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AN UNPUBLISHED GREEK (?)TOMBSTONE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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The stone is on display in Mount Stewart, County Down (some 15 miles from Belfast), ancestral home of the Marquesses of Londonderry. I find no trace of its ever having been formally published or otherwise brought to the attention of an academic readership; so I am indebted to its owner Lady Mairi Bury, aunt of the current Marquess, for permission to give the piece, here, its belated *editio princeps*.¹

1. Description

A photograph of the front (Pl. I) will suffice to accompany the following description and to convey this artefact's significant features, of which there are none on the (very roughly-hewn) back, sides, or flat top.²

(i) Material. White marble with reddish-brown, ferrous tinges of the kind once routinely associated with Pentelic marble in the literal sense,³ nowadays giving rise to less confident geographical attributions.⁴ Thus (as e.g. in recent SEG editorials) "Pentelic".

(ii) Dimensions. Overall: height 48.0 cm.; width 38.7 cm. upper, 31.4 cm. lower; depth (max.) 7.9 cm. upper, 9 cm. lower. Max. depth of relief 2.6 cm. Height of figures: 21.2–28.6 cm.⁵ Approximately the lowermost third of the front surface, below the relief, has been left rough-dressed; and some 6 cm. from the bottom itself the sides cut away inwards⁶ to create a tongue or tenon. (See further below, § 3.)

(iii) Inscription. Five personal names are cut along the cymation, above the heads of the individuals concerned. Letters: height 7–10 mm; width 8 mm (max.); distance between letters 4 mm. Four of the five names are fully preserved: ΚΛΕΝΩ, ΦΑΙΝΩ, ΝΕΟΦΡΩΝ, ΟΝΟΜΑΝΤΟΣ. The fifth, at the extreme left, lacks its beginning, which was on a wedge of stone, some 3.3 cm. wide, now sheared off and lost. Only]ΣΙΟΣ is preserved. Given the

¹ For help in doing so I am variously beholden to my colleague Dr Maureen Alden (who, *inter alia*, took the photograph), Professor George Huxley, Dr Alan Johnston, Dr Antony Keen, Mr Thomas Heine Nielsen, Ms Lene Rubinstein, and Mr Peter Marlow of the National Trust. The question of the stone's immediate provenance – how it travelled from the Aegean Sea to the Irish Sea – I pursue in *Hermathena* 1996, forthcoming.

² One feels safe in assuming the same of the bottom; it appears anyway to be immovably fixed to its heavy modern plinth or socle of black marble.

³ R. E. Wycherley, *The Stones of Athens* (Princeton 1978) 275.

⁴ The difficulty of identifying Aegean marbles by petrology alone: H. S. Washington, *AJA* 2 (1898) 1–2; C. Renfrew – J. Springer Peacey, *ABSA* 63 (1968) 45–66. In this case, as will be seen, there are no other links with Athens.

⁵ Individual figure-heights: below, iv.

⁶ In a rather angular manner on the left, a more curved contour on the right: there has been no attempt at precise symmetry.

8 mm gap between the end of ONOMANTOΣ and the right-hand end of the cymation, there were either one or two missing letters before]ΣΙΟΣ. The clear, unfussy letter-forms suggest a date in the second half of the fourth or, conceivably, the early third century.⁷

(iv) Relief. Five individuals in two groups (marked off from each other by the only two figures who are standing back to back). On the left one man and two women, on the right two men. Working from left to right:

(a) [.]ΣΙΟΣ or [. .]ΣΙΟΣ (height 22.5 cm.) is an elderly man with a full, long beard. He sits on a chair – the relief cut very deep between its legs – of the klismos type.⁸ Head and body in profile view facing right. He wears a himation draped over both shoulders; this leaves bare his right arm (with which he clasps the right forearm of Phaino: below) and chest. Right leg bent, at so acute an angle that the right foot is tucked between the legs of his chair. Left leg straighter, allowing the left foot to rest on the ground.

(b) Next to him, on his left, is a seated woman, KLENO (height 21.2 cm.), cut in very low relief. Head and body in profile view facing right. She has a rather large nose, and she too seems elderly; there are hints of a double chin. She wears a peplos, and her hair is styled in a face-encircling roll. Rather than looking at or interacting with any of the other figures, her attention is absorbed by a small bird sitting on her raised left hand.

