

FIFTH-CENTURY CONTRACTORS' MARKS AT THE ARGIVE HERAION*

Abstract: This article presents three single-word inscriptions carved on blocks of the large retaining wall that supported the Classical temple of Hera at the Argive Heraion. Two of the inscriptions record the name Kleomachos, while the third presumably records the first three letters of a name beginning Epi... The inscriptions, which include local Argive letter forms characteristic of the mid-fifth century, appear on ordinary wall blocks in places where they could not have been read when the terrace was completed. From the evidence of similar inscriptions at Delphi, it is argued that the inscriptions at the Argive Heraion should be identified as the marks of local contractors responsible for supplying building material to the site at a time when the sanctuary was entering a major phase of expansion.

RECENT investigations at the Argive Heraion have revealed that the surviving portion of the massive retaining wall at the west side of the terrace of the Classical temple of Hera preserves three single-word inscriptions carved on three separate wall blocks. Two of these inscriptions have never before been published. The third was published by R.B. Richardson in 1896, soon after it was unearthed.¹ It was subsequently included by M. Fraenkel in *IG* iv (no. 511) and has twice been cited, by M. Mitsos in his prosopography of the Argolid and by L.H. Jeffery in her study of the Greek epichoric alphabets.² In none of these publications was the purpose of the inscription or its association with the other two inscriptions discussed. The aim of this note is to provide a clear record of the text, context and purpose of all three of these inscriptions.

The one previously published inscription (*IG* iv.511) consists of a name, ΚΛΕΟΜΑΧΟΣ, in the nominative case. It is carved on an ashlar block, 0.36 m high and 1.26 m long on its inscribed face and 0.76 m deep. The block forms part of the backing course of the retaining wall and is located at a distance of 16 m from the north end of the wall. The inscription appears on the east face of the block, which would have been concealed by the earth fill of the terrace of the Classical temple of Hera. The fact that the block on which the inscription is carved is comparable in size to the remainder of the blocks of the retaining wall and the fact that its material is the same friable limestone that is used for the rest of the backing blocks of the wall together confirm that the inscribed block is not a re-used statue base or any other kind of inscribed monument but an original backing block of the retaining wall in which it remains. That this is just an ordinary wall block and that the inscribed name was not intended to be visible once the temple terrace was completed would seem to confirm that the inscription is a contractor's mark.³ At Delphi, where similar marks can be compared with contemporary building accounts, they are known to identify the individuals responsible for supplying materials to the building site.⁴ For the sake of economy, most marks of this kind at Delphi and elsewhere identify the contractor by an initial, ligature or abbreviation rather than by his complete name, as in the case of *IG* iv.511.

As the photographic detail in PLATE 2a and FIG. A show, the appearance of *IG* iv.511 corresponds only approximately to the published copies of Richardson and Fraenkel. Extending in a single line from one end of the block to the other, the letters vary considerably in height, from

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¹ R.B. Richardson, 'Inscriptions from the Argive Heraeum', *AJA* 11 (1896) 57-8; re-published with slight variations in C. Waldstein *et al.*, *The Argive Heraeum* 1 (Boston and New York 1902) 197, no.1.

² M. Mitsos, *Αργολική Προσωπογραφία* (Athens 1952) 107; L.H. Jeffery, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (2nd edn, Oxford 1990) 152 (*LSAG*²).

³ For a general discussion of contractors' marks, see R. Martin, *Manuel d'architecture grecque* 1 (Paris 1965) 222-5.

⁴ On the blocks of the fourth-century temple of Apollo there are inscribed names, in abbreviated form, that correspond to the names of men who appear in extant building accounts as contractors who undertook to quarry blocks, transport them, and set them into place; see P. Amandry, 'Chronique delphique (1970-1981)', *BCH* 105 (1981) 683, 686, 707; P. Amandry, 'Delphes', *BCH* 107 (1983) 854; J. Bousquet, *Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes* II (Paris 1989) 83-129.

