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THE DATES OF THE DEDICATIONS FROM THE ATHENIAN AKROPOLIS

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## The Dates of the Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis

It has long been recognized that the dedications from the Athenian Akropolis are critical for establishing any chronology of early Attic letter forms.<sup>1</sup> Professors A.E. Raubitschek and L.H. Jeffery published these stones in 1949<sup>2</sup> and thereby provided a set of dates which has not been seriously challenged as a whole.<sup>3</sup> *DAA* is a work remarkable for its scope; furthermore, the approach adopted, i.e. architectural epigraphy, set the tone for epigraphical studies for the years which followed. There is, however, a serious problem with the dates of these inscriptions: they are remarkably close, and in fact are often dated to within a decade, although there is rarely any historical reference in the inscriptions. Of the 392 dedications, 300 of them were dated primarily on letter forms. I suggest that not only are the dates of the dedications too narrow, but perhaps the method of dating by letter forms alone simply will not stand for this group of inscriptions. Indeed, we may simply have to accept the fact that we may never have a firm chronology for these stones. It will be useful at the outset to provide a brief discussion of Raubitschek's criteria and methods for dating the inscriptions, since much of what follows will of necessity deal with the dates which he established.<sup>4</sup>

Raubitschek distinguishes two main groups of letter forms for the period under question: one from before 515 to the early 490's, his old style, and a second which he claims attained popularity in the 480's, called the new style. In between these two periods, he places a few stones which seem to him to be transitional. He relies primarily on the shape of the letters alpha, epsilon, theta, mu, nu, and chi to distinguish these two periods. In the earlier period alpha, epsilon, mu and nu appear in different forms but commonly with a rather straight and long first vertical stroke, e.g. Α, Ε, Μ, Ν. Gradually the shapes of these letters were altered. The slanting crossbar of alpha became horizontal, as did the cross strokes of epsilon which also lost its tail. Mu and nu lost their running appearance. Theta, which in the early period appeared with a crossbar, Θ, had in the later period a dot in the center; the early form of chi was cut in the shape of an upright cross as opposed to the later x form. By the mid fifth century the letters had essentially achieved the form which they would have for the remainder of the century (cf. H. Immerwahr, *Attic Script* [Oxford 1990] 177).

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Professors S.V. Tracy, A.G. Woodhead and A.E. Raubitschek, all of whom have read and commented on this paper in various drafts. An earlier version of this paper was read at the 1992 meeting of the American Philological Association in New Orleans and I am grateful also for helpful comments received there, especially from Professor R. Stroud.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis* (Princeton 1949). Hereafter this work is referred to as *DAA*. In references to this work, I follow the convention of referring to page numbers differently than the inscriptions themselves, e.g., *DAA* p. 121, and *DAA* 121.

<sup>3</sup> See, however, A. J. Graham's extremely sensible discussion of the difficulties of dating in this period, "Dating Archaic Greek Inscriptions", in *Acta of the Fifth Epigraphic Congress 1967* (Oxford 1971) 9-17.

<sup>4</sup> For Raubitschek's discussion of letter forms, see *DAA* pp. 448-451. There are, in addition, his occasional observations in the commentary for the individual stones.

Raubitschek chooses as representative of the old style such stones as the herm of Hipparchos, *IG* 1<sup>2</sup> 837 (Kirchner, *Imagines*, no. 11; *CEG* I 304);<sup>5</sup> the dedication of Kallimachos, *IG* 1<sup>2</sup> 609 (*DAA* 13; *CEG* I 256; here, pl. X) and the Salamis decree, *IG* 1<sup>3</sup> 1. As representative of the new style he used the dedication of Nearchos, *DAA* 197 (*CEG* I 193; here, pl. XI.1), the Altar dedicated by Peisistratos to Apollo Pythios, *IG* 1<sup>2</sup> 761 (Kirchner, *Imagines* no. 12; *SEG* 305), and the Hekatompedon inscription, *IG* 1<sup>3</sup> 4 (here, pll. XI.2 and XII).

Raubitschek recognizes that there are difficulties with the dating of some of these stones.<sup>6</sup> Letter forms overlap one another; two different styles of a letter appear in the same inscription; letters on a stone which is securely dated on other grounds might look as though they belong thirty years earlier or later. When we examine the stones which he uses as a guide to establishing his chronology, these difficulties are brought into high relief.

