

**A Greek Funerary Stele in Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): Great North Museum, Shefton Collection 827)<sup>1</sup>**

On long loan from the Wellcome Collection: NEWGM 827. A rectangular, slightly tapering, stele of white marble, with some brown tinges. Broken into four pieces but repaired; top flat but damaged at front. The inscription is located in the area above the sculpture. Beneath the inscription is a raised relief panel, within which there is a scene in relief framed by a high, semicircular, arch supported by two pilasters each crowned with plain capitals. The relief depicts a frontal adult male figure, his weight placed on his right leg, wearing a himation around his hips. He appears to wear a chlamys around his shoulders which is buttoned in the middle. He turns to face a small male figure to the left and stretches out his right hand to receive a long spear from him. The small figure is a slave and wears a knee-length tunic; in his left hand he appears to hold an object, perhaps a strigil. There is a plain rosette in each of the upper corners of the relief panel. Beneath the relief panel is an undecorated space.

Dimensions: h. 0.97m; w. 0.41m; th. 0.11m. Letters: the well-cut letters feature apices and broken-bar alphas; sigma with parallel top and bottom bars; epsilon with shorter middle bar. The letters of the second line are more widely-spaced than those of the first. Letter-height: 0.02 m.

On Display: Shefton Gallery, Great North Museum: Hancock (long loan from the Wellcome Institute). Autopsy Liddel and Low 2020. **Figs 1, 2.**

First Century BC/AD?                      Καλλίμαχος Γοργία  
   χαῖρε

Kallimachos, son of Gorgias, farewell

This funerary monument appears as no. 18 in a short catalogue of sculptures which were given on long loan to the Greek Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne, by the Wellcome Institute in 1982.<sup>2</sup> Objects in the Wellcome collection were acquired by Sir Henry Wellcome (1853-1936) during his travels or were purchased through auction.<sup>3</sup> However, there survives no information about

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion of this inscription and interpretation of it we are grateful to Carrie Sawtell, Pierre Juhel, Olga Palagia, Robert Pitt, and Anja Slawisch. We would also like to thank Sally Waite (Newcastle University) and Andrew Parkin (Great North Museum) for facilitating permission to publish it and for their helpful comments on a draft.

<sup>2</sup> This catalogue is said to have been prepared by Geoffrey Waywell. The object may be identified with the ‘unnumbered grave stele’ mentioned by de Peyer and Johnston 1986, 290 in their distribution list of antiquities from the Wellcome collection. On the dispersal of Greek antiquities from the Wellcome collection between 1981 and 1983, see de Peyer and Johnston 1986.

<sup>3</sup> On Wellcome and his collection see de Peyer and Johnston 1986, 286; Vermeuele, *AJA* 53, 1959, 332. On the Newcastle Greek Museum, see Shefton 1960-70; Liddel and Low.

the acquisition of this object; it was probably purchased on behalf of Wellcome at some point during or before the 1930s.<sup>4</sup>

The names Gorgias and Kallimachos are common across the Greek world and their appearance does not allow us to be any more certain about the provenance of the inscription. The form Γοργία is the ‘Doric’ or ‘Hellenistic’ genitive of the name Γοργίας.<sup>5</sup> The nominative name + χαῖρε formula which appears on this epitaph is well known across the Greek world, and thus also does not provide any definitive evidence about provenance. However, we note that it is well-attested on monuments from Rheneia (Couilloud 1974, 25); as we will discuss below, other aspects of the monument are also consistent with (though not absolutely indicative of) a Rheneian provenance.

The swaying stance of the main figure with himation around hips and exposed torso is perhaps best paralleled on an Attic funerary monument of the late second century BC in which a figure in such a pose is represented above a *loutrophoros* (Athens NM 931 = Conze IV, no. 2007 = Scholl no. 118). The stance is attested also on imperial-period funerary monuments from Attica.<sup>6</sup>

However, some prominent iconographic and stylistic features of the inscription make it compatible with derivation from the necropolis at Rheneia, which was situated on the east coast of the island opposite Delos;<sup>7</sup> this was probably the source of the vast majority of ancient funerary inscriptions now on Delos.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, many Rheneian funerary monuments found their way to the UK in the nineteenth century: examples include a stele in the City Museum of Leeds, West Yorkshire (see Liddel and Low, *AIUK 6 (Leeds City Museum)* Appendix).<sup>9</sup> The depiction of a standing male with slave is well-known on grave markers from Rheneia (Couilloud 1974, nos 279-96 with p. 57), sometimes with the servant holding the strigil (Couilloud 1974, nos 280, 281, 285, 287, 294 with p. 281); this feature, generally emphasising hierarchy between master and slave, is known from elsewhere in the Greek world.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the image of an attendant holding a spear on behalf of his master is better attested in the eastern Greek world (e.g. Pfuhl and Möbius no. 288 [Rhodes, late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC] and no. 392 [Byzantion?, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (= *IK Byzantion* 339)]).

The feature most evocative of the Rheneian style, however, is the framing of the sculptured area with a semicircular arch placed upon pilasters. This motif appears on Rheneian funerary monuments from the second half of the second century BC and throughout the first century

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<sup>4</sup> For other Greek inscriptions in the same collection, see Liddel and Low; Loy and Mullen; for bronze *pinakia* in the collection, see Liddel and Low, 2.

<sup>5</sup> The genitive form ending in alpha is described by Schwyzer (I.561) as a Hellenistic Genitive and by Smyth (214 D.5; 225) as the ‘Doric Genitive’.

<sup>6</sup> For the swaying style, see von Moock nos 494 (1<sup>st</sup> half 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), 550 (no date).

