

## REMARKS ON AN INSCRIBED ANCHOR STOCK FROM AEGINA (IG IV, 176)\*

For Honor Frost

Among the stone objects exhibited in the Museum of Aegina, there is an anchor stock of trachyte, found at the end of the last century in the so-called Meristos area, some 10 minutes walk from the coast, not far away from the modern port.

The stone (fig. 1) is broken at one end. Its preserved length is 1.11 m. It carries a 5th century B.C. inscription,<sup>1</sup> published in 1902 by Fränkel (*IG IV*, 176):

MEKINETOΔE

Μὲ κίνε τόδε (Μὴ κίνει τόδε, do not move this)

Since such anchor stocks were not well known at the time of the discovery of the stone, scholars interpreted it in several ways: Fränkel (*l.c.*) comments that it could be a grave stone, but he thinks that this is not certain. In 1914 the Greek scholar Iriotes<sup>2</sup> was the first to mention that some others thought it was either a boundary stone, or a gravestone, or an anchor (*p. 93*), but he himself interpreted it as a weight intended to hang from the lever arm of a winch for a draw-well (*κηλώνειον, γεράνιον, tolleno*). Iriotes based his interpretation on the fact that the stone was found by a well. According to him the inscription is addressed to children, who would try to play with the suspended stone.

Gabriel Welter, in 1938, recognized it definitely as an anchor stock and explained the inscription as an invocation, a plea, to the spirits of the sea, not to move the anchor stock stuck on the sea bed.<sup>3</sup>

This ingenious interpretation was generally accepted. Only M. Guarducci<sup>4</sup> in 1974 came back to Iriotes' theory of the draw-well lever weight. But more recently, in 1980, Costis Davaras<sup>5</sup> defended Welter's interpretation again and remarked that the inscription finds its parallels in the apotropaic gorgon masks, caduceuses or astragals found on later lead anchor stocks. Welter's interpretation is also accepted by Mc Caslin.<sup>6</sup>

There is no doubt that the stone was originally an anchor stock.<sup>7</sup> It looks as if it had not been in use for a very long time, since its surface is not much damaged by sea worms. There are however good reasons to believe that the inscription was not cut for its initial use:

1. The inscription covers 3/4 of the length of the stock, including the central groove. In such a case the rope needed to hold the stock attached to the vertical shanks and the shanks themselves<sup>8</sup> would cover a part of the inscription, making it invisible.

2. The greek words meaning "anchor" are εὐνή, ἄγκυρα (both feminine), and sometimes the more generic term λίθος (masculine).<sup>9</sup> But the neuter pronoun τόδε

must refer to a neuter word.

3. The third argument is *ex silentio* and thus merely cumulative: no other example of such a plea was ever found on other anchor stocks, although one could expect that such a belief might have been quite widespread among mariners.

In order to understand the real meaning of the inscription let us look at some analogous examples, both epigraphical and literary:<sup>10</sup>

a. On a column drum from Paros (*IG XII 5, 247*) we read:

*Νυμφῶν* Of the Nymphs

*Μὴ κίψει.* Do not move (or take away)

b. A little stele from the same island, most probably funerary (*Arch. Deltion 1960, Chron., p. 245*), carries the inscription:

*Ἀντιφίλο, μὴ κίνε.* Of Antiphilos, do not move.

c. A similar interdiction on a slab from Thera (*IG XII 3, 451*), which could have belonged to a precinct or to a tomb, reads

*Μὴ θίγγανε.* Do not touch.

d. A later funerary epigram (*Kaibel, 166*) starts with:

*Μὴ κείνει λίθον [έκ] γαίης ἀνθρωπε πανούργε...* Do not move any (funerary) stone from the earth, o rascal...

Of course there are many epigrams of the same character.<sup>11</sup>

d. Plato (*Laws 842e*), when establishing the theoretical basis for his ideal state, has as the very first of his agricultural laws:

*Μὴ κινεῖτω γῆς ὄρια μηδέεις.* No man shall move boundary-markers of land<sup>12</sup>.

f. A similar interdiction is frequently stated in the Bible. In *Deuteronomy 19.14* for example we read:

*Οὐ μετακινήσεις ὄρια τοῦ πλησίον, ἃ ἔστησαν οἱ πατέρες σου.* You shall not remove your neighbour's landmark which the men of old have set.<sup>13</sup>

These examples, which could be multiplied, give, I think, the key to our problem. The neuter word to which the pronoun *τόδε* refers is most probably *ὄριον* (boundary) or perhaps *σῆμα* (sign).

The first alternative, most probable in my opinion, means that the anchor stock was reused as a boundary stone, fixed upright on the boundary of a field at Meristos, with the uninscribed part in the earth.

