimated that the very low relief in which the old man is carved is most likely due to the sculptor's familiarity with carving marble funerary *lekkythoi*, another interpretation for the low relief must also be considered. Did our sculptor possibly aim at rendering Glykera's deceased father as a mere shadow, σκιῇ εἵκελον ἢ καὶ ὄνειρῳ, already in Hades? Prokles, though dead, partakes in the death of his daughter as did Odysseus' mother Antikleia, who, in the Netherworld of the *Odyssey* has greater knowledge of what has occurred in Ithaca during Odysseus' absence than he himself who speaks to her shadow. We are fully aware that crediting the sculptor of our gravestone with such subtle evocation of associations may stand in gross contrast to his capacity as an artist. Not only are we confronted with mediocre execution as such but the composition as well is clearly derived from well established prototypes¹¹. Thus it is possible, after all, that the connotation of the shadow in Hades is, in principle, inherent in gravestones in which are also attested the same basic components (many-figured composition, inscribed names) as in the grave monument in Geneva.

Dating very likely from after 350, the third quarter of the fourth century B.C., the second gravestone, in which a group of figures is entwined by an interplay of mutual emotions, contrasts nicely with the gravestone discussed first, the figure of which strongly appeals to the sentiments of the beholder.

Greek gravestones, and in particular Attic funerary monuments confront us with more complex formulation of questions than is usually admitted. This could be gathered from the second gravestone discussed in this paper. Recently, a Hellenist characterized the situation as follows:

*En dépit de leur apparente simplicité et de leur dépouillement, les stèles funéraires attiques sont déconcertantes. Impossible souvent de savoir si elles ont été exécutées sur commande ou s'il s'agit d'un monument de série, prêt à être emporté et à recevoir pour seule "personnalisation" le nom du défunt. Si d'autres noms viennent s'y ajouter, les liens de parenté et la date des ensevelissements successifs restent vagues. Pour la sculpture, que de retouches, que de reprises au ciseau! Que de disparates aussi entre reliefs et inscriptions (je pense surtout aux stèles "béotiennes")! Quant aux épigrammes, le fond est presque toujours d'une banalité totale. Les cas parfaitement clairs et satisfaisants pour l'esprit sont l'exception; la plupart du temps, sur l'ensemble ou sur le détail, l'helléniste et l'archéologue se trouvent dans l'embarras.*¹²

One does not have to be quite so discouraging as the author just quoted, nor does the statement with respect to the epigrams — *le fond est presque toujours d'une banalité totale* — honour him, a Hellenist for sixty years. What must a generation twice as young think if men in their old age come forth with such totally disillusioned, negative statements! Moreover, not only would one expect a hundred years after Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* slightly more respect towards ancient monuments, but it is also worthwhile to remember here the response aroused in Goethe by Schlegel's criticism of Euripides. Goethe remarked to Eckermann:

*Ein Dichter aber, den Sokrates seinen Freund nannte, den Aristoteles hoch stellte, den Menander bewunderte, und um den Sophokles und die Stadt Athen bei der Nachricht von seinem Tode Trauerkleider anlegte, musste doch wohl in der Tat etwas sein. Wenn ein moderner Mensch wie Schlegel an einem so grossen Alten Fehler zu rügen hätte, so sollte es billig nicht anders geschehen als auf den Knien.*¹³

Perhaps the best cure for *banalité totale* is to take a walk through any Christian cemetery. Having experienced this, we believe that it will be a real delight to return to and to deal with Greek gravestones without or with epigrams. Another method to cure one's disconcerted spirit is to avoid seeking erudition, ambivalence, and ambiguity where there is none. L. Robert,

¹¹ All of which are of much higher quality than the gravestone in Geneva. Cp. the following, Athens, NM 725, Conze, 239, pl. 59; Athens, NM 762, Conze, 339, pl. 84; Berlin, StM K 34, Conze, 455; Diepolder, pl. 44; Copenhagen, NyCG 219, *Billedtavler*, pl. 16; Copenhagen, NyCG 227a, Diepolder, pl. 45; Trachones, Komninos, Conze, 207, pl. 55.

