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AN HONORARY DEMA DECREE AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF A PALAISTRA IN KEPHISSIA


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The chance find of a fourth-century BC deme decree in the early 1960s (appropriately enough by a schoolboy) provides evidence for one of the most distinctive of Greek social institutions, a palaistra, in the large, wealthy deme of Kephissia. This document has been little discussed by scholars since Eugene Vanderpool’s brief article.1 The purpose here is to present a new text of this inscription,2 to provide a brief commentary, and to suggest that the honorand held the office of epistates of the palaistra. This decree is one of the few pieces of evidence for the administration of an Athenian palaistra—and the only one to refer to a deme palaistra—and provides invaluable insights into its operation.

The Inscription

The decree is inscribed on a block of gray, medium-grained micaceous marble. The total preserved height of the stone is 0.206 m. The maximum preserved height of the inscribed face is 0.085 m. and the maximum preserved width 0.150 m. The back of the stone is roughly finished and tapers from bottom to top (bottom 0.068 m.; top 0.038 m.). The uninscribed upper portion of the stone is rounded with its bottom edge is beveled; it appears to have been dressed with a toothed chisel. The left side of the inscribed face appears to have been damaged from a blow, the impact point of which appears to have been at the fourth line of the inscription. The damage extends from one letter space in the first line to six letter spaces in lines 9 and 10. The right side of the inscribed face and the bottom of the stone are entirely broken. The lettering is non-stoichedon and at times uneven, but deeply cut. A total of eleven lines may be read or restored with certainty, and it is likely that the inscription continued at least a few more lines.

Calculation of the original dimensions of the inscribed face is difficult, because the spacing of letters varies throughout the text. Based on the extant lettering, the ‘average’ letter space has been calculated at ca. 0.0069 m.3 Line 9 follows a common formula and its restoration appears certain. If iota is counted as a half space, this line provides 36.5 letters as a guideline for restoration. The restored width of the inscribed face, then, assuming an average of 36.5 letters per line, was ca. 0.251 m.4

In the following text, lines have been restored up to a maximum of 38 letter spaces or a minimum of 36 letter spaces. The count for each line is printed at the right side of the text. The numbers in parentheses represent the iota-count. Readers should take special note of words marked as questionable in the text below. These restorations, which are admittedly speculative, are included for the reader’s convenience; ordinarily these lines would be relegated either to the critical apparatus or the commentary, where arguments for their inclusion would be presented. Vanderpool dated the inscription on the basis of letter forms to sometime in the second half of the fourth century BC.5


2 I am grateful to the 2nd Ephoria of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities for permission to study MP 3514, which is housed in the Ephoria’s storerooms in the Piraeus Museum. I also wish to thank the Regents of the University of California and the Classics department at University of California, Santa Barbara for their generous financial support.

3 This calculation is based on an average of the measurements of the preserved letter spaces in each individual line. The average is based on only on the average measurements for the three lines with the largest number of fully preserved letters: 1, 8, 9. These lines fully preserve 17 (average 0.0065 m.), 21 (average 0.0065 m.), and 19 (average 0.0071 m.) letter spaces respectively.

4 The measurements for the remaining lines, the number of fully preserved letters, and the measurements for them are as follows: L. 2, 15 letters@0.0068 m.; L. 3, 11 letters@0.0073 m.; L. 4, 10 letters@0.0069 m.; L.5, 13 letters@0.0069 m.; L. 6, 14 letters@0.0067 m.; L. 7, 15 letters@0.0072 m. Thus, the average letter spacing for these lines is 0.0069, which is comfortably close to the average established above. The differences in individual lines, however, are striking. The maximum possible width, based on these measurements, is 0.266 m.; the smallest possible width is 0.244 m.

5 The lettering of this decree corresponds remarkably well with that of the cutter of IG II2 1176, which S. Tracy (Athenian Democracy in Transition. Attic Letter-Cutters of 340 to 290 B.C. [Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1995] 129-131) dates to 326/5-318 BC. Compare his description: “The work of this cutter is characterized by the fact that his known inscriptions
Piraeus Museum MP 3514
post a. 350 a.c.  