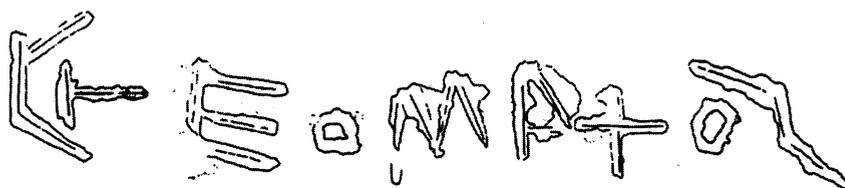


FIG. A



FIG. B



0.067 to 0.205 m. The forms of the letters are generally consistent with known Argive forms, and according to the chronology established by Jeffery, they suggest a date near the middle of the fifth century BC. The *alpha* (corresponding to Jeffery's $\alpha 1$), *epsilon* (Jeffery's $\epsilon 2$), *mu* (Jeffery's $\mu 2$) and *chi* (Jeffery's $\chi 2$) were all in use until about 460-450 BC.⁵ On the other hand, the *lambda* (= Jeffery's $\lambda 2$) only came into use at about 460-450 BC.⁶ The forms of the *kappa* and *sigma* are unusual for Argive inscriptions and should, perhaps, be regarded as idiosyncratic features of the hand of Kleomachos (or whoever it was who carved his name). As first observed by Richardson,⁷ the diagonal strokes of the *kappa* are widely separated. In fact, they meet the upright stroke so near its top and bottom ends that they create a letter form that resembles an angular 'c'. Although some separation of the diagonal strokes of the letter *kappa* can be seen in some archaic Argive inscriptions, there is, to my knowledge, no other example in the corpus of Argive inscriptions in which the separation is so extreme.⁸ As preserved, the *sigma* is far odder than is shown in the copies published by Fraenkel and Richardson.⁹ The clearly preserved strokes create what appears to be an elongated, retrograde three-barred *sigma* that tilts strongly to the left. Because the surface of the stone is somewhat eroded, it is just possible that this letter has lost a fourth bar at its top, which would affect both the form and direction of the letter. But it should be noted that this fourth bar, if ever it existed, must have been carved more shallowly than the remaining strokes, since, otherwise, some portion of its chiseled groove would still be visible on the stone. Given the fact that *IG* iv.511 has already been cited in regard to the use of three-barred *sigma* in the Argolid,¹⁰ it would be desirable to be able to determine for certain whether the inscription did or did not have that letter form. A fair appraisal of the stone, however, allows one only to say that the three-barred form is probable but not decisively confirmed.

That *IG* iv.511 is a contractor's mark, as argued above, and not a re-used monument base, receives further substantiation from the fact that a second wall block, located immediately to the south of the block inscribed with *IG* iv.511 bears another inscription with the name of Kleomachos in abbreviated form (KAEMAX) on its east face (see PLATE 2b and FIG. B). The

⁵ Jeffery, *LSAG*², 151-2.

⁶ Jeffery, *LSAG*², 152.

⁷ Richardson (n.1) 58.

⁸ For examples of *kappas* with some separation between the diagonals, see: *IG* iv.510 (*Argive Heraeum* 1. 202, no. III; Jeffery, *LSAG*², 169, no.16b); *IG* iv.565 (Jeffery, *LSAG*², 168, no. 5, pl. 26); *IG* v.1 231 (Jeffery, *LSAG*², 168, no.3, pl.126). Jeffery does not discuss variations in the letter *kappa* in her treatment of the Argive script.

⁹ Richardson's copy (Richardson (n.1) 57 and Waldstein (n.1) 197) correctly shows the letter as retrograde but gives it a form more conventional than it really is. Fraenkel's copy in *IG* iv mistakenly shows it as a normal three-barred *sigma* facing right.

¹⁰ Jeffery, *LSAG*², 152.

block, which is 0.39 m high and 0.75 m long on its inscribed face and 1.25 m deep, is carved from the same stone as the rest of the wall backers. Its inscription, never before published, is in the same hand as *IG iv.511*. Like *IG iv.511*, this second inscription is located in a position in which it could not have been seen when the temple terrace was completed. That the name of Kleomachos appears in abbreviated form here is to be explained by the shorter length of the inscribed face of the block; rather than reduce the size of the letters to fit the available space, Kleomachos or whoever recorded his name, simply omitted letters.