He begins his discussion of the early period with two stones which he dates to the earliest years of his 'old style': the Herm of Hipparchos and *DAA* 178, both of which he dates to 'immediately before 515'.<sup>7</sup> Raubitschek bases his date on what he perceives as early letter forms. Of the Herm of Hipparchos, he writes, "Significant are the vertical first stroke of alpha, gamma, and to a certain degree mu; the irregularly slanting strokes of epsilon give its vertical stroke increased emphasis" (*DAA* p. 448). He cites *DAA* 178, the dedication of Andokides, as contemporary, a judgment based on the similar use of vertical first strokes.<sup>8</sup> However, these vertical first strokes also appear on at least one stone which Raubitschek has dated to the 490's, the dedication of Kallimachos (Kirchner, *Imagines*, no. 18; here, pl. X), which relates to the battle of Marathon and is therefore datable on other grounds.<sup>9</sup> Even if their use on the Kallimachos dedication is stylistic, i.e. deliberately archaic (an idea which would be practically impossible to demonstrate in this period), it still demonstrates that they were in use at a date much later than 515.

The next stone in the series is *DAA* 197 (pl. XI.12), a statue base referred to as the dedication of Nearchos, signed by Antenor who may have cut the inscription (*DAA* pp. 232-33). Of *DAA* 197, which he dates to shortly after 515 B.C., Raubitschek states, "It seems clear that this stone stands at the beginning of a new development" (*DAA* p. 449). The crucial letters here are alpha, mu, and nu which have lost the vertical first stroke. Epsilon and theta remain unchanged. Even if we accept that *DAA* 197 stands at the beginning of a new development, there seems no good reason for offering such a narrow date. Raubitschek himself notes that Nearchos the potter, who set up *DAA* 197, "must have had a flourishing business in the

<sup>5</sup> When F. Hiller von Gaertringen published *IG* 1<sup>2</sup> in 1924 he had only a copy of this inscription (837) which was transcribed by Fourmont. See S. Dow, *Ath. Mitt.* 62 (1937) 1 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., his remarks on the altar of Apollo Pythios, *DAA* pp. 449-450.

<sup>7</sup> For number 178 see *DAA* pp. 213-216; for the Herm of Hipparchos as well as further comments on 178, see *DAA* p. 448.

<sup>8</sup> *DAA* p. 449. Of 178, illustrated in *DAA*, pp. 214-15, Raubitschek states further that the letter nu is simply a mu without the final stroke. In fact, the final stroke of nu is not consistently as heavily slanted as the third stroke of mu. See particularly the final nu, illustrated on the top of *DAA* p. 215, and the nu in 'Andokides', shown on the bottom of p. 215, as compared with the mu in 'μe' illustrated on the top of p. 214. It is difficult at best to be certain that such details are of critical importance, but in this vexed period any perceivable phenomenon is likely to be seized upon.

<sup>9</sup> The dedication of Kallimachos is number 13; it is discussed in *DAA* on pp. 18-20 and 450.

last half of the sixth century." He goes on to say that "any date ca. 525-510 B.C. would be possible for a dedication by the potter Nearchos" and notes further that "the letter forms of the inscription, the profile of the moulding, and the style of the marble statue seem to be in keeping with this date" i.e. 525-510 (*DAA* p. 233). Furthermore we need mention only the dedication of Kallimachos again as an example of a stone with earlier forms of mu, nu, and epsilon which must be dated to post 500, and secondly the altar of Peisistratos with its finely cut letters which, I will argue, precedes 515, as examples of stones which call into question Raubitschek's dating. While these stones do not in themselves invalidate his date for *DAA* 197, they should cause us to reconsider the value of the letter forms as confirming evidence for such a specific date.