It is well known that the necessity of preventing violation of private property was so widespread, that any boundary stone (*ὄρος, ὄριον*) in antiquity was invested with sanctity, as being under the protection of *Ζεὺς Ὀρίος* (*Zeus, the Boundary-god*) or of other similar deities.<sup>14</sup> Parallel to the divine, human law also provided special measures against violators of boundaries.<sup>15</sup> In such a case the inscription *μὴ κίνει τόδε* (sc: *ὄριον*) would be an almost proverbial phrase, meaning: "Do not move this (boundary stone)".

The second alternative, although less probable, cannot be excluded. An anchor stock would fit perfectly as a *σῆμα* (which is also a kind of boundary stone)<sup>16</sup> on a tomb of a boatman, but also on the tomb of anyone buried in a coastal area, such as Meristos.<sup>17</sup> Recently Piero Gianfrotta<sup>18</sup> identified an anchor

stock, which was fixed upright as a *σῆμα* of the etruscan tomb 245 of Valle Trebba (mid 5th cent. B.C.) excavated in 1922. He thinks that this particular *σῆμα* could reflect the occupation of *Kutikluna*, as the buried person (with some maritime occupation) was called.<sup>19</sup>

This unique find can be better understood in the light of literary sources: we know from Homer (*Od. XII, 13-15*) that an oar (*ἔρετμόν*) was put as a *σῆμα* on the tumulus-tomb of Elpenor, on which a pillar (*στήλη*) was also erected.<sup>20</sup> The ghost of Elpenor asks Odysseus (*ibid.*, XI, 75 sq.) “to fix upon the mound (of his tomb) his oar wherewith he rowed in life when he was among his comrades”. It is obvious that he wants to have something on his tomb, which recalls his occupation in life. Vergil (*Aen.*, VI, 232) imitates these verses, saying that an oar was fixed on the tomb of Misenus (*Vergil omits mention of a stele*). An epigram attributed to Sappho,<sup>21</sup> but probably later, says that “his father, Meniscus, placed on fisherman Pelagon’s tomb a weel and oar, a memorial of the indigent life he led”. Here also the symbols of the occupation of the dead man are put on his tomb.

Was the anchor stock of Aegina also a *σῆμα* of a tomb? After the discovery of P. Gianfrotta this is possible. In such a case the inscription would mean “Do not move this tomb marker (*σῆμα*)”. Two objections however could be advanced: a) The name of the dead man does not appear, unless we suppose that a funerary *stèle* was also erected. b) In such early times interdictions of violating a tomb are extremely rare as for example the case of Antiphilos mentioned above.

Whether grave stone or boundary stone, in any case the inscription goes with a second period of use of the anchor stock and thus cannot be an invocation to the spirits of the sea. Nor could the stone be the counterweight for a winch of a well, because such weights have a completely different shape.

Charalambos B. Kritzas  
Archaeological Museum of Iraklion,  
Iraklion,  
Crete

#### Notes

\* I wish to thank Mrs J. Binder for the revision of my english text.

1. M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca, III* (1974), p. 363, fig. 128, dates the inscription approximately to the middle of the 5th cent. B.C. L. Jeffery, *LSAG*, pp. 112 sq., no 20 places it “c. 450-431?” For the dating of anchor stocks see below, note 7. For a good picture of the anchor stock of Aegina see G. Bass (ed.), *A history of Seafaring*. (New York 1972), p. 58, fig. 20.

2. Π. Ηρειώτης, *Εἰς Αἰγίνης ἐπιγραφὴν* (IG IV, 176), AE 1914, pp. 92-94, figs 1-2.

3. Arch. Anz. 53 (1938), col. 490-491, figs. 14-15.

4. L.c., p. 364.

5. BCH 104 (1980), pp. 56-57.

6. Dan E. Mc Caslin, *Stone anchors in antiquity: Coastal settlements and maritime trade-routes in the Eastern Mediterranean ca. 1600-1050 B.C.* Studies in mediterranean Archaeology, vol. LXI (1980), p. 49.

7. For stone anchor stocks, in addition to the book of Mc Caslin noted in note 6 (bibliography in Chapter II, note 131), see especially: F. Braemer - J. Marcadé, *Céramique antique et pièces d’ancre*

*trouvées en mer à la pointe de la Kynosoura (Baie de Marathon)*, BCH 77 (1953), pp. 139-154. V. Tusa, *Ancore antiche nel Museo di Palermo*, in *Marine Archaeology*, ed. D. Blackman (London 1973), pp. 411-439. P.A. Gianfrotta, *First elements for the dating of stone anchor stocks*, *Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 6 (1977), pp. 285-292. See also the chapter "Anchors and anchorages" in H. Frost's, *Under the Mediterranean* (London 1963, pp. 37-61).

8. For the manner of attachment see G. Kapitän, *Ancient anchors - technology and classification*, *Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 13 (1984), pp. 33-44, fig. 2.

