

Simonides: Fragment 531

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This is part of a choral ode, and the meter appears to be aeolic. The text comes from Diodorus, quoted in 11.11.6.

We have a few epigrams attributed to Simonides about the Spartans who died at Thermopylae:

ὦ ξεῖν', ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῆδε
κείμεθα, τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

*Stranger, bring the message to the Spartans that here
we remain, obedient to their orders.*

This poem uses the literary Choral Doric dialect.

τῶν ἐν Θερμοπύλαισι θανόντων
εὐκλεῆς μὲν ἅ τύχα, καλὸς δ' ὁ πότμος,
βωμὸς δ' ὁ τάφος, πρὸ γόων δὲ μνήσταις, ὁ δ' οἶκτος ἔπαινος·
ἐντάφιον δὲ τοιοῦτον οὐτ' εὐρώς

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¹τῶν here translate a *of those who...* Θερμοπύλαι Thermopylae, the narrow pass with hot springs (*lit.* “hot gate”), famous because Leonidas and 300 Spartans defended it against Xerxes for a time before being betrayed. θνήσκω, θανέομαι, ἔθανον, τέθνηκα *die; be killed*; here genitive plural of aorist participle. It's not clear if this first line is a label or part of the poem.

²εὐκλεῆς *és of good report, famous, glorious.* ἅ = ἦ, Doric. τύχη ἢ *luck, success, good fortune; chance, fortune.* καλὸς ἢ ὄν *good, noble, brave, beautiful, handsome.* πότμος ὁ *what befalls one, lot, destiny.* This and the next line are very condensed: “glorious is their luck, and good their fate, ...”

³βωμὸς ὁ *altar*; sometimes plural with singular meaning. τάφος ὁ *burial, funeral; grave.* πρὸ *adv. and prep. with gen. before, in front, forward; instead of.* γόος ὁ *weeping, wailing; mourning, lamentation.* μνήσταις ἰος ἢ *remembrance* here with Doric long alpha for eta. οἶκτος ὁ *pity, compassion; lamentation; + gen. ἔπαινος ὁ approval, praise.* “... their grave an altar; instead of tears, remembrance; and for pity, praise.”

⁴ἐντάφιος *ον used in burial; τὸ ἐντάφιον shroud; τὰ ἐντάφια offerings to the dead.* τοιοῦτος, τοιαύτη, τοιοῦτο(ν) *of such a kind/quality, just such.* οὐτ'ε take as *neither* to anticipate the next line. εὐρώς -ῶτος ὁ *mould, decay.*

- 5 οὐθ' ὁ πανδαμάτωρ ἀμαυρώσει χρόνος.
ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅδε σακὸς οἰκέταν εὐδοξίαν
Ἑλλάδος εἶλετο· μαρτυρεῖ δὲ καὶ Λεωνίδας,
Σπάρτας βασιλεύς, ἀρετᾶς μέγαν λελοιπῶς
κόσμον ἀέναόν τε κλέος.

⁵πανδαμάτωρ -ορος ὁ *all-tamer, all-subduer*. ἀμαυρόω *make dim, make obscure*; passive, *disappear*. χρόνος ὁ *time; duration, period*. The verb here agrees in number only with χρόνος but the full subject is both εὐρώς and χρόνος together.

⁶σηκός ὁ *pen, den; sacred enclosure, shrine; burial place*; here with Doric long alpha for eta. οἰκέτης ὁ *dweller, inhabitant*; the form οἰκέταν is a Doric first declension accusative, the final alpha long; in apposition to the next word, so take as “as an inhabitant.” εὐδοξίη ἡ *good reputation; glory, honor, approval; good judgement*.

⁷Ἑλλάς ἄδος ἡ *Greece* αἰρέω, αἰρήσω, εἶλον *take, seize*; middle, *choose, take (for oneself)*. μαρτυρέω *be a witness, bear witness*. Λεωνίδας *Leonidas, a Spartan king*. Line 6 and the first part of line 7 are a bit difficult: “this burial place of good men takes the glory of Greece as its inhabitant.”

⁸Σπάρτη *Sparta*; here a Doric first declension genitive. βασιλεύς ὁ *king*. ἀρετή ἡ *excellence, virtue*; here Doric first declension genitive. μέγας, μεγάλη, μέγα *large; great*; modifies κόσμον in the next line. λείπω, λείψω, ἔλιπον, λέλοιπα, λέλειμμαι *leave, leave behind, leave as a legacy; abandon*; intransitive, *be gone, missing*; here perfect participle.

⁹κόσμος ὁ *order; decency; regularity, arrangement, decoration; glory, honor*. ἀέναος -ον *ever-flowing, everlasting*. κλέος τό *fame; glory, honor*.