Raubitschek continues with an inscription which is soundly dated on historical grounds. In 506 B.C. the Athenians defeated the Boiotians and Chalkidians, and shortly thereafter they set up a monument commemorating that victory. This inscription, *DAA* 168, *CEG* I 179, (p11. XIII and XIV.2),<sup>10</sup> which Raubitschek dates to c. 505, exhibits some interesting characteristics. Concerning letter forms, Raubitschek notes only that the stone shows two different forms of nu, the older one with the first stroke vertical and the newer style with the first stroke slanted (*DAA* pp. 198-99). It should be noted also that the stone has alpha with both side strokes slanted, although the right stroke is not as long as the left, and the crossbar of alpha is angled as well. The stone has fifteen letters preserved on two lines and in general the letters in the first line are thinner and taller, characteristics of older letters, than the letters in the second line. Finally, the older style nu appears only in the first line and the newer style only in the second. Raubitschek notes summarily that over all this inscription shows "less skill on the part of the engraver than the private dedication of the potter Nearchos (*DAA* 197), which is ten years earlier."<sup>11</sup> We might note in passing that the date for 197, which he suggested earlier as possible, he now cites as established. *DAA* 168 receives only brief comment from Raubitschek but it deserves closer attention, for this stone is one of the few which refers to a datable historical event. The difference between the letters in the two lines of the inscription, particularly evident in the nu and pi, suggests that this stone may be at the beginning of a new development, or at least transitional. Alternatively, there may simply have been two cutters who worked on the stone, and who had different styles. In either case, perhaps this stone should be used as a focal point around which some of the other dedications might be placed in a relative chronology.

The funerary epigram published by J.H. Oliver in *Hesperia* IV, 1935 p. 53 ff., number 15, is the next stone discussed by Raubitschek. This stone is dated by Oliver, and Raubitschek after him, to c. 498/7. Here the alpha and nu resemble those found on *DAA* 197, dated by Raubitschek to shortly after 515, but epsilon and chi have changed. Epsilon no longer has slanting horizontals but rather these are now straight; chi has gone from the upright cross to a St. Andrew's cross (x).

<sup>10</sup> See also D.L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge 1981) 191-193.

<sup>11</sup> *DAA* p. 449. I note further that the sigma at the end of line two should be dotted, and the delta following it would clearly be of different shape than that in line one. I am indebted to Professor S. V. Tracy for calling to my attention the difference in the two deltas.

These three stones, *DAA* 197, *DAA* 168 and the funerary epigram, represent a transitional phase for Raubitschek in which some letters change and others remain the same. As sound and obvious as this observation is, it is unfortunate that the letters which change are not always the same. That is, while one stone may have the later form of epsilon and earlier form of mu and nu, another stone may demonstrate the opposite phenomenon. While there is no reason that the same letters should change in the same way on different stones, the variation in changes makes it difficult to date these stones accurately relative to one another. We may put them all in a transitional period but a more precise dating based on letter forms is difficult, if not impossible. Raubitschek himself claims that "the individual dates [of the dedications] are interrelated, and that they may be accepted or questioned only in their entirety," and he adds a further, cautionary note, "that does not mean that the relative chronology can now be considered as established..." (*DAA* p. 448). His salutary caveat has been too often and too easily overlooked.

The altar of the Younger Peisistratos, *IG* I<sup>2</sup> 761 (Kirchner, *Imagines*, no. 12), the next stone in Raubitschek's chronology, has puzzled scholars for many years.<sup>12</sup> Simply put, the letter forms seem too advanced for a date in the 520's. According to Thucydides VI.54, Peisistratos dedicated the altar during his archonship and it would be difficult to interpret this evidence in any other way, though Raubitschek suggests that this may be necessary.<sup>13</sup> Raubitschek prefers a date for the altar at the beginning of the fifth century. He says that the letter forms "definitely do not fit the picture of the Athenian script at the beginning of the last quarter of the sixth century." As support for a date in the 490's, he offers the shapes of epsilon and nu, which he notes are "the same as on the contemporary tomb epigram [i.e. the one published by Oliver in *Hesperia* IV (1935) 53 ff.], and the middle stroke of alpha is horizontal for the first time." Raubitschek adds that "alpha and epsilon with horizontal strokes and symmetrical mu are not attested for the time before 500 B.C." Unfortunately, these statements assume what needs to be proven. The altar is not "contemporary" with the tomb epigram until proven so, and simply because Raubitschek dates the altar to the 490's, the possibility is not precluded that these same letters occurred before that time on stones which are not datable on other grounds. Raubitschek felt, as others have, that there is a problem here in fitting the letter forms into the generally accepted chronology. In this case the letters seem to fit a date later than historical circumstances demand. Here is a case wherein we must either opt for one of two dates, both of which have difficulties, or simply state that we have not sufficient evidence to do more than suggest parameters for dating the inscription. I believe that the historical date, i.e. the 520's, is a good one and it should be retained. Given the prominent location of this inscription it should not surprise us that Peisistratos would want a bold, striking appearance. The suggestion offered by Meiggs and Lewis is that although "the straight bar of the alpha is surprising...we need only believe that Peisistratos chose a craftsman who was ahead of most of his contemporaries" (*M.&L.* 20). This simple explanation avoids the difficulties involved in Peisistratos' chronology which must be faced if a later date is adopted. While a later date is not impossible, it seems improbable given the tortuous historical reasoning demanded if a later