¹² *Phoros*, p. 42. A reference to a note in the quote has been omitted.

¹³ J.P. Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*. 1823-1832, vol. II, March 28 (Leipzig, 1827).

who always finds the appropriate words, said recently: *L'érudition peut prendre des figures déconcertantes*¹⁴.

An example of the unwished-for mood of erudite speculation is Daux' commentary on a stele in the National Museum of Athens (Fig. 4)¹⁵. There are two names above the figured scene (a seated woman on the left shaking hands with a standing male, the latter figure being most scantily preserved): ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟ | ΘΕΟΔΟΤΗΣ.

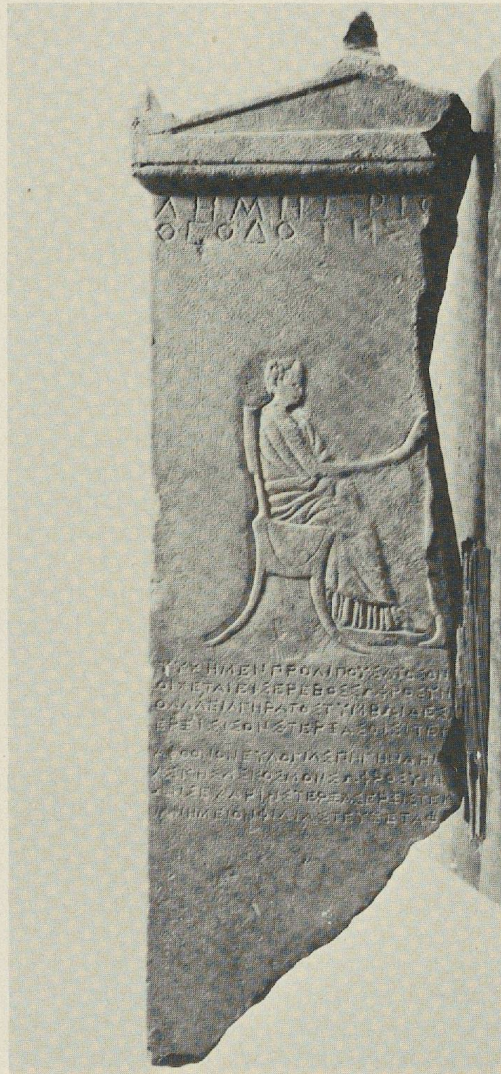


Fig. 4: Grave stele of Demetrios.

The names do not fill the available space in their respective lines; however, there is definitely not enough space for any additional name(s), short as they may be. In case of Demetrios, scholars have variably suggested a nominative or genitive ending. In the first case, the first name and that of Theodotes are taken to be male; in the latter case the names are taken

¹⁴ J. et L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.*, REG, 86 (1973), 45 à propos of Daux, *BCH*, 96 (1972), p. 503-566. One is surprised to find that Daux wasted a page on the stele in Karlsruhe, *Phoros*, p. 46-47. Did he really miss J. et L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.*, REG, 81 (1968), 182? See also Clairmont, p. 133.

¹⁵ Athens, NM 1115, Conze, 191, pl. 54; Clairmont, no. 42, pl. 21; *Phoros*, p. 42-46, pl. 5,2.

"Though the soul has left your body, Demetrios, and has gone to Erebus, the goodness of your character still flourishes unaging. When you died, Erxis buried you in a tomb, for she loved you always as much as her own children.

A boundless source of praise you won, Demetrios, by your pursuit of the fair renown that comes from goodness. Because of this, loving you as much as she loved her children, Erxis gave you this tomb when you died, in remembrance of her love." (trad. Clairmont, p. 120).

as referring to the tombstone of one Demetrios and of one Theodote. Daux produces valid arguments against both assumptions and proposes: ... *une autre solution, qui n'a pas été envisagée, une solution unitaire, me paraît s'imposer: Démétrios, fils de Théodote*¹⁶. So far so good. It comes somewhat as a surprise to the reader that Daux relegates rather casually a most crucial aspect of his novel interpretation concerning the two names to the very last sentences of his discussion after an *excursus* on a third name which appears only in the epigram(s). It is most remarkable indeed for an Attic gravestone *que Démétrios n'ait pas de patronyme, mais seulement un métronyme*¹⁷. Demetrios must have been a natural child, whatever the status of his mother was¹⁸. The case is to my knowledge unique in the funerary inscriptional material of Attica and it definitely deserved emphasis rather than being shoved to backstage¹⁹. Although we fully share Daux' interpretation, others might want to reject it as unlikely. This would make it necessary to return to either of the two solutions for the names referred to earlier²⁰.