Non-stoich.\(^6\)

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\begin{array}{l}
1 \quad \text{[Ε]πικλής εἶπεν: ἔπεις τῇ δή Φρο[υ] (ca. 8) καλῶς καὶ] 38 (3)\(^7\)
\[φιλ]οτιμός τῶν τερών τῶ[ν Ἐρμιαῖον ἐπιμελήθη καὶ] 39 (5)
[έν; τῷ] εὐτίκου χωρίω τῶ[ι] (ca. 18)
\[καὶ τῇ] ἱν κρήνην καὶ τὸν [ἄχετὸν καὶ] (ca. 8) 37 (3)\(^7\)
[κατεξ]εύσατε καὶ τῇ παλαι[είς ἐπεκτάτησα;] 37 (2)
[καὶ τῷ] ἀποδυτήριον τῆς πα[λαίστρας ἐπεκεύσατε] 39 (3)
[καὶ τῇ] ἱν κρήνην ἔφραξεν ὁ[ὗτο τὸ πρόβατα μὴ εἰς] 38 (3)
8 \[ἐναὶ εἰς αὐτήν καὶ] τᾶλλος φι[λοτιμὸς ἐπροξεῖ πρὸς] 39 (5)
τὸν δήμον τὸν Κ[η]φίς[έων ἔδοχθαι τοὺς δημότα] 39 (5)
[c] ἐποι[νέει] Φρο[υ] ρ ca 23
\end{array}
\]

\begin{itemize}
\item Vanderpool 1 \quad \text{Φρο[υ] scripsi collata lin. 10; post litteras 2-5 patronymicum expectes}
\item Morison 3 \quad \text{[Ε]πικλής εἶπεν: ἔπεις τῇ δή Φρο[υ] (ca. 8) καλῶς καὶ]}
\item Morison 4 \quad \text{καὶ τῇ} \quad \text{[Ε]πικλής εἶπεν: ἔπεις τῇ δή Φρο[υ] (ca. 8) καλῶς καὶ]}
\item Morison 5 \quad \text{κατεξ]εύσατε Panessa ἐπεκτάτησα vel ἐπιμελήθη Morison 6 [ἐπεκεύσασε] Morison 7-8 ὁ[ὗτο τὸ πρόβατα} \quad \text{Vanderpool}
\item Robert 8 \quad \text{Morison φι[λότιμὸς ἐτὶ πρὸς vel εἰς] Robert 9-10 Vander-}
\item pool 10 \quad \text{Φρο[υ] ρ κτι. Morison}
\end{itemize}

are non-stoichedon and the letters of his texts are crowded together. ... His letters vary in height, with rho, upsilon, and phi usually being taller, and omikron and omega smaller” (129, emphasis added). For example, Tracy’s description of the upsilon of the cutter of \textit{IG II} \(^2\) 1176 is as follows: “This letter varies in height. The vertical is usually more than half the height of the letter and is surmounted by a fairly large and slightly symmetrical V.” This matches accurately what may be seen clearly in Pl. 1 on lines 3, 6, and 8. Additional examples may be easily observed by a comparison of Tracy’s description and photographs of the inscription provided here.

\(^6\) Non-stoichedon decrees are infrequent in the fourth century BC, but do occur. See, for example, the honorary decrees \textit{IG II} \(^2\) 223 (343/2), 275 (before 336/5), 348 (331/0), 366 (323/2), 399 (320/19), 421 (318/7), 477 (305/4), 479 (305/4), 509 (after 307/6), 513 (end of the fourth century BC), and 543 (before 303/2).

\(^7\) N.B. The count of letter spaces includes unrestored letters, which are counted as full letter spaces.
1 [Ε]πικλής: see s.v. LGPN II. No other Epikles is known from the deme Kephissia or the tribe Erechtheis, although the name was common in Attica.

1-2 [καλὸς καὶ] φιλότιμος: Compare IG II² 223A.11, which is the earliest dateable occurrence of this formula (342 BC). D. Whitehead (Classica et Mediaevalia 34 [1983] 62) has noted that it “is quite certain that from the 340s onwards the philotimia words were integral to the language of achievement and reward in all Athenian honorific decrees.” If Whitehead is correct, the use of the formula here provides a terminus post quem consistent with Vanderpool’s post-350 BC date for the decree.