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. the bibliography in R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford 1969) 20, and *DAA* p. 449.

<sup>13</sup> For Raubitschek's arguments summarized in this paragraph, see *DAA* p. 450.

date is adopted. Clearly we must challenge either our assumptions about letter forms, or the given historical information. Common sense demands that we re-examine our suppositions about early letter forms.

Kallimachos was polemarch in the battle of Marathon and a column was dedicated in his name on the Akropolis with an inscription commemorating that battle, *IG I<sup>2</sup> 609, DAA 13* (here, pl. X). Raubitschek places this inscription next in his chronology, and he dates the stone to c. 490, which must, despite a small problem, be the case.<sup>14</sup> As Raubitschek notes, however, the letters have more in common with earlier forms than later. "The shapes of the letters of this inscription are rather early, the first stroke of alpha being invariably vertical; epsilon, theta, mu and nu also are of the earlier type so that it may be assumed that this inscription was engraved by a stone cutter who received his training twenty years earlier, and who did not change the style of his writing" (*DAA* p. 450). In other words, based on letter forms alone, Raubitschek would have dated this stone to c. 510 B.C., yet the historical circumstances described in the inscription demand a date after 490 B.C. Here is a stone which clearly defies Raubitschek's chronology and, as was the case with the Altar of Peisistratos, the implication is that we must allow a range of at least twenty-five years in which this stone might be dated if letter forms were the sole criterion. *DAA 13* epitomizes the danger of depending on letter forms as we now understand their development.

Let us now look briefly at the Salamis decree, *IG I<sup>3</sup> 1*. As Meiggs and Lewis state, the letter forms (and the stoichedon layout) provide the "main evidence for the date of this important decree" (*M. & L.* 27), and yet they allow for a forty year range, 520-480 B.C., in which these letters might be found. They ultimately arrive at a date on historical grounds, c.508-506 B.C., i.e. after Kleisthenes' reforms, but before the settlement of the Athenians on Chalkis in 506/5 (*M. & L.* 27). Raubitschek dates the decree to the decade between 490 and 480 while admitting that "some of its letter forms are rather early. The alpha has in one instance a vertical stroke, but the shorter strokes of epsilon are almost horizontal" (*DAA* p. 450-51). In fact, two alphas, the ninth letter in line two and the first letter in line nine, have a vertical first stroke. In the latter case, the vertical can be explained both by the position of the letter on the left margin, and by the appearance of letters which have straight verticals (iota, epsilon, and rho) directly above it in the three preceding lines. Epsilon generally has straight horizontals, only rarely are they slightly slanted. Crossbar theta appears, but Raubitschek dismisses this and adduces comparanda with crossbar theta and horizontals on epsilon from several dedications, the latest of which dates to c. 455 B.C., *DAA 172*.<sup>15</sup> This, however, serves only to extend the parameters for the letter forms. Once again we are faced with a situation in which the letter forms can really do no more than supply rough boundaries.