<sup>7</sup> See Couilloud in Bruneau and Ducat 2005, 111-13, 322-26

<sup>8</sup> Couilloud-Le Dinahet (*BCH* 108, 1984, 346) estimates that the necropolis was the derivation of some 4500-5500 funerary monuments.

<sup>9</sup> For other Rheneian funerary monuments in UK collections, see Couilloud 1974, 39-40, 48.

Monuments associated with Rheneia still periodically occasionally appear on the antiquities market.

<sup>10</sup> Strigils are attested in other Greek and Athenian funerary art of the Augustan period but were sometimes held by the male commemorated (*Agora* XXXV 300). For the depiction of slaves in Hellenistic grave monuments, see Fabricius 1999, 230-32; Masségliá 2015, 184-204 (discussion of them proffering items or gazing at a master at 190-95).

BC.<sup>11</sup> The marker for Thesmion of Syros (Couilloud 1974, 278) of the second half of the second century BC is broadly comparable to the Newcastle stele in terms of its flat top, its dimensions (height 120 cm), the rosettes above the arch and the absence of tenon (a common feature of Rheneian funerary *stelai*). But unlike the example published here, most arch *stelai* from Rheneia place their inscription beneath the sculptured scene and are pedimental in shape rather than rectangular. Moreover, most Rheneian examples are shorter than the Newcastle monument.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the arch stele style does not rule out derivation from somewhere else in the Greek world: arch *stelai* are attested as from the Greek east: an epitaph for the gladiator Drosinos of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, from Miletos, is one example (*Milet* VI, 2 544 = *SEG* XXXV 1133); others are known from Byzantion and possibly Ephesos (Pfuhl and Möbius nos 191 [late Hellenistic (= *IK Byzantion* 94)], 198 [Ephesos, but its editors consider the possibility that it was imported from Delos]). Moreover, the arch *stèle* type is known in Athens too from the late first century BC to the early first century AD.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as is the case on the Newcastle monument, in Athens this form sometimes places the inscription above the relief (Muehsam, 93, 100): examples include the famous arch stele of Ammia of Miletos of the Augustan period at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 9386 with Grossman, *Agora* XXXV p. 20 [ph.]) or that of Mousis of Miletos at the British Museum (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 9781).<sup>14</sup> In terms of provenance, therefore, Rheneia is possible, but so is derivation from Athens or the eastern Greek world.

Visual style and letter-form allow us to propose only an approximate date. The high arch of the current inscription is of a type identified by Muehsam (93) as characteristic of earlier versions of the arch stele form at Athens; later examples exhibit a flatter arch. Muehsam (94) observes also that the merging of arch and frame at the crown of the arch, which we see in the Newcastle stele, was characteristic of examples of the second half of the first century AD. A Hellenistic/early imperial date is suggested also by the drapery: the himation wrapped around the hips is a classicising style, whereas later Roman monuments tend to wrap the whole male body: Grossman, *Agora* XXXV no. 30). The visual interaction with another figure is, however, reminiscent of classical and Hellenistic representations. The late-Hellenistic letter-forms (especially the sigma with parallel bars, thought of as Augustan: Muehsam 82) and swaying pose of the adult figure (see above) do not contradict a date in the first century BC or AD.

The depiction of an individual with an attendant, probably a slave, who holds a strigil and passes him a spear, reflects possibly the key associations of this individual: the gymnasium and the battlefield. His well-developed pectorals and abdominal muscles suggest that this monument commemorated his youthful athleticism and represented him in a leisured lifestyle. The fact that he wears a chlamys around his body may be evocative of ephebic activity: as de Lisle notes, “‘putting on’ and ‘taking off the cloak’ were standard terms for enrolling in and graduating from the ephebate’ (e.g. [Plut.] *Mor.* 752f, Artem. *Oneir.* 1.54), and ephebes were

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<sup>11</sup> Couilloud 1974, nos 249, 264-66 with figs 13, 16.5, 18, 268; Couilloud *BCH* 102, 1978, 862 fig. 11); the arch style is noticed as characteristically Rheneian also by Schmidt, 1991, 35.

<sup>12</sup> For dimensions of Rheneian *stelai*, see Couilloud-Le Dinahet, *BCH* 102, 1978, 859-73.

<sup>13</sup> See Grossman, *Agora* XXXV p. 20 with n. 99 and p. 59; von Moock, 49-50.

<sup>14</sup> See also *Agora* XXXV 249, 375. For further examples see von Moock nos 82, 85, 87, 90, 96, 108, 198, 201, 216, 223, 226, 230, 233, 235, 268, 281, 310, 384, 400, 401, 404, 443, 470, 485, 496, 500, 538, 540, 542.

usually represented as naked except for a chlamys.<sup>15</sup> The visual contact with the small figure suggests a particular attachment to this slave. This association, alongside the military and gymnastic (and perhaps ephebic) implications of the representation, suggest that this stele commemorates an individual who died prematurely, perhaps before marriage.

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<sup>15</sup> See de Lisle, 20; de Lisle, *AIUK* 11 (*Ashmolean*), p. 125; Gauthier. We might note *IG* XII 6, 2.1253, a second or third-century AD funerary monument from Ikaria which mourns that had boy had 'not yet thrown the cloak (chlamys) around his body, nor seen Hermes presiding over the gymnasium'.

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Captions:

Fig. 1. Newcastle, Great North Museum, Shefton Collection 827. © Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Collections.

Fig. 2. Newcastle, Great North Museum, Shefton Collection 827. Photograph: P. Liddel.

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