Because many surfaces of the other wall blocks of the terrace wall are badly eroded and many are obscured from view by adjacent blocks, it is impossible to determine whether there might be other inscriptions of Kleomachos among them. It is, however, highly unlikely that every block supplied by Kleomachos was laboriously inscribed with his name. It is easier to imagine that only a small fraction were so marked; perhaps, one per delivery or cart-load would be adequate for the purpose of indicating to officials at the site that Kleomachos had fulfilled his contract. Because the two inscriptions bearing the name of Kleomachos appear on sides of blocks that did not need to be reworked or trimmed before installation in the wall, it is possible, though not certain, that these inscriptions survive from the time the blocks were first extracted from the quarry.

That Kleomachos was not the only contractor involved in supplying blocks for the retaining wall of the temple terrace is indicated by yet another inscription (EΠI) inscribed upside down on the south face of a wall block located one course below the two Kleomachos inscriptions and just over 19 m from the north end of the retaining wall (PLATE 2c and FIG. C). Unlike the two previous inscriptions, this one was not located on the east face of the wall but on a joint face; it would, therefore, have disappeared from view as soon as the next block in the course was set in place. The inscribed face of the block is 0.37 m high and 1.21 m long, while the depth of the block is 0.76 m. The height of the letters, *c.* 0.150 m, falls within the range of the letter heights of the two Kleomachos inscriptions. The letter forms, again, indicate a date of around the middle of the fifth century: the *epsilon* is of the form (Jeffery's ε2) used in the Kleomachos inscriptions, while the *pi* is a form (Jeffery's π2) that came into use around 460-450 BC. Given the fact that this inscription is comparable in size, quality and date to the Kleomachos inscriptions and the fact that ἐπί, as an isolated preposition, could have no meaning on the side of this inscribed block,¹¹ there can be little doubt that this is another contractor's mark, probably comprised of the

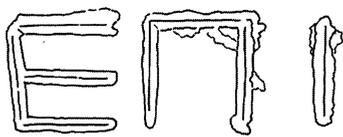


FIG. C

0 10 20 30 cm

first three letters of his name. In contrast to the second Kleomachos inscription, the extent to which the name is abbreviated in this case exceeds what is required to fit the available space. Though there is considerable room in front of the *iota*, it is clear that no letters were ever inscribed there.¹² Because of the great number of names beginning Ep(i)... attested in the Argolid,¹³ it is impossible to determine what the full form might have been.

¹¹ Adverbs and prepositional phrases are attested occasionally on architectural elements where they served as prompts for construction workers; see A.K. Orlandos, *Τὰ ὑλικά δομῆς τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων* 2 (Athens 1958) 162; Martin (n.3) 230-1. There would, however, have been no need for such an instructional note on the wall block inscribed with the letters EΠI.

¹² The inscribed face of this block is illustrated in Waldstein (n.1) pl. XXIX:R, but the letters are misplaced so that the *iota* approaches the end of the block. This gives the false impression that the inscription might have

continued onto an adjacent block. I might note here that the same plate (XXIX:X) shows a block with a single letter *theta*. From the size of the block and letter, it is tempting to think that this is yet another block from the terrace retaining wall with an inscribed contractor's mark. Despite careful inspection of the retaining wall and of other buildings on the site, I have been unable to locate this mark.

¹³ *LGPN* IIIA gives 29 names beginning with Ἐπ(ι)... at Argos alone; cf. also Mitsos (n.2) 75-7.

The material of the backing blocks of the retaining wall, including those provided by Kleomachos and Epi..., is a poor quality limestone that was appropriate only for use in places where it was protected from the elements. The provenance of this stone has not yet been determined, but in light of evidence indicating that transportation and labour costs constituted much, if not all, of the expense of building materials in the ancient Greek world,¹⁴ it is unlikely that such stone would have been brought at high cost from a distant source. That the name of the contractor, Kleomachos, is written in the local Argive script is, under these circumstances, hardly surprising.