One important text which must be re-examined based on these findings is *IG I<sup>2</sup> 470, DAA 68* (*DAA* pp. 71-4). Raubitschek restores this inscription as a base which "contained a list of at least nine names with demotics." He goes on to say that "the occurrence of demotics,

<sup>14</sup>*DAA* p. 450. The problem is that Kallimachos died in the battle and, as Meiggs and Lewis said, "dead men do not make dedications" (*op. cit.* 33).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* These inscriptions are *DAA 22*, not illustrated in *DAA*, but see Raubitschek's article in *B.S.A.*, XL (1943) pp. 31-36 and plates 12 and 13; 110, illustrated p. 113; 172 illustrated p. 198; 285, tracing p. 305; 296, tracing p. 319.

as well as the letter forms, indicate a date at the end of the sixth century" (*DAA* p. 73.) We are safe to assume that by "end of the sixth century" he means between 508/7 and 500 B.C. given his acceptance of the idea that one of Kleisthenes' reforms was the institution of the demotic.<sup>16</sup> There are four fragments of this inscription and since they do not join, their order is debatable. Be that as it may, what is important here about *DAA* 68 is that the letter forms are not significantly different than those of either *IG* I<sup>2</sup>490, *DAA* 65, dated to the last quarter of the sixth century, or *IG* I<sup>2</sup>488, *DAA* 77, dated to the 520's (*DAA* pp. 68-9). Indeed in some particulars, *DAA* 65 is strikingly similar to 68, (cf. the nu in line 1 of *DAA* 65 and the nu in lines 2 and 3 of fragment c for *DAA* 68), and in some ways 65 looks as though it could be later than 68, (cf. alpha of 65 with the same letter on fragment c of 68). Specifically, on 65, the cross stroke of alpha is more nearly horizontal and falls closer to the vertical center of the stone, whereas the alphas on 68 have a sharply slanted cross stroke. In general, the cutting is finer, the strokes neater on 65 than on 68, although this, of course, could be due simply to a difference in the abilities of the cutters. Furthermore, some of the lettering on *DAA* 13, which Raubitschek dates to shortly after 490 (*DAA* pp. 18-20), is also similar to 68, which could therefore conceivably fall into the first decade of the fifth century. If dated on letters alone, *DAA* 68 could be placed anywhere from the 520's to the 490's. That leaves the appearance of the demotics as the sole distinguishing criterion for dating the inscription in the closing years of the sixth century. The mere existence of demotics on the stone, however, (and the reader should note that while some of the restored demotics seem quite certain, others are questionable) does not demand a date in the last few years of the sixth century. Indeed as P.J. Rhodes has shown, "rural demotics were entirely possible before Kleisthenes' institution of the demes as political units."<sup>17</sup>

What I hope that this brief discussion has shown is that there is need for further work on the chronology of these late sixth and early fifth century letters. Although in many cases the letter forms simply cannot yield a more precise date than a forty year span, they have been used as supporting arguments and in some cases as the sole argument for dating inscriptions to a certain decade. This leads to difficulties because inscriptions, fragmentary though they be, can and often do provide an argument for dating a particular stratum or building in an excavation, which in turn is liable to be used to provide a date for an historical event, and therefore the epigraphist cannot afford to be liberal in assigning a date to a particular piece. The attempt to date a fragment such as *DAA* 249, *CEG* I 245 (here, pl. XIV.2), by letter forms, as Raubitschek does, is simply not realistic.<sup>18</sup> As Scranton has said, "We can hardly hope to date a wall on stylistic grounds closer than within a fifty year period. We may be able to see a development within the period so that we can say a given example is early or late in the style, but we cannot hope for greater precision with our present information."<sup>19</sup> This statement, although

<sup>16</sup> I am not convinced that Kleisthenes legislated nomenclature, and have argued against the idea in *JHS* CXIII (1993) 162-65.

<sup>17</sup> Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981) 82.

<sup>18</sup> On the date of this fragment Raubitschek wrote: "The letter forms indicate a date at the beginning of the fifth century" (*DAA* p. 284).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Scranton, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Scranton's comment, part of which was used by Raubitschek as support for his argument, is worth quoting at length: "A youth might learn a certain stonecutting technique from an old and famous master who had already outlived his contemporaries. A new style sets in but our youth reaches his