(c) Standing in front of -sios, and grasping his right forearm with her own, is the young woman PHAINO (height 27.8 cm.). Head slightly bent as she looks down on him, in profile view facing left; body in three-quarter view. She too has a rolled hairstyle and wears a peplos, with mantle, draped over her left shoulder, which completely covers her left arm and hand, and sandals on her feet. Left leg slightly bent; weight on right foot.

(d) Back to back with Phaino, but touching the outside of her left foot with his right heel, stands NEOPHRON (height 28.6 cm.). He shakes hands – as distinct from clasping forearms – with Onomantos (below). Head, with a beard cut shorter than that of -sios, in profile view facing right; body in three-quarter view. Right leg bent; weight on left foot. He wears a himation, draped over both shoulders, which leaves bare his chest and right arm; a great length of material, hanging down from his left shoulder, is clutched in his left hand.

(e) Facing Neophron, on his right, is ONOMANTOS (height also 28.6 cm.): naked, clean-shaven, athletic-looking. Head in profile view facing left, inclining slightly downwards; body in three-quarter view. Left leg bent; weight on right foot. Left arm hangs, relaxed, down his side.⁹

All three men are portrayed with a horizontal line cut across the forehead – even the young Onomantos, who also has a vertical line between his eyebrows.

⁷ This and all other ancient dates are BC unless otherwise indicated.

⁸ See generally G.M.A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (London 1966) 33–7.

⁹ The forearm and hand have suffered damage in the form of a shallow sliver from elbow to knuckles, but the fingers are intact.

2. (In)completeness

As indicated (§ 1ii), there is a large rough-dressed area below the relief and a tongue- or tenon-like section at the very bottom. Either of these features alone, not to mention both of them together, suggest that the surviving monument is incomplete. Originally, the stele was surely set in a base, with a correspondingly-shaped recess serving as a mortice; this will have supported the stele either on all four sides or else, if its overall positioning offered some guarantee against its falling backwards, on the front and sides only.

In base-plus-stele monuments of this kind the base commonly bears an inscription, whether instead of the stele¹⁰ or as well.¹¹ Therefore, the lost base of our stele might have revealed more about the individuals portrayed in the relief; enough, perhaps, to have permitted the decoding of its “message”, which as matters stand remains obscure (§ 4).

3. Onomastics and prosopography

Since only one of the names cut on the cymation, Phaino, has any known associations with the divine,¹² our five individuals were presumably human. Beyond that, though, one can make little progress with three of the names: Kleno, Phaino, and the man whose name is indeterminate in itself, [.]στος or [.]στος.¹³

With the others one does, however, get slightly further. Although I can establish no link between the two, there is something to be said on each of them individually:

(a) Neophron. A prosopographical trawl for other Neophrons appears, *prima facie*, to find four, but on closer inspection two can be discarded: IG II² 3706 (cf. Anth. Gr. appendix, epigram 266), where the dedicator of a statue-base at Eleusis in the mid-third century AD

¹⁰ As in IG II² 6217, the well-known cenotaph of Dexileos from early-fourth-century Athens. Photographs: M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca* III (Rome 1974) fig. 68; G. R. Bugh, *The Horsemen of Athens* (Princeton 1988) fig. 12; U. Knigge, *The Athenian Kerameikos: History – Monuments – Excavations* (Athens 1991) fig. 3a with 3b (and drawing fig. 107).

¹¹ For example, in the mid-fifth-century grave monument, from Athens, of Pythagoras of Selymbria (IG I³ 1154) the base has a four-line epigram, packing in as much detail as it can, while the stele itself just confirms his name, Πυθαγόρο. ‘It is otherwise blank, but may originally have been furnished with a painted design, of which there now remains no trace’ (M. B. Walbank, *Athenian Proxenes of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Toronto 1978] 81). Photographs: Knigge, *Kerameikos* figs. 90–92.

¹² One of the daughters of Okeanos: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* line 418; cf. Paus. 4.30.4, quoting it.

