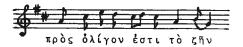
ΠΡΟΣ ΟΛΙΓΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ZHN. Sten Ebbesen.

ΠΡΟΣ ΟΛΙΓΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ZHN. So runs the beginning of the last line of the funeral epigram inscribed over the grave of one Seikelos who died some 1800 years ago^1 . Now we must ask: is this just another way of saying, as Hippocrates did, ὁ δὲ βίος βραχύς, or does it perhaps mean "life is of little use"?

Seikelos had notes carved above the lines of the poem, in order that we should be able to sing his song. The melody shows a remark-able correspondance between accentuation (pitch of voice in speech) and pitch of song. One place offends, however². That is the eggit in our line which runs:



Supposing the double note on έσ to have some correspondance to pronunciation we must expect έστι to be accentuated on the first syllable. If that is so, it must be because έστι is here not just the grammatical copula but a verbum existentiae.

And if so, the interpretation of the line is no longer a matter of dispute. It naturally means "life stays for a short while only", and we should write: πρὸς ὁλίγον ἔστι τὸ ζῆν.

This phenomenon might also yield material for second thoughts as to the age of the έστι pronunciation of the verbum existentiae. Maybe it is no Byzantine invention. In all events the verbum existentiae would be likely to be accentuated, and a penult accent would

conform also with the later developments of the language: In Modern Greek that verb has fairly regular medial endings, and all forms are stressed on the first syllable.

^{1.} The stone which had disappeared for some years has recently been found again and is now in the National Museum in Copenhagen. The account of the monument's fate given by Pöhlmann, Griechische Musikfragmente p. 80 (Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft 7, Nürnberg 1960) is wrong; it never was in the Smyrna Museum. Older editions are cited Pöhlmann Gr. Musikfrgm. p. 80. A new transscription is due to be published by Pöhlmann.

^{2.} See Pöhlmann Gr. Musikfrgm. p. 27