2 τῶν ἵππων τῶν Ἐρμαίων?: The performance of, or financial responsibility for, rituals (sacrifices?) on the part of the honorand is clear. Unfortunately there is no parallel for this phrase. But because the inscription honors someone’s services to a palaistra (see below), some of his merits may concern the Hermes festivals in the palaistrai. Although other deities (e.g., Herakles) may have received honors in Athenian palaistrai during the Classical period, Hermes is the only deity for whom these honors are securely attested (Aischin. Tim. 11-12 and Pl. Lys. 206D [with mention of the sacrifices], 207D, and the schol. ad loc.). In 131/0, the clerouchs of Salamis honored a gymnasiarchos who was responsible for agonistic Hermaia (IG II² 1227; L. Deubner, Attische Feste [Berlin 19932] 217). IG II² 2980 (2nd cent. BC) attests a torch race as part of Hermaia. However, the antiquity of this particular torch race in Athens (attested only by this inscription) and its connection with the Hermaia in the palistrai is uncertain. In comparison, the Hermaia recorded by the gymnasiarchal law found in Veroia (2nd cent. BC) included a torch race and sacrifices to Hermes by the paidides under the direction of the gymnasiarch (see SEG XXVII B59-67). How much the Macedonian Hermaia were like their Athenian counterparts, and for how long a torch race had been a part of these rites is, of course, impossible to say with certainty.

3 [καὶ] τῆς χαρίας: At the top of the fifth letter space, which is at the edge of the break and badly damaged, the top of a vertical (.002 m.) is visible and, therefore, a dotted iota is printed. But prepositions other than en are also possible. The reference appears to concern activity that has some proximity to or is on the private property of the honorand. τῶν; ca. 18]: A description of the location of the honorand’s property may have been given. The property might have been located near a popular sheep run, which, thus, necessitated the fencing-in of the springhouse (line 7).

4 καὶ τῆς κρήνης: The stone appears to have been abraded—perhaps deliberately erased to correct a mistake—in this line. In the seventh letter space the upper portion of a right vertical is visible; and faint traces remain of a nu and kappa in the eighth and ninth spaces. A κρήνη is a natural spring, as opposed to a ϕρησία, an artificial well. The construction mentioned here is presumably the housing around a natural spring that likely supplied water for the palaistra.

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8 Hermes Enagonios is listed (IG I³ 5.3) among the deities to receive sacrifices at Eleusis (ca. 500 BC). Scholars have debated his appearance as a youth in the Iliad 24.347 and Odyssey 10.278 (e.g., A. Heubeck and A. Hoenstra, A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey [Oxford 1989] ad loc.), but his later association with palaistrai and ephebes surely had antecedents. Prof. A. Athanassakis points out to me that Hermes is described in Archaic Greek poetry as a πάγιος (Hom. Hym. Merc. 254, 271; also cf. 386) and further notes that when Hermes addresses Apollo as Δίαι θηράσκος κοῦρος (490), he implies that he himself is a κοῦρος also. The evidence for worship of deities other than Hermes in Athenian palaistrai during the fourth century BC is slim. Aischines (Tim. 10), however, makes it clear that the Muses were worshipped in the didaskaleia and Hermes in the palaistrai. The ancient scholarist on this passage reports that “there were shrines in the inner building of the schools and palaistrai for the Muses, and Hermes and Herakles” (ναυσκήρα ἐν τῷ ἐνδοτήρῳ οἶκῳ τῶν διδάσκαλεσιν καὶ τῶν παλαιστρῶν, Μουσῶν, καὶ Ἐρμοῦ καὶ Ἡρακλῆος). No other references attest the worship of Herakles in the palaistrai themselves during the Classical period.