¹³ If only 1 letter of his name is missing, the only possibility would seem to be [”A]στος; if 2 letters are missing, 7 other names – [A’]στος, [Γέ]στος, [Θά]στος, [’Iά]στος, [Κά]στος, [Κί]στος, and [Λά]στος – come into play. Some of these 8 names were commoner than others. Nevertheless (a) there is no means of determining whether a 5- or a 6-letter name is called for, and (b) none of the above 8 can anyway be linked with any of Kleno/Neophron/Onomantos/Phaino. As to Kleno and Phaino themselves, they are names too far-flung in their attestation to be of help here. Κλενώ, admittedly, is otherwise unattested as such; what one finds is actually Κλεινώ or occasionally Κληνώ; but no implications for provenance seems to stem from this. (Attic cases of ει cut as ε: K. Meisterhans, *Grammatik der attischen Inschriften*³ [Berlin 1900] 36 n. 193, and esp. L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions I: Phonology* [Berlin/New York 1980] 299–323.)

may or may not have been [Νεό]φρων;¹⁴ and I. Cret. 13.1, where comparable uncertainty surrounds the name of the individual honoured by Elyros in the second century (BC).¹⁵ That leaves two securely-attested cases: Neophron of Sikyon, the fifth-century tragedian (Diog. Laert. 2.134, etc.); and the deceased on a third-century tombstone from Palairos, Akarnania (P. M. Fraser – T. Rönne, *Boeotian and West Greek Tombstones* [Lund 1957] 137 no. 27).

(b) Onomantos. I know of just two other recorded instances. One occurs in *Staatsverträge* 297 (IG V.2, 343 etc.), a synoikism-treaty between Arkadian Orchomenos and Euaimon probably concluded in the mid-fourth century; an Ὀνόμαντος (line 92) – there is no means of telling which community he is from – is named second of four or more men who have evidently taken, or administered the taking of, an oath. The other, from the late fourth century, is an Argive victor in the horseback race at the Arkadian Lykaia festival (IG V.2, 550, lines 10–11): Ὀνόμαντος Ἐρυμάνθου Ἀργεῖος.

Could either of these men actually be the Onomantos of the Mount Stewart stele? To suggest this meets no positive impediment (as well as exerting greater attractions than any involving the other four names on the stone); and of the two candidates the second, the Argive jockey, looks the better chronological fit. However, if such speculation be eschewed, the overall results of onomastic and prosopographical testing are best formulated more generally: we seem to be directed towards the north-eastern Peloponnese¹⁶ for the origin of the individuals concerned.¹⁷

4. Function and character

Given that the textbooks are replete with warnings about how difficult some tombstones can be to distinguish from votives (and *vice versa*),¹⁸ it would be folly to exclude either possibility in the present case. However, as no feature seems to favour classification as a votive, the assumption in what follows will be that it is a tombstone.

Within that assumption, however, more questions are raised than answers to them. Any multiple-person tombstone relief prompts one primary question (who is/are the deceased?) and one secondary one (what is his/her/their relationship to the/any other persons?). Sometimes these questions can be answered, by appeal either to iconography or to an accompanying inscription or to both. But not here.

The prudence of an admission of *aporia* emerges plainly enough from testing the Mount Stewart stone against the largest available body of comparative evidence: classical tomb-

¹⁴ Duly disregarded in M. J. Osborne – S. G. Byrne (eds.), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names II: Attica* (Oxford 1994).

¹⁵ Face B line 2: Νεο[...φ]ρωνα Νεοκρέοντος Πι[...]; ‘quomodo potissimum proxeni nomen supplendum sit non video’ (Guarducci ad loc., venturing Πύ[ριον as the ethnic).

¹⁶ Note also Onomas (Arrian *Anab.* 3.24.4; Onomastoridas in Curt. 3.13.15; A. B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian’s History of Alexander I* [Oxford 1980] 233–234), Spartan envoy to Dareios in 330.

¹⁷ Not the same issue, of course, as the origin of the inscription as such, if Onomantos and co. were not still living in the city or cities of their birth.

¹⁸ See (e.g.) D. C. Kurtz – J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London 1971) chap. 12; B. S. Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton 1981) chap. 6.

stones from Attica. Conducting such a test entails no presumption about the piece's actual provenance; my justification does rest solely on the quantity of the material (2800+ items from the period 430–300), together with the convenience of handling it in the recently-published eight volumes of Christoph Clairmont's *Classical Attic Tombstones*.¹⁹

At the risk of stating the obvious, one must say first that this Attic material offers no exact parallel to our piece considered *in toto*, the main reason for this being the number of individuals depicted thereon. Clairmont's section (vol. IV pp. 155–173) for 'tombstones with five adults' sets aside 500 numbers in readiness for them (5.000–5.499), yet actually contains 6 items.²⁰ To these one could add *Ergon* 1955 [1956] 9 (Clairmont 10), a fourth-century base with five adult figures depicted on its left-hand side – but (for present purposes) to no avail. None of the seven groups are at all like that on our relief; they are also heterogeneous in themselves, and mostly impossible to "read" with any assurance.