9. Cf. D.E. Mc Caslin, l.c., p. 53 sq.

10. Cf. M. Guarducci, l.c., p. 364.

11. See for example w. Peek, GV, no 1373 sq.

12. Cf. *ibid.*, 843 β, 913 β.

13. Cf. *Deut.*, 27.17; *Proverbs*, 22.28 and 23.10, *Hosea*, 5.10.

14. Cf. M. Guarducci, EG, II, p. 430.

15. See for example the laws of Chios (5th cent. B.C.), SGDI, 5653, 5654.

16. It is characteristic that the funerary stelae are sometimes called *ὄρος*: see for example IG P, 907: *ὄρος Χσανθίου* and HESPERIA 35 (1966), p. 276-277: *ὄρος Ηελίκης*.

17. It is known that there is an ancient cemetery at Meristos (I owe the information to my colleague Liana Parlama, whom I thank).

18. Piero A. Gianfrotta, *L'ancora di Kutikluna*, *Musei Ferraresi, Bolletino Annuale* 12 (1982), pp. 59-62, figs 1,5. I would like to thank Miss Honor Frost, who brought the article to my attention and kindly sent me a photocopy, since there is no copy of this periodical in Greece.

19. There are many examples of stone anchors found in connection with tombs, all of earlier times, but none was used as a stele. See for example H. Frost, *Note on three fragmentary anchors from the palaepaphos - Skales tombs*, in *Kouklia V* (ed. V. Karageorghis), 1984, pp. 433-434 with earlier bibliography.

20. *Τύμβον χεύαντες και ἐπὶ στήλην ἐρύσαντες πήξαμεν ἀκροτάτω τύμβῳ εὐήρες ἐρετμόν*. These verses are sometimes considered as a later addition to the homeric text, but this has no bearing in our case. Cf. the commentary of V. Bérard in the edition "Les Belles Lettres"<sup>4</sup> (1946).

21. Anth. Pal. VII, 505: *Τῶ γριπεῖ Πελάγωνι πατήρ ἐπέθηκε Μενίσκος κύρτον και κόπαν, μνῆμα κακοζῶϊας*.

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

### ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΕ ΕΝΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΟ ΑΝΤΙΒΑΡΟ ΑΓΚΥΡΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΑΙΓΙΝΑ (IG IV, 176)

Στο Μουσείο της Αίγινας υπάρχει ένα αντίβαρο άγκυρας από τραχειίτη λίθο, που βρέθηκε τον περασμένο αιώνα στην παραθαλάσσια θέση Μεριστός. Τα τρία τέταρτα της επιφάνειάς του καλύπτονται με την επιγραφή του 5ου π.Χ. αιώνα:

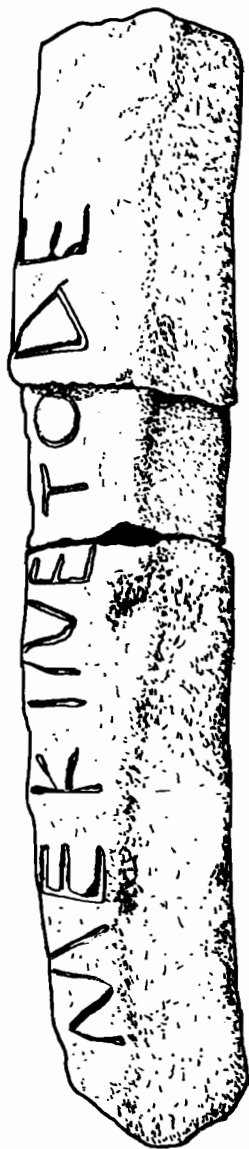
Με κίνε τόδε (Μή κίνει τόδε)

Για τον χαρακτήρα του λίθου και την σημασία της επιγραφής έχουν διατυπωθεί διάφορες υποθέσεις: επιτύμβια στήλη, αντίβαρο γερανιού (*κηλω-νείου*) ενός πηγαδιού, επίκληση στους θαλάσσιους δαίμονες να μη μετακινούν την άγκυρα από τον βυθό.

Με βάση επιγραφικά και φιλολογικά παραδείγματα υποστηρίζεται ότι η επιγραφή είναι μια σχεδόν παροιμιώδης έκφραση, που χαράχθηκε σε δεύτερη χρήση του λίθου, όταν χρησιμοποιήθηκε πιθανότατα ως *ὄρος* ή ίσως ως επιτύμβιο *σημα*. Γι' αυτό άλλωστε η επιγραφή καταλαμβάνει και το χώρο της κεντρικής εγκοπής, που ήταν αθέατος όταν το αντίβαρο ήταν στερεωμένο στο κάθετο στέλεχος της άγκυρας.

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Fig. 1. Anchor stock from Aegina.



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