The introduction of a third name, Erxis, in the epigram — (which consists of two quatrains the content of which is much alike) — can be considered all by itself, in the context of the meaning of the epigram; that is, the third name does not influence the validity of the new interpretation of the first two names. However, we believe that the erudite attempt of Daux, who considered seriously the possibility that Erxis could be male instead of female, was totally superfluous, was a mere sophistic *tour de force*. Even though from the epigrams themselves there is no hint at the gender of Erxis, nor does the word *πόσις* in reference to Demetrios occur, what is said in the quatrains is unequivocal and could only be said by a female. That much is absolutely clear.

Daux is upset — and calls it *une autre ambiguïté, plus gênante* than the ambivalence of Erxis' name (which, in our mind, does not exist) — that Erxis should say that she loved Demetrios "as much as her own children" (v. 4), "as much as she loved her children" (v. 7). If one contends that a wife could not express herself thus, *les conventions du genre épigrammatique étant ce qu'elles sont à l'époque classique*²¹, one would have to prove first that in Athenian society of the fifth/fourth century B.C. wives loved their husbands more than their children — a difficult task indeed! In order to understand the epigram, one must free oneself from the notion of ambiguity, one must admit non-concurrence with epigrammatic conventions and, last but not least, banish the feeling of surprise which, if anything, characterizes a modern reaction and not necessarily an ancient feeling. If, therefore, the poet has Erxis say that she loved Demetrios as much as her own children, we should accept that what she says is the intrinsic meaning of the epigram. Erxis' frank statement, which is far from any convention, may induce one to believe that commonly, but obviously in the convention not admitted, husbands fell somewhat short of the love of their wives for the benefit of their children. This, we learn, was not Demetrios' case.

There is, we believe, very much on the same lines of interpretation of intrinsic meaning, another possible solution for understanding the monument as a whole. Since Demetrios was a natural child, could he have grown up with Erxis' children? Could he have died in his youth or when a young man, being buried by his foster-mother who loved him as much as her own children? Some of the content of the epigram(s) would only be suitable if Demetrios died as a young man, since a child would hardly be credited with *sophrosyne* (v. 2) and some of the other praises, always supposing that one does not read the epigram "conventionally". However, the crucial passage in the quatrains makes perfect sense, whether we accept Erxis' frank statement regarding her husband or whether she refers to a common upbringing of children.

The figured scene, which shows two adults, concords with either of the two interpretations. That the right hand figure is male, is certain; but since so little of the figure is left, we are unable to tell what its age is. That does not alter the main issue: we still have Erxis, the wife *or* the foster-mother, and Demetrios (son of Theodote), her husband who passed away in the prime of manhood *or* her foster-child who died as a young man.

¹⁶ *Phoros*, p. 43 f. In Clairmont, p. 120 f., we took both Demetrios and Theodotes for male and thought, with others, of a second later burial.

¹⁷ *Phoros*, p. 45.

¹⁸ *Phoros*, p. 45: it is suggested that *ce pouvait être un neveu, un bâtard, un affranchi, le fils d'une affranchie, etc.* Both Chr. Habicht and P. Kussmaul, whom I consulted in this context, thought foremost in terms of a hetaira. Gerda Panofsky Soergl draws my attention to an interesting detail with regard to the name of Piero della Francesca (quoting from a German translation of Vasari, *Piero della Francesca*): *Man nannte ihn nach dem Namen seiner Mutter Della Francesca, weil, noch ehe er die Welt erblickte, sein Vater, ihr Ehemann, starb und sie ihn deshalb allein erzog und ihm weiterhalf, das Ziel zu erreichen, das ihm vom Schicksal bestimmt war.*

¹⁹ Daux himself, who is usually *fort minutieux*, omits reference to any parallels.