9 For the meaning of κρήνη as springhouse, see [Dem.] 13.30 and Philochoros, FrGH 328F122.13. In both cases the verb κατάσχεσθαι is used.
5 της παλαιστράς; Repetition of the word “palaistra” in lines 5 and 6 is difficult to understand, unless mention was made of an office held by the honorand that was related to the governance of a palaistra, which probably belonged to the demos itself. The benefactions performed by the honorand have to do with performance of rituals at festivals, and with repairs or building for the palaistra and a spring that serviced it. It is reasonable to posit that the office in question was that of the epistates. The office of epistates would have included maintenance of and capital improvements to a palaistra, and perhaps even in the superintendence of the Hermata. Alternatively, a more general verb of superintendence (e.g., ἐπημέλημα) may have been used. Because so little is known about the administration of palaistrai in Athens itself, and because nothing at all—aside from what this decree may tell us—is known about palaistra in the demos, precision is impossible. It is not unlikely that the duties performed by the honorand may have included those normally associated with the paidotribes or the gymnasiciarchs, whose function in the palaistrai are not precisely known.

It is not surprising that palaistrai were located outside of Athens and its environs. Kephissia was a large deme and its distance from Athens may have made it inconvenient for the local youth to exercise at the athletic facilities in or near the city itself. It is not unlikely that other demes that were a considerable distance from Athens, such as Aphaidna and Thorikos, also had palaistrai. The sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron had both a gymnasium and palaistra, and the deme of Rhamnous had a gymnasion from at least the 330s. There were, possibly, athletic facilities at Marathon during the fifth century BC as well.

Because the Kephissia decree was not found in situ, attempts to locate the site of the palaistra itself must remain speculative. However, Vanderpool’s report on the vicinity of the findspot is worth repeating here: “If the place of [the] finding of the inscription may be taken to indicate the general location of the palaistra, we see that it was well situated. The intersection of Charilaou Trikoupi and Kairaikas Streets where the stone was found by a schoolboy is three blocks, or about 400 meters, south of Kephalar, the great flowing spring of Kephissia. A modern irrigation ditch which carries water from the spring passes just a block to the west of the intersection so that the fountain house of a palaistra located in this general area could easily be supplied with water from the spring” (Deltion 24 [1969] 6).

Plato’s description (Lys. 206cE) of the apodyterion in the palaistra where a certain Mikkos (204A) taught makes it clear that an apodyterion could be an integral part of the palaistra building itself. However, in Plato’s description of an apodyterion in the Lyceum (Euthyd. 272E), there is no mention that this structure was part of a built palaistra or gymnasion.
nasion. 15 [Xen.] *Ath.Pol.* 2.10 mentions *apodyteria* as structures separate from palaistrai and gymnasia. S. Miller has excavated a freestanding building at Nemea to the west of the stadium that he identifies as an *apodyterion.* 16

7 τὴν χρήσην ἐφαρμεῖν: The enclosure of the spring seems to indicate that there was a previous problem with pollution of the water supply either by errant humans or animals. Clean water both for the sacrifices to Hermes and for the athletes in a palaistra or gymnasium would have been a major concern, as the decree (*IG* I2 257) concerning the tanners and the Kynosarges Heracleion on the Ilissos river suggests. 17

Moreover, it is no accident that the Lyceum and Kynosarges were both located close to the Ilissos river and that the Academy was located near the Kephissos river. Plato (*Leg.* 761D) connects gymnasia with bathing establishments, which by definition require copious amounts of clean water. Kimon’s piping of water from the canalized Erídanos river out to the Academy in the second quarter of the fifth century BC was necessary not only for landscaping (as Plat. *Cim.* 13.7), but also for cult use and for bathing. The Lyceum may have had a reputation in antiquity for being muddy, 18 at least in parts. There also appear to have been waterworks (Theophrast. *Plant.* 1.7.1). Strabo 9.1.19 and 9.1.24 mentions rivers and springs in the neighborhood of the Lyceum.

τὴν χρήσην ἐφαρμεῖν: The return to the spring, already mentioned in line 4, may indicate that the fence was added after the original construction. Or it simply stresses the importance of the fence.

7-8 ὅτε τὰ πρόβοτα μὴ εἰσὶν εἰς αὐτήν: L. Robert has rightly pointed out that the sense of this line requires a word referring to animals (*Bal. Epigr.* [1971] no. 286). Of the various possibilities, Robert rightly gives preference to τὰ πρόβοτα because it is more likely to fit the number of required letter spaces—he also suggests τὰ θρέματα or τὰ βοσκήματα οτιδ' οτᾶ τετράποδα. In a rural deme like Kephissia, conflicts between human needs and livestock were apt to have been common. These πρόβοτα are probably sheep (as *IG* I2 1672.289: τὸ πρόβοτο καὶ τὴς αὐτός).