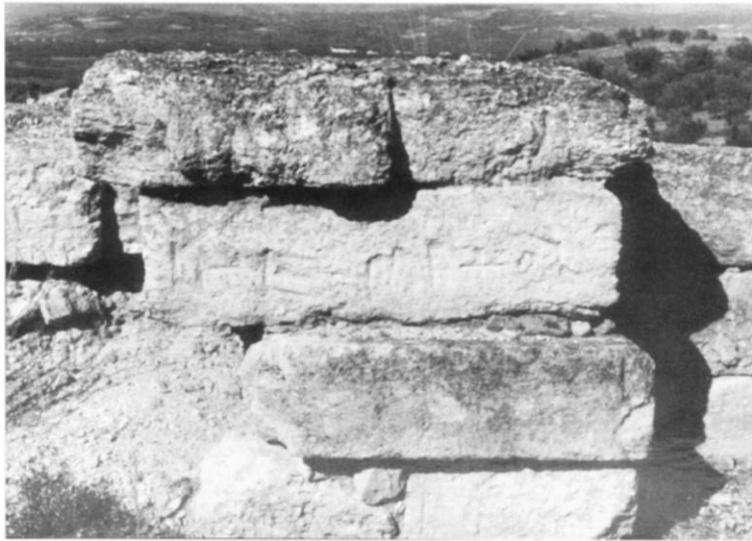
Blocks similar to those supplied by Kleomachos and Epi... were also used at the Argive Heraion in the contemporary foundations of the South Stoa and the slightly later foundations of the temple of Hera, but there is nothing to show that Kleomachos and Epi... were suppliers for these projects. Of the 19 different contractors' marks (abbreviations and ligatures) that have been observed on these foundations, none can be shown to refer to Kleomachos or Epi...¹⁵ Whether this indicates that these two men retired from the building trade after their involvement in the construction of the temple terrace or whether they simply transferred their activities to another site is not clear from the evidence at hand. There is, of course, much else that the available evidence fails to tell us about these contractors and their careers, but at least the proper identification of *IG* iv.511 and the associated marks presented here allows us to recognize these men for the first time as two of the individuals whose efforts helped transform the Argive Heraion into one of the great architectural ensembles of the Classical era.¹⁶

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¹⁴ See A. Burford, 'The economics of Greek temple building', *PCPS* 191, n.s. 11 (1965) 29-30; A. Burford, *The Greek Temple Builders at Epidauros* (Liverpool 1969) 184-91.

¹⁵ Ten different painted marks on the foundations of the temple were first recorded in C.L. Brownson, 'Excavations at the Heraeum of Argos', *AJA* 8 (1893) 219; six incised marks on the foundations of the temple were first recorded in C.A. Pfaff, 'The Argive Heraion: The Architecture of the Classical Temple of Hera' (diss. New York University 1992) 87-9, pl. 93. Painted and incised marks that I have observed on the foundations of the South Stoa have not yet been published.

¹⁶ For more on the development of the Argive Heraion in the fifth century, see H. Lauter, 'Zur frühklassischen Neuplanung des Heraion von Argos', *AM* 88 (1973) 175-87; P. Amandry, 'Observations sur les monuments de l'Héraion d'Argos', *Hesperia* 21 (1952) 222-74; P. Amandry, 'Sur les concours argiens', in *Etudes argiennes*, *BCH* Suppl. 6 (1980) 235-44; M.-F. Billot, 'Recherches archéologiques récentes à l'Héraion d'Argos', in *Hera: Images, espaces, cultes. Actes du Colloque International du Centre de Recherches Archéologiques de l'Université de Lille III et de l'Association P.R.A.C. Lille, 29-30 novembre 1993*, *Collection du Centre Jean Bérard* 15 (Naples 1997) 39-44.



A



B



C

Three inscribed wall blocks from the Argive Heraion (author's photographs).
Figs A-C in text.