²⁰ It is of course possible that earlier scholars thought already of the most recent interpretation but did discard it in their minds just because of the metronymic.

²¹ *Phoros*, p. 45 for both quotations.

A gravestone with inscription — names and an incomplete hexameter line — was recently acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum (Fig. 5)²². The text of the "epigram"

Ἐνθά[δε] κεῖται Μυννία μητρὶ ποθεινῇ

was rendered in a free translation as follows:

"Here lies Mynnia to the sorrow of her mother".

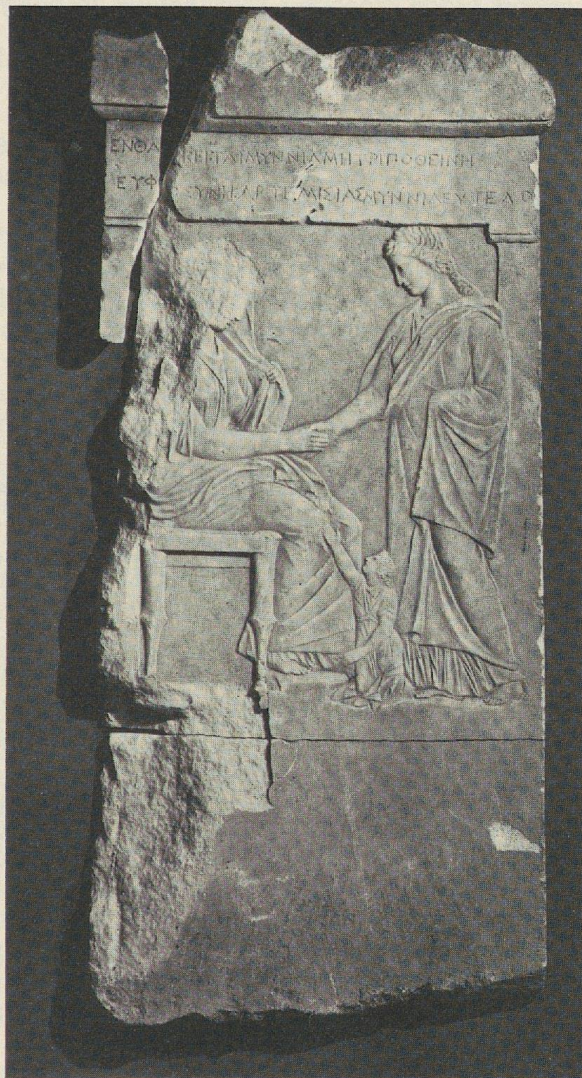


Fig. 5: Grave stele of Mynnia.

Some conjectures by Frel regarding the names were shown to be unnecessary. With Marcovich and Merkelbach we read them as follows²³:

Εὐφροσύνη: Ἀρτεμισιάς, Μυννία Εὐτέλο.

Let us first describe the gravestone. On the left a middle-aged woman sits to the right, her head slightly bowed; part of her mantle is laid over her head; with her left hand she grasps the edge of the mantle at the height of her left upper arm. The lady shakes hands with a female who is in her late teens, perhaps 18-20 years old, wearing chiton and mantle. As she stands, she looks with head inclined at the seated figure. Between both figures kneels a "very young child" and, as Frel states, "represented as a small adult". It is known that Greek artists were, with rare exceptions, quite incapable until the middle of the fourth century B.C. of depicting children with

²² J. Frel, "An Attic Grave Stele with Epigram", *GRByzStudies*, 14 (1973), p. 173-177. The new inv. no. of the stele is 71.AA.121. See also C. Vermeule - N. Neuerburg, *Catalogue of the ancient art in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, Cal., 1973), no. 11.

²³ M. Marcovich - R. Merkelbach, "A misplaced Sigma?", *ZPapEpig*, 15 (1974), p. 168.

the correct physical proportions. That the reader may better understand how our appreciation of the gravestone differs in essentials from that given by Frel, we feel it is necessary to quote from the latter's article²⁴.