So far so bad. If the monument resists overall interpretation, what of its details? Arguably the most distinctive one is Kleno's bird; but its implications are most unclear. Thanks to Clairmont's chalcid-centric indexing one can swiftly track down the 200+ Attic tombstone reliefs which include 'Birds, small'.²¹ However, (a) almost 80% of them commemorate a single adult (\pm child) or child;²² and even more noteworthy, (b) small birds in scenes with any number of individuals are held by children and young people, as opposed to adults, in a ratio approaching 9:1. The dozen or so instances where the bird-holder is a grown woman are, again, both miscellaneous *per se* and unrewarding in terms of parallels. So on the basis that such a bird was 'an attribute mostly of the unmarried, such as children, youths and maidens',²³ where does that leave our Kleno, who would otherwise most naturally be seen as wife of -sios and mother of Phaino?

What we lack, then, is a point of certainty from which interpretation can proceed. Who is dead? All five persons are named, so there is no simple clue there.²⁴ Even if, by the time the monument was prepared, all five were dead,²⁵ what had been their relationship while they

¹⁹ C. W. Clairmont, *Classical Attic Tombstones* vols. 0 ('Introductory Volume') – VII (Kilchberg 1993) – hereinafter Clairmont. Amongst other features of this scholarly *tour de force* which can be expected to provoke debate amongst its users is the numbering-system, which *inter alia* embraces far more empty numbers than full. Here I generally give such numbers in parenthesis after a more conventional reference.

²⁰ IG II² 5421a (5.450), 11561/2 (5.480), 11865b (5.380), 11990 (5.280), 12196 (5.150, the well-known Myrrhine lekythos); SEG 28.339 (5.290).

²¹ As opposed to 'Birds, semi-large or large'; even this has seven subdivisions.

²² This point is made (without quantification) by Clairmont himself at p. 3 of the Introductory Volume.

²³ Clairmont vol II p. 135, on his 2.202.

²⁴ Note Clairmont on IG II² 11990 (5.280): 'Since [only] Lysarete is named, there can be no doubt about the deceased. Without an inscription, one would probably have made the elderly man the deceased.'

²⁵ Clairmont describes SEG 28.339 (5.290) as 'another of those multi-figured memorials in which the family kin are honoured, all of its members having died eventually'. In the Mount Stewart scene there might, nevertheless, be temporal significance in the depiction of Kleno in such low relief. Compare Clairmont's comments on the three-figure scene in SEG 26.279 (3.433): 'Prokles appears like a shadow and . . . may actually be dead already, now partaking in the death of his daughter Glykera . . . To further explain the exceptional depiction of Prokles, it may be suggested that the carving of the figure of the old man is an afterthought, the stele being originally comprised of only two figures' (cf. Vol. IV p. 25).

were alive? If, despite the bird, the group on the left does consist of Phaino and her parents, how do Neophron and Onomantos relate to them,²⁶ and to each other? What, if anything, differentiates the -sios/Phaino and Neophron/Onomantos handclasps?²⁷ And what is the significance of the more subtle physical contact between Phaino and Neophron, each of whom is ostensibly concentrating on another person?²⁸

‘One might say that, with more figures, more complexities arise accordingly.’²⁹ The Mount Stewart relief seems to me further proof of this quasi-paradox.

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²⁶ See Clairmont vol. V p. 140 for references to 19 reliefs which he calls *pasticci*, defined as ‘in essence a combination of two two-figure groups set back to back’ (vol. IV p. 26). The situation on our relief could be so described if Kleno is set aside (previous note). Double *dexiosis* in such scenes is not universal but extremely common: see e.g. IG II² 6737a (4.324), 10612 (4.205), 11341 (4.369), 12625/6 (4.309).

²⁷ Interpretation of the *dexiosis* motif is a minefield at the best of times (i.e. with merely one per scene!), and I shall keep out of it. The most judicious discussion is probably still that of K. F. Johansen, *The Attic Grave Reliefs of the Classical Period* (Copenhagen 1951) 55ff.

²⁸ Is this contact of feet accidental? Amongst Clairmont’s *pasticci* (n. 26, above) there are at least two (3.810, 4.368) where a non-weight-bearing leg appears to result in something similar. But note, on the other hand, the loutrophoros-amphora IG II² 7504 (3.868), where ‘the wife’s lower legs overlap those of her husband’ (Clairmont vol. III p. 485).

²⁹ Clairmont vol. IV p. 159.



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