



Rhomis

Author(s): Alan W. Johnston

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RHOMIS

Delphi Museum 2254 + 3080 is an inscribed base that could perhaps be termed neglected, even though it has been included in Jeffery, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (LSAG) 369, 10 and pl. 70, Marcadé, *Receuil des Signatures de Sculpteurs Grecs* 129 and pl. 5, 3 and Ridgway, *The Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture* 296. The two joining fragments form most of the front of one step from the base of a small monument dedicated by Theugenes of Potidaia early in the fifth century.¹⁾ The preserved upper surface gives no clue as to the nature of the monument; indeed, it need not have been sculptural – bronze or marble – although by all known precedent we should conclude that it was in view of the addition of the artist's name, cut in larger letters under the two lines of the dedication. (Taf. IIIa).

The script of the signature is clearly not Potidaian; whether the signature was in the imperfect or aorist cannot be conclusively decided.²⁾ Most commentators have named the artist Domis,³⁾ but the letter taken as a delta must be reexamined. The lower part is just preserved above a scar on the surface: we have an irregular loop, fuller at the top, and a clear space between the lower ends of the constituent lines (to be discerned in Marcadé's photograph and transcribed in Jeffery et al.). The letter must be a rho and the sculptor's (?) name Rhomis. No delta would be engraved in this manner in a monumental text.

I know of no close parallel to the shape of the rho in a Phokian inscription; there we find a distinct tail to the rho from quite an early date.⁴⁾ Perhaps the closest example is

1) No close date can be given in view of the lack of comparative material from Potidaia and the uncertainty over the origin of the cutter of the second inscription. Jeffery suggests c. 475, Ridgway indicates a preference for the end of the sixth century. My argument concerning the first letter of the signature will favour an earlier date, but still not necessarily before 500.

2) Marcadé writes that ἐποίε is 'seule restitution matériellement possible', but I calculate that, with the obvious restorations in the first two lines, there is just room for ἐποίεσε in the third. Nonetheless, the imperfect is the more common form in signatures and was probably inscribed here.

3) Jeffery does read rho, dotted and with a question mark, in the transcription of pl. 70 on p. 415. The middle of the sigma is lost, but the reading certain.

4) Tailed rho appears first in Rhodopis' dedication, c. 530, and is regular afterwards during the period which interests us.

to be found in the variety of types with a more vestigial tail in the Pierian pelanos inscription, LSAG 103, 12. Ridgway takes 'Domis' as a Potidaian, but it would be at least highly unlikely for him not to have used his local script. While there is no compulsion to take the signature as Phokian (a very wide range of alternatives is open), it would be curious to find a dedication, with an ethnic, in a non-Phokian script in company with a signature in another non-local script without an ethnic. A Phokian training of the inscriber of the signature may well be posited. Whether this means that Rhomis himself hailed from the area of Delphi cannot be decided on the evidence available. Signatures in the local script without an ethnic are otherwise unknown at Delphi and Olympia; only when the Ionic script has been adopted do signatures without an ethnic begin to appear.⁵⁾ In archaic Athens however there is a far more complex pattern of signatures, from which few general conclusions can be drawn.⁶⁾

We can be reasonably sure that Rhomis was not a Potidaian; it is likely that the signature is in Phokian script, but other possibilities cannot be ignored; in any case such bald signatures, to our knowledge, are extremely rare at this period in the major sanctuaries.

Marcadé notes that Pausanias VI 14, 13 mentions a work, dedicated perhaps around 480 BC, at Olympia, whose artist was Somis. It is very tempting to suggest that Pausanias misread the signature of Rhomis, missing the initial vertical stroke of a developed tailed rho; if so, the mistake would be all the more explicable if the final letter of the name was a three-bar sigma, $\Sigma\Omega\text{M}\text{I}\Sigma$; such lettering would be typical of the local Elian script of the period apparently concerned.⁷⁾

The dedication at Olympia was by an athlete from Andros, whose colonies were close to Potidaia, but other attested holders of the name Rhomis belong to the western Greek

5) The earliest preserved examples may be the signatures of (a) Polyclitus, Olympia V 164-5, about whose dating there is general disagreement. No other example can claim any foothold in the fifth century.

6) See e.g. Raubitschek, DAA 473 and Ridgway, o.c. 293-4. Gorgias does not use an ethnic, although probably not an Athenian; later, Kresilas varies in his usage at Athens, but has the ethnic at Delphi and Hermione (Marcadé I 64).

7) Manuscript error could also be entertained as an explanation, but sigma for rho does not seem a likely uncial mistake. The question of Rhomis' origins would only be complicated if we do in fact have two signatures in local script without an ethnic; that would suggest that Rhomis had a Panhellenic reputation not echoed in surviving literary sources.

world.⁸⁾ The two epigraphically attested namesakes are from Selinus and Kamarina, of much the same period.⁹⁾ Guarducci has aired the possibility of a connection with the city of Rome, and far earlier Plutarch relates a claim that the tyrant of the Latins who expelled the Etruscans was so named (Romulus 2). While we may doubt the veracity of this account, the personal name Rhomis must have been in use when it came into circulation, whenever and wherever. Unfortunately, Plutarch does not mention his source; perhaps we should go no further than suggesting that it is of western origin and of the fifth century or later. Alphabetically there is no reason why Rhomis at Delphi could not be taken as a Sicilian, but it must be conceded that it would be most surprising to find such a signature without an ethnic; our only comparandum is Pythagoras of Rhegion who in fact signs himself as a Samian at Olympia (LSAG 342, 19 and pl. 63). We may tentatively conclude that Rhomis was a name of rather wider currency than Plutarch and the Sicilian inscriptions suggest.

London

Alan W. Johnston

8) The form Rhommis can scarcely be entertained and one with a short o is hardly more likely. In passing, I know of no example of the name Domis (long or short o), at least BC.

9) M. Guarducci, *ASA* n.s. 21-22 (1959-60) 262-3. Both examples are somewhat later than the sculptor. The Kamarina graffito bears either an incomplete name or Rhomis in the dative (Guarducci's preference, although the suggestion of a dedication is hazardous); it is, however, almost certain that it does record a personal name with the root Rhomi-. The Delphi signature could, epigraphically, be in either Selinuntine or Kamarinan script. 'Italian' (rather than Sicilian) names found in the archaic period on the Greek mainland are disputed: Italos (LSAG 72 n.2) and Ombrikos (PdP 32 (1973) 403 and in the latest instance F. Lorber, *Inschriften auf Korinthischen Vasen* 39-40).

I am grateful to P. Themelis for his customary generosity in facilitating my study of the inscription at Delphi and to Professor P. E. Corbett for very pertinent advice.



a)



b)

a) Inschrift aus Delphi; zu A. W. Johnston S. 95 ff.

b) Grabstele auf dem Monte Mario in Rom; zu A. W. Johnston S. 115 ff.

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