8-9 τὰλλα πλοτίμια ἐπράξει πρῶς τὸν δήμον: A summary of the honorand’s proper fulfillment of sundry other duties would have been appropriate here. 19 Robert’s conjecture (ἡ πλοτίμοι ἐκτὶ πρῶς vel eic 1 -- 1) fits the sense, but would seem to leave the line short by several letter spaces. They create a line of 34 or 35.2 letter spaces, respectively.

9 τὸν δήμον τὸν Κηφισίαν: The tip and the upper part of the arc of a phi in the 14th letter space are visible.

10 Φρουρὸς [p] ca. 8: On the left edge of the break on the right side of the inscribed face, the tip of the left diagonal is visible. Chi and upsilon are both possible palaeographically, but sense and the position of the diagonal above the preceding omicron makes reading upsilon certain (cp. the carving of upsilon and chi in line 3: οὐσίος χοριοῦ). Four names beginning with Φρου- are attested: Φρούραρχος, Φρούριος, Φρούριος, and Φρούρος. None of the known individuals listed with these names in the *LGPN* II s.vv. is known to have come from Kephissia. It is also possible that the honorand was not enrolled in Kephissia’s dème register. The names Phourarcho and Phourides are perhaps the least likely as they would leave only ca. 3-4 letter spaces respectively for a patronymic.

11 I expect mention of the specific honors voted (e.g., a crown) (e.g., *IG* I2 237.14 and *IG* I2 343.8), and it is probable that at least one or more lines followed the extant text.

**Purpose of the Decree and the Restoration of its Missing Text**

The extensive damage to the inscribed face of this stone, and the resultant loss of at least half of its original text, makes certain restoration unattainable. On the other hand, enough remains to restore much of text with a fair degree of accuracy. The first step is to delineate precisely what the extant text of the inscription tells us; and, then, to see what connections may be drawn from these points. The restoration of the missing text and the overall interpretation of the decree are based on these connections.

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19 For parallels, see *ASAtene* 3 (1941-1942) 79.7 (honorary decree, 250-200 BC), *SEG* XXV 89.14 (282/281 BC), and *IG* I2 1023.3 (honorary decree, end of second century BC). Also, cf. *IG* I2 1156.56 (ephebic dedication, 334/333 BC) and 1330.54 (decree, after 163 BC).
First, what precisely does the extant text of the decree tell us? This decree, passed by the demesmen of Kephissia, honors an individual whose name is lost beyond certain restoration. The individual is honored for the following services: 1) performance of, or provision for, rituals (sacrifice?) probably at a festival, 2) something to do with his own land, 3) building or repair of a springhouse and perhaps a pipeline, 4) activities involving a palaistra, 5) repair of the *apodyterion* of a palaistra, 6) the fencing-in of a springhouse to keep animals (or persons) out, and 7) the honorable completion of certain other unspecified benefactions for the deme of Kephissia. Thus, in brief, the honorand received praise for having done certain things concerning cult rites, for having built certain waterworks, and for having built or repaired part of a palaistra.

What connections may be reasonably made between these facts? We know from literary sources that cult rites (sacrifices?), water, and the maintenance of the buildings were all part of the operation of palaistrai. The deme of Kephissia would have needed someone to oversee the *paides* in their observance of the *Hermaia*, to oversee the physical training of the youth and, perhaps, to pay for expenses of the festival including those of the sacrifices. The palaistra may also have required a reliable source of clean water for washing and bathing, and buildings would also require maintenance.

The connections between the individual benefactions mentioned in this decree build a strong case for taking this decree as honoring benefactions performed by the *epistates* (or another official) of a palaistra. The emphasis of the decree on building and repair of waterworks and the palaistra seem most suited to the little we know of the *epistatai* connected with Athenian athletic facilities. In demes like Kephissia wealthy members of the community may have been expected or encouraged to perform multiple functions in the course of their duties. More importantly, this decree provides us with evidence for deme palaistrai and some insight into their administration and maintenance.