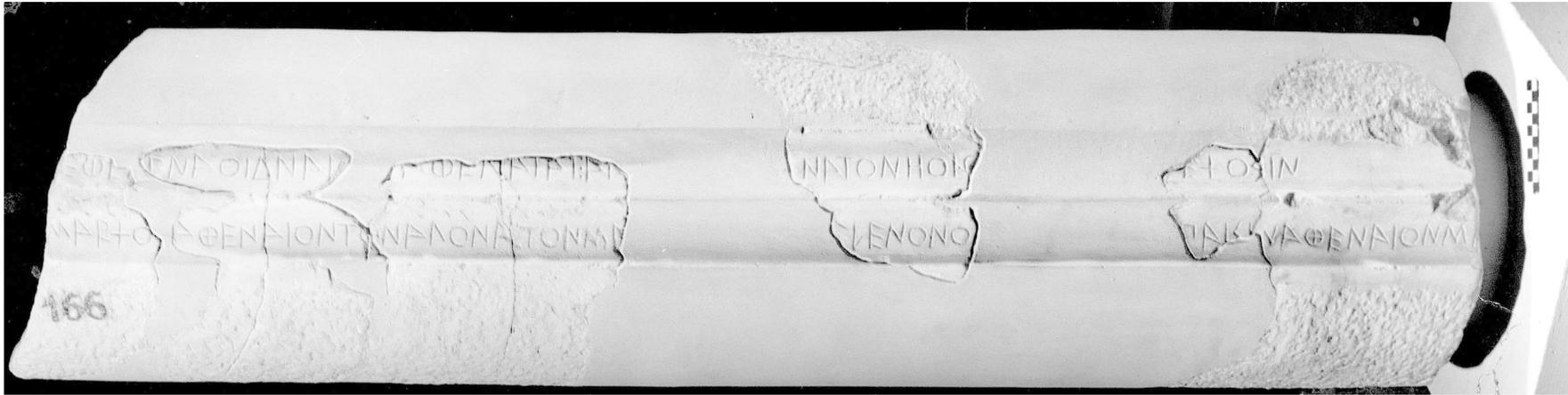
written almost fifty years ago about Greek walls, is relevant to the matter at hand and it must be admitted that the use of letter forms as an argument in support of dating an inscription to pre- or post 508 B.C., or any other particular year in this period, is exceedingly hazardous. If the stones which Raubitschek used to establish criteria for his chronology of letter forms are not themselves securely dated, then the chronology which is based on them cannot be secure either. Furthermore, if the chronology of letter forms is not secure, then the order of the early inscriptions will not be secure and they will be of little value, therefore, in determining the chronology of historical events. While the admission that we cannot be precise about these dates may cause some scholars to squirm with discomfort, we should not give way to our general desire for precision simply to relieve that discomfort. For the time being we must leave the dates of the dedications open.

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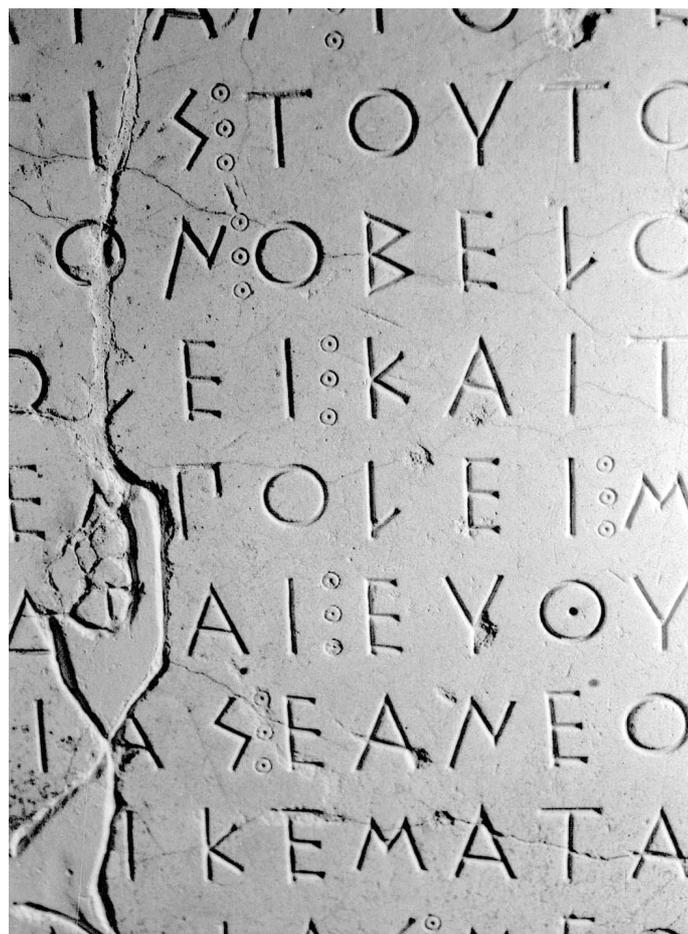
prime and grows old still using the same technique as his master. Fifty years after the normal life of that style has expired, and it has been replaced by younger styles, he is still building walls in a manner by then forgotten...We can hardly hope to date a wall on stylistic grounds closer than within a fifty year period. We may be able to see a development within the period, so that we can say a given example is early or late in the style; but we cannot hope for greater precision with our present information." The same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of letter forms.



