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FROM SYROS (I): POLYBIUS THE ARCHITECT

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## FROM SYROS (I): POLYBIUS THE ARCHITECT\*

The discovery in 1987/88 on the island of Syros of three privately owned epigraphical pieces (one stele and two fragments belonging to the same epistylum)<sup>1</sup> ended a fifty-year silence<sup>2</sup> in the field of epigraphical studies from this island, since the last inscriptions published were by Werner Peek for the IG XII, Supplementum.<sup>3</sup> Realizing that there was the possibility of other unpublished epigraphical material, the author requested and was granted access to the records and stockrooms of the Hermoupolis Archaeological Museum of Syros. The following paper presents the first of a series devoted to these unpublished pieces.

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A greyish marble funerary stele complete on 3 sides and broken at the bottom. Its top is crowned with a pediment; the tympanon is empty. Preserved height 0,53, width 0,335, thickness 0,12; height of letters 0,025. It was donated to the Hermoupolis Museum (where it is presently located) on May 3, 1969 by Vassilios M.Doukas of Syros<sup>4</sup> (stockrooms, inv.no.832). Its origin is said to be Syros, but no other details are available concerning its exact provenance.

The inscription is set in 3 lines in the upper part of the stele, in letters with heavy apices, is in legible condition (Tafel Ia)<sup>5</sup> and reads:

ΠΟΛΥΒΙΩ ΑΡΧΙΤΕΚΤΟΝΙ  
 CΥΝΕΡΩCΑ ΑΝΔΡΙ  
 ΧΡΗCΤΩ

Πολυβίω ἀρχιτέκτονι  
 Cυνερω̄cα ἀνδρί  
 χρηcτῶ

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<sup>1</sup> See by the present author: "A Stele for a Priestess of Isis on the Island of Syros", *Ancient World*, XVII, 1&2 (1988) pp.35-39; "From Syros: A Dedicatory Inscription of Herodes the Great from an Unknown Building", *Ancient World*, XVIII, 3&4, 1988 (1989) pp.87-99. However, the origins of both inscriptions remain unknown.

<sup>2</sup> An exception being the discovery of an inscribed archaic pottery sherd found 12 years ago, a drawing of which was shown to Dr. H.Immerwahr, who made a brief comment about it in A.D.Manthos "Surface Finds from Galessa, Syros", *AAA*, XII (1979) no.1, p.46 (= *SEG*, XXX, 1980, [1983] no.1064) and re-interpreted by Al.N.Oikonomidis "Three Archaic Greek Inscriptions from the Island of Syros", *Ancient World*, XVII, 1&2 (1988) pp.32-33. The sherd is now exhibited in the Hermoupolis Museum (inv.no.837).

<sup>3</sup> *IG*, XII, Suppl., pp.117-118 (1939).

<sup>4</sup> The information concerning the name of the donor and the date it was given to the Museum are recorded by Chr.Doumas in a note-book, which along with the first Syros inventory book (completed on Sep. 5, 1911) are now kept in the library and archives of the Archaeological Museum of the island of Myconos.

<sup>5</sup> It was impossible to photograph the stele in an upright position and for this reason the pediment is not completely visible.

The T and E in ἀρχιτέκτονι are written in Ligature. The shape of the letters date the inscription between I/AD to II/AD.

The name Συνερώσα has been found on an inscription from the island of Paros (IG, XII, 5.443) and dates from the imperial period. The male counterpart of the name has been recorded on the island of Kos (Paton-Hicks 71a, Συνέρωσ), from the imperial period as well.

The most striking fact of the inscription is that instead of the father's name the deceased's profession is given. Stating a person's profession on funerary stones is found rarely in Greece proper (even at later periods such as this) while it was an accepted practice elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, e.g. in Italy where some inscriptions include the profession.<sup>6</sup> In the present case, Synerosa (his wife?), considered this to be sufficient identification.

In his study on ancient builders, Alison Burford devotes an entire chapter to the role of the architect.<sup>7</sup> He, as well as other scholars, has pointed out that even the greatest architects (Iktinos, Mnesikles, Philon, etc.) were not mentioned by their contemporaries, that there are very few instances in which the name of any architect of a noteworthy building is preserved, and that nothing is known of the origins of the most famous architects of antiquity.<sup>8</sup> Burford also argued that "... in general, no Greek architect would have been able to find employment as an architect (for temple building was essentially a rare occurrence, and private houses were surely not built by 'architects' but by ordinary masons and carpenters.)"<sup>9</sup> On the basis of Burford's argument, can it be assumed that the term 'Architect' was an honorary title bestowed on a skilled builder to whom the construction of a sacred building was entrusted - a title he would carry from then on? If indeed this assumption is true, and if Polybios built a temple on Syros, or elsewhere, it may explain why no other identification was necessary for his grave stone.

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<sup>6</sup> IGRR, I, 201, 211, 218, 219, 226, 486 (= IG, XIV, 1419, 1443, 1468, 1469, 1478, 419), for πλάστης, μαρμαράριος, ἰατρός, ἔμπορος.

<sup>7</sup> Alison Burford, *The Greek Temple Builders at Epidaurus*, Univ. of Toronto Press (1969), pp.138-145.

<sup>8</sup> Burford, *opcit.*, p.138. Some inscriptions from this period and from outside Greece are suggestive, e.g.: IGRR, I, 530 (Moesia), 1236 and 1260 (Egypt); IGRR, III, 1287 (Arabia); IGRR, IV.727 (Eumeneia. Only the first inscription on the stele), and 504, 505, 506 on the same architect from Pergamon.

<sup>9</sup> Burford, *opcit.* p.139.



Inscription aus Syros (Hermoupolis Museum inv.no. 832)