"The standard interpretation of the figured scene would identify the seated figure as the deceased. The first line states that Mynnia is deceased, yet the second line identifies her as the standing figure. The explanation is simple: the family of the deceased Mynnia bought a ready-made stele and had the inscription engraved, regardless of the meaning of the conventional representation that was there. Here is one more proof, if needed, that there is no obligatory correlation between the assumed reality of an artistic image and the facts of life for which it is used. And, of course there exists no correlation between the epigram on the one hand and the relief on the other, though both use well-established, traditional themes."

Let us begin with the concept of "standard interpretation". This concept, as such, can no longer serve as working hypothesis. The one and only conclusion we have to draw from the study of a multitude of gravestones is that in two-figure-groups or in composition with more than two figures the deceased is just as often (if not more often) standing rather than seated²⁵.

This being so, we can not assert that the stele was bought "ready-made", as Frel does. Nor will we be able to tell whether it was made to order or bought "ready-made", even if we raise the question whether or not the daughters were quite as many years apart with respect to their age as is suggested by the figures themselves. In other words, do we have before us actual fact or "convention"? Surely, if the former, the stele could have been made to order; if the latter, it was "ready-made". The final answer must escape us because we are ignorant of the respective ages of the daughters.

Of much greater importance is that inscriptions and figured scene are perfectly correlated in the present memorial. To achieve this correlation, the inscribing of names and epigram could be grafted upon the figured scene of a "ready-made" stele as long as the correspondences were there that really concerned the individuals involved. To achieve meaningful correlation does not necessarily mean that a stele has to be made to order; much room is open on available grave-stones for sheer coincidence.

In the stele in Malibu the female names identify all the figures depicted. The epigram tells of the sorrow inflicted upon the mother, Euphrosyne. The sorrow of Euphrosyne is splendidly conveyed to the beholder in the female figure with her bowed head and her mantle drawn over her head. Euphrosyne does not look at her deceased daughter but grieves inwardly and outwardly. Mynnia does not reveal any sign of grief; the contrary holds true. In this she follows the *kanon* because generally speaking, the depiction of the deceased as a dejected mourning figure is found only exceptionally in Greek gravestones of the classical period (430-320 B.C.). Those surviving have reason to mourn, not those who depart for eternity. Last but not least, there is Artemisias, who makes a longing gesture towards her mother as if disturbed by her mourning and wanting to be raised from the floor to her mother's lap, possibly to comfort her. We cannot help but note that, as is true for many gravestones, those still alive are grouped together, are linked by subtle gestures or motives and thus are separated in some psychical sense from the one who is deceased and about to depart physically.

This is a precious addition to the small group of monuments in which visual art and language are combined and, in lending each other mutual support, enhance the meaning of the memorial significantly. It should have become clear by now that one cannot over-emphasize the wealth of connotations that emanate from funerary epigrams and gravestones of the classical period.

List of illustrations

Fig. 1: Geneva, Collection Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Inv. 11562.

Fig. 2-3: Geneva, Collection Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Inv. 9311.

Fig. 4: Athens, National Museum, Inv. 1115.

Fig. 5: Photo reproduced courtesy, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California, Inv. 71.AA.121.

²⁴ J. Frel, *op. cit.*, p. 175-176.

²⁵ A count in Clairmont, in which all monuments are inscribed, hence irrevocable as far as the interpretation of the deceased goes, reveals these statistics: a) two-figure compositions, deceased seated: 6, standing: 9; b) three adults, deceased seated: 6, standing 4. There are specific themes in two-figure compositions in which the deceased — for social conventions — is always seated, namely the mistress-and-maid stelai. For the very reason that both standing *and/or* seated figures can represent the deceased, A. von Gladiss misinterprets the facts when stating in the discussion of a newly found gravestone in Cilicia: *Wenn sie* — i.e. the deceased — *als die jüngere Frau entgegen der Sitte des Alltags sitzend dargestellt wird, ist damit ein Zeichen der Heroenwürde gegeben, die die Tote über die Lebenden stellt*. See "Ein Denkmal aus Soloi", *IstMitt*, 23-24 (1973-74), p. 175-181; the quote is from p. 176.