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An Elusive Pan from Mt. Parnes (IG II² 4829)

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Best known as the setting of Menander's Dyscolus, the cave of Pan on Mt. Parnes (Lychnospilia) is a site of great interest to archaeologists and epigraphists alike. Not only has it yielded some of the finest marble reliefs on display at the National Museum of Athens (e.g. NM 1448; 1859), but with twenty-some inscriptions in both verse and prose, the Parnes shrine ranks among the top cave sanctuaries in Greece in terms of its epigraphical patrimony. Excavated by A. Skias in the early 1900's, this site is now due for a new study. Particular attention needs to be given to those rock-cut features of the cave (niches, shelves, mortises, beam cuttings: fig. 5) which in the early publications were overshadowed by the other findings. The inscriptions engraved on the cave walls also need to be re-examined in their proper physical setting. A case in point is IG II² 4829. This text is located approximately 3 m above ground on the right upper side of the cave entrance (fig. 1), where a rectangular area of 0.38 x 0.21 was specifically smoothed for the purpose (figs. 2-3). The lettering, minute and professionally executed, shows the style of the Imperial Period (3rd or 4th century CE: Kirchner).

still be seen on the cliff wall (H. 0.50. W. 0.15 top, 0.24 bottom: figs. 3-4). Inexplicably, no one has realized that the image is still there, a standing Pan engraved in low relief within the borders of the enclosure. The god is shown in right profile, his left hand reaching down to (or holding?) an unidentified animal in front of him. The animal's posture—hindfeet on the ground, forefeet in the air—prompts comparison with a contemporary marble relief in Munich (Glyptothek 456 = *LIMC* VIII suppl. s.v. 'Pan', cat. 139 [J. Boardman]), where two Pans are shown holding two rampant goats by the horns.

Thus restored, the missing artwork associated with IG II² 4829 would confirm that this dedication was the work of hired professionals, as indicated in lines 5-7. But why did the stonemasons of IG II² 4829 go to the trouble of placing their product so high above ground, in a position where the minute lettering of the text could barely be discerned by incoming visitors? With all the unencumbered rock surface available at the site, it is a choice that seems to defy explanation. Yet IG II² 4829 is not the only votive at the Parnes shrine whose location is at odds with modern criteria for viewability. During recent fieldwork at the site, the authors have detected a number of previously unnoticed rock-cut texts similarly placed in elevated and/or hardly visible areas (fig. 7). Additional examples can be found among the niches, shelves, and other apparatus for votive display (see e.g. the niche near the top left margin of fig. 5, located well over 4 m above ground level). Clearly, an adequate study of the situation cannot be attempted before all rock-cut features of the cave are recorded and properly inventoried. This is the object of a work in progress that the authors hope to complete in the near future. With its wealth of rupestral inscriptions and cult furniture, the cave of Pan on Mt. Parnes can provide crucial evidence for our understanding of ancient Greek cave use.







FÜR GRIECHISCHE







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<u>ἀγαθῆ τύ[χη]</u>· <u>Τελ[εcφόροc]</u>? <u>Κ.Λ</u>...Κελάδοντάδε τέκ[το]νας θ[έ]**cθαι** [τ]ην εἰκώ τοῦ Πανός. ὁ θύων δ' ἦν Τ[ρο]φιμιανός. 63

Good Fortune. Telesphorus ... this gorge of Celadon ... that the workers set up Pan's image. The sacrifice was supervised by Trophimianus.

Based on lines 6-7, scholars assume that the inscription accompanied a lost image of Pan—a tablet (Lolling), or a rock-cut sculpture originally placed to the left of the text (Skias), where traces of a tapering rectangular frame can

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Fig. 5. Cave terrace. View of south cliff with niches and beam cuttings.



Fig. 6. East cliff. Unpublished inscription.



Fig. 7. East cliff. Unpublished inscription high above ground.



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