Dedication of Kallimachos (*IG I<sup>2</sup> 609; DAA 13; CEG I 256*), with close-up photographs

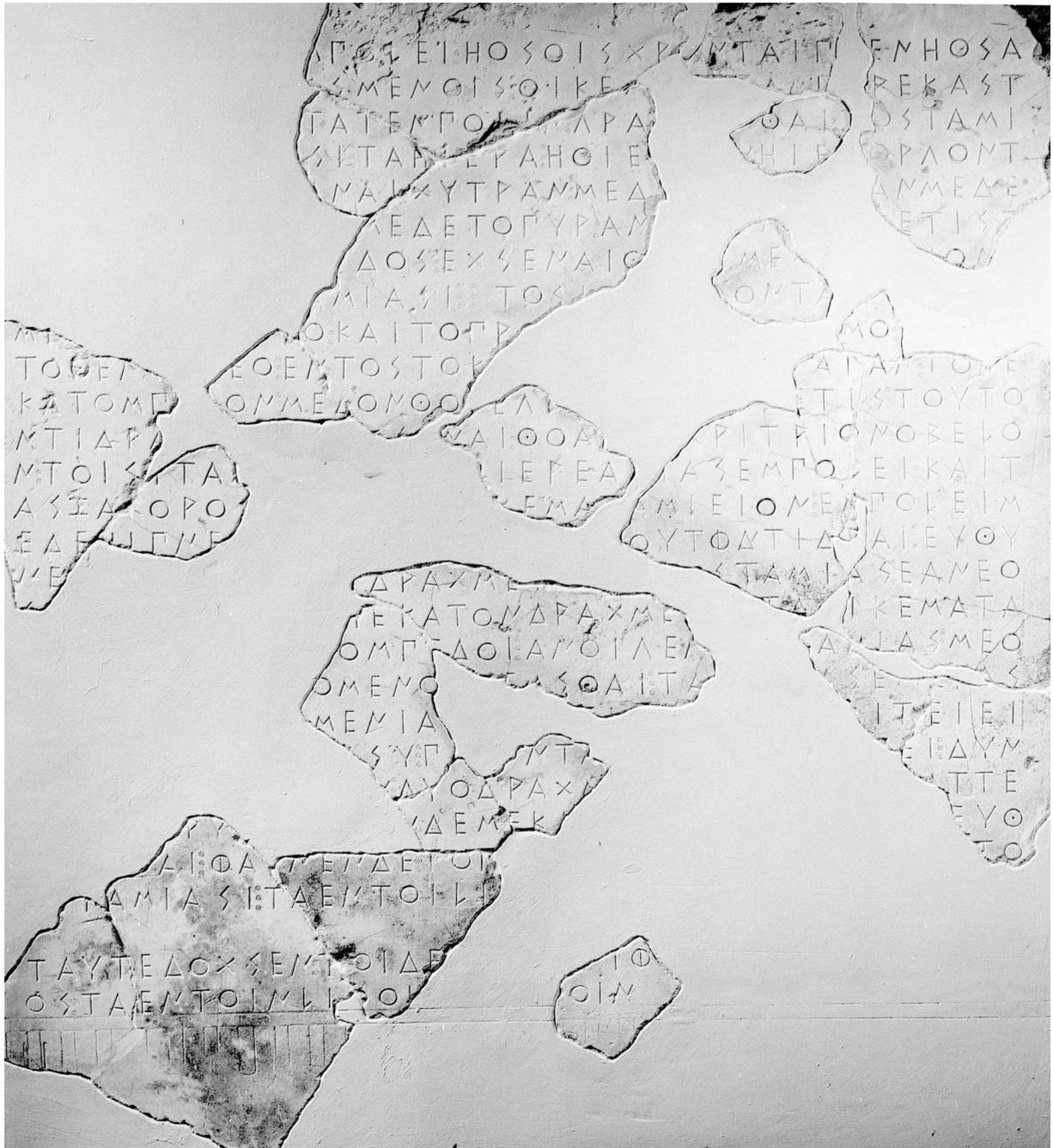


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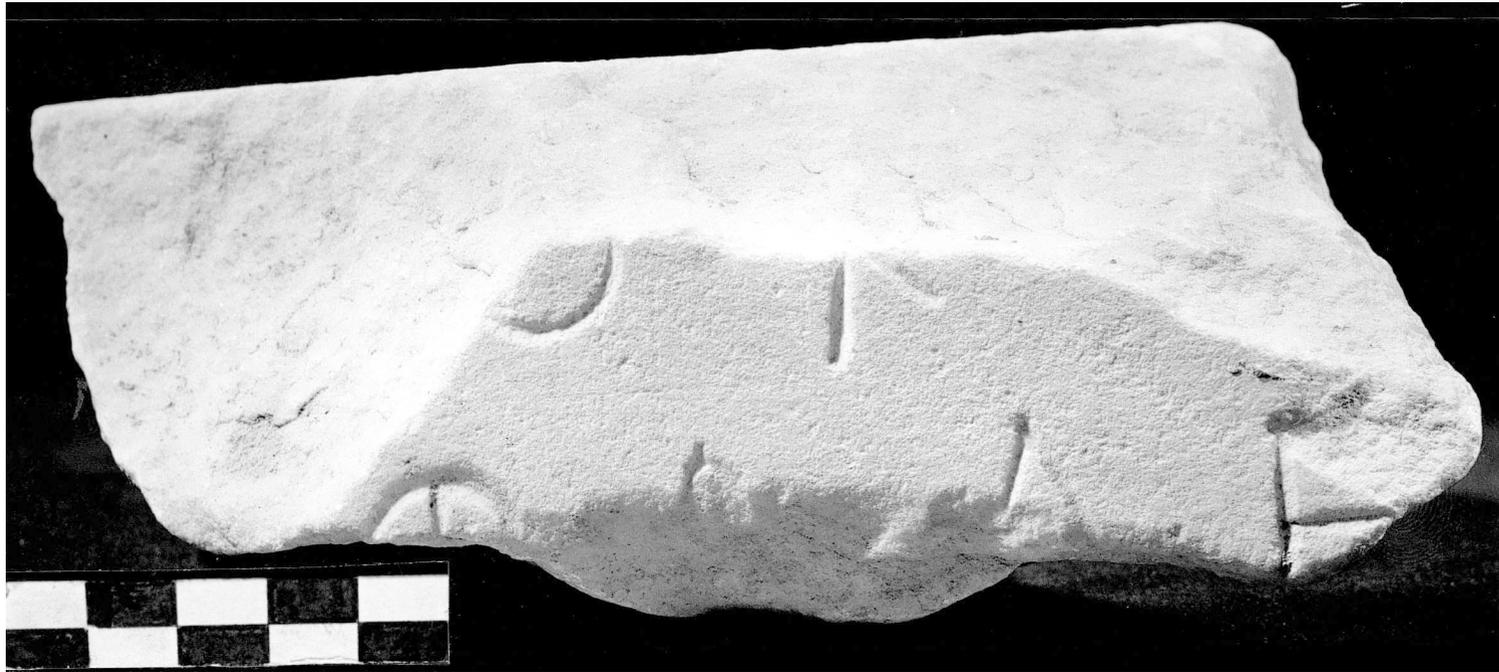
1. Dedication of Nearchos (*DAA* 197; *CEG* I 193), close-up photograph;
2. Hekatompedon inscription, *IG* I<sup>3</sup> 4, close-up photograph (also see pl. XII)



Hekatompedon inscription, *IG I<sup>3</sup> 4* (also see pl. XI)



Commemoration of the Athenian victory of 506 over Boiotians and Chalkidians (*DAA* 168; *CEG* I 179); for a close-up photograph see pl. XIV



2.



1.

1. Commemoration of the Athenian victory of 506 (see pl. XIII), close-up photograph (*DAA* 168; *CEG* I 179);

2. Fragment (*DAA* 249, *CEG* I 245)