



Poseidonia — corrigendum et cogitandum

Author(s): Alan W. Johnston

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POSEIDONIA – CORRIGENDUM ET COGITANDUM

A set of inscriptions from Linora, a site to the south of Poseidonia, published a decade ago, seems not to have received comment since (Fig. 1). Their interpretation is fraught, but their reading is not, and the main purpose of this note is to correct the publication in the latter respect, while airing some possibilities with regard to the former.

Concetta Masseria, 2007, 133–4, discusses a set of pots with an identical graffito in local Achaian script. Four are black-glazed – a mug and a skyphos are fairly fully illustrated, a further mug and a kylix mentioned and the text on one of them (which?) given in facsimile, while a fifth piece is a form of askos with a black-figured scene, fairly fully published. The text is identical, as far as preserved and published, on all five, taken by Masseria to read ἀπολύσο, which she takes as an imperative; the verb is to be connected with the indication of initiation rites which she argues is shown by a scene of katoptromancy on an Attic red-figured pelike in the title of her article, from a tomb in the area.

The reading must however be discarded. The sign taken as lambda is a clear tau; in all cases the upper stroke extends to either side, and is more or less canted in the manner of many late Archaic Achaean texts. Similarly the alleged san is undoubtedly a mu, with a short fourth stroke in all cases. We therefore have αποτυμο, and the problems of interpreting this reading should not deter us from accepting it.¹

It can at least be said that a date somewhere in the first quarter of the fifth century BC fits the group. The late black-figure style of the askos points in this direction, as does the type of mug, if Attic, and in more general terms the breadth of the skyphos. The askos is of interest not only for the graffito but for a pre-firing retrograde dipinto part-preserved, Σιμης[], with room for a maximum of three letters lost in the space available, if indeed it is not complete as it stands, thus perhaps denoting a maker; but if we accept the supplement ἐμι, which seems the only other possibility, we would have a female Simie noted as the owner of the unusual pot before it was fired.² The alphabet and dialect are Ionic, and one's thoughts turn to Velia as a possible production place.

Uncertainties might appear to mount up when the find-spot of the pieces is considered. In Masseria's account, drawn from earlier sources, on p.128 they were in the soil around the tombs which contained Attic vases with Archaic graffiti, while on p.129 the pots were found 100 metres east of the tombs. The primary source, Voza 1965, 192–3, does not however say this, but confines remarks on inscribed material to the cemetery area; not all the pots are Attic, as his statement says, but perhaps could have been taken as such in the cursory resumé which he delivered. Later work by Avagliano (1988, 414–5) revealed statuettes in the eastern quarry area. I therefore assume that the inscribed material is to be connected with the cemetery in some way, even if as dumped fill. At any rate it is some two generations earlier than the pelike at issue.

What can we make of the unparalleled form αποτυμο? What it surely is not is a personal name. The sequence may be of one or two words and most likely has a genitival ending. The only near attestation is Hesychios' gloss τύμος = τύμβος; a plausible alternative would be to see an unspirated θύμος as the core of the text. Suffice to say that neither of these adduces much clarity, though they can both be given some sort of sense – 'something away from the tomb mound' or 'something/somebody without "spirit"'. If the text is a single word, the grammatical puzzle is whether it is a noun or adjective; the form seems to favour a noun, though a possibly cognate adjective is available in πρόθυμος. One is reminded of the more clearly adjectival form, ἀποβώμιον, first found perhaps on the more or less contemporary bronze statuette,

¹ Perhaps one should make mention of the extreme unlikelihood of these letters being in some form of code, magically obscuring the message 'free (me)' to the divine recipient.

² Both names are at best rare, the masculine form occurring only once, in the genitive (LGPN IIIB, Larisa), though the termination in -ias is common; Simie is unattested, and Simia is sporadic. Masseria (2007, 133, n.51) overlooks the grammatical and gender consequences of supplementing ἐμι (her ἐμι would be too long).

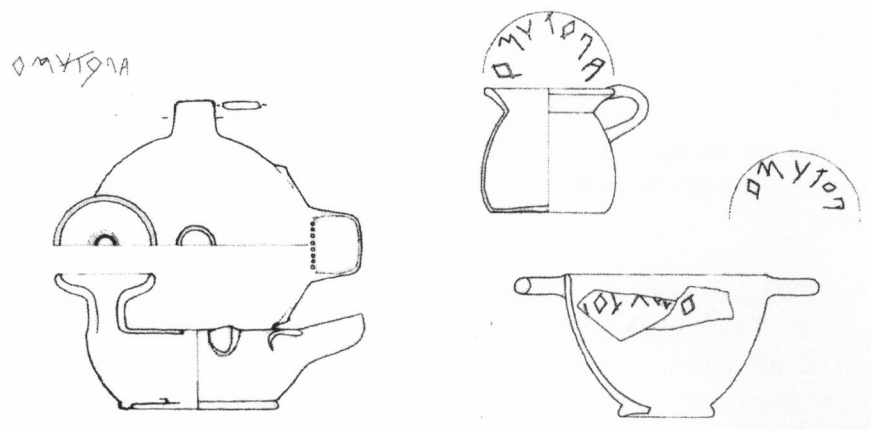


Fig. 1. Graffiti from Linora, after Masseria 2007

the Behague Apollo, dedicated to Artemis at Lousoi in Arcadia (Johnston 1993). Is our word some funerary equivalent of that dedicatory usage? Indeed the parallel form ἀποτύμβιον is attested in the cemetery world, though from Pisidia (*BCH* 23 (1899) 281 from Termessos).³ That some form of ‘funereal notation’ was known in the Greek world is demonstrated by the bald graffito νέκυς on the Lakonian krater from Timosthenes’ rich tomb of c.530 BC on Thera (Inglese 2008, 46), but such evidence is rare; much closer to Poseidonia, however, in Etruria many objects from tombs were marked as funerary offerings, *suthina* (recently, Briquel 2016, 117–43).

There remains a substantial gap between ἀποτύμβιον and ἀποτύμβιον and perhaps we should be wary of jumping across it, but I suggest that the possibility of some sort of equation is strong, even if the precise connotation remains obscure.

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Alan W. Johnston, Institute of Classical Studies, University of London / Institute of Archaeology, University College London

³ It is of incidental interest also that it was cut as aspirated ἀποθύμβιον.