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NEW LATE ANTIQUE EPIGRAMS FROM STRATONICEA IN CARIA

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M. Çetin Şahin has published two epigrams from Stratonicea in Caria, typical of the Late Empire in style and vocabulary, and not lacking in elegance. According to his report, “they were found near two grave monuments, immediately east of the apsis of a church together with two stylistically almost identical headless statues. I am tempted to believe that the grave monuments, the statues and the inscriptions belong together.” For the decipherment of the two epigrams, and for their English translation, Şahin thanks Gregor Staab (Cologne).\(^1\) He gives only a minimal commentary on the two epigrams, and also on the prose inscription (no. 4 below) that honors Maximus and makes a very important reference to the tax known as the χρωσάργυρον, and hence it seems worthwhile to supply some further comment.

The first (no. 32) is carved within a tabula ansata on what Şahin calls an “architectural block”, that is, a block built into a wall. The block is now broken into two parts (left, 65 h, 63 w, 75 d; right, 63 h, 97 w, 75 d). The text is as follows:

\[† \text{φορμίζων κιθάρῃ μελιήδει Πίνδαρος εἶπεν} \]
\[\gammaατὶς εὐρυβότοιο καὶ ἥρος ἀμβροσίου \]
\[καὶ πυρὸς ἓκαμάτοι μόνον προφερέστερον εἶναι \]
\[4 \text{ὕδωρ ἀγλαώρθου, ὃ καὶ μόκαρες ποθέουσι.} \]
\[ψ πίσυνος γενέτης Ἀπολινάριος Στρατονίκης} \]
\[ἀλκόν ὕλον νεότυκτον ἐθήκατο καὶ πόρεν ὕδωρ \]
\[ἀστεὶ καὶ ναέτησι, πόνων ἂμπαυμα κότιστω.] \]

I translate: “Playing on his honey-sweet lyre, Pindar said that to wide-nourishing earth, ambrosial air, and tireless fire only bright-streaming water was superior, which the blessed ones too desire. Trusting in that, Apoll(inaris) father of Stratonice [Stratonicea], made the whole water-course new-fashioned and provided water for the city and its inhabitants, a very great relief from pains.”

1–4. The epigrammatist is alluding the famous opening of the First Olympian, ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ, though his allusion is very free. Pindar does not in fact compare water to anything at all, and his implied point of comparison was the subject of disagreement in antiquity. Plato (Euthyd. 304 B) makes Socrates says that “water is cheapest, though best, as Pindar said”: Aristotle (Rh. 1, 7, 1364 A), making the point that the common is worth more than the rare, cites “Water is best” as a proverb. The scholiasts, however, have a much more elaborate explanation, that Pindar is drawing on a view of “the philosophers” that the three elements of earth, air and fire all took their origin from the fourth, water, and hence water was superior to the other three. “Doctius quam verius”, observed Wilhelm Christ, but from this epigram it appears that this view had

\(^1\) M. Ç. Şahin, New Inscriptions from Stratonikeia and its Territory, Epig. Anat. 41 (2008) 66–68, with excellent photographs. After completing a first version of this article, I learned of the study of the same subject by G. Staab, Zu zwei neuen Epigrammen aus Stratonikeia in Karien, ZPE 170 (2009) 35–42 (henceforth referred to as “Staab”), who comes to many of the same conclusions; accordingly I have corrected and altered my previous version. I give measurements in centimeters and in the order h(eight), w(idth), d(epth). As always, I am grateful to G. W. Bowersock for his comments.
followers in Late Antiquity, and no doubt before. The epigrammatist thus shows a considerable degree of learning.2

Such a reference to Pindar accords with his high reputation in Late Antiquity, particularly but not only among pagans. A magnificent tondo portrait of Pindar discovered at Aphrodisias in the house of a Neoplatonic philosopher enables several other copies of the same portrait to be identified as his. Prose and verse authors of Late Antiquity refer to him, and the poets of the Greek Anthology who do so include Palladas in the later fourth century, and Cyrus the honorary consul and Macedonius the consul in the sixth.3 Macedonius’ epigram satirically exploits this same Pindaric tag to make fun of a woman who hides her wrinkles with heavy make-up:

Οὐ λαλέει τὸ κάτοπτρον· ἐγὼ δὲ σε πᾶσιν ἔλέγξα

τὴν νωθοκαλλοσώρην φύκει χριμένην.

τούτῳ καὶ ηὐδιλυρής ποτὲ Πίνδαρος [εἶδος] ἔλέγχα

ἐπεν “Ἀριστον ὤδωρ,” φύκεος ἐξηδρόστατων.

4. ἀγλαόρ(ε)θρος, correctly formed, is hitherto unattested, though several other compounds of ῥεῖθρον are found from Homer onwards.4 The phrase “bright-streaming water, which the blessed ones too desire” is puzzling. Despite the reference to Pindar in the opening lines, the poet presumably cannot use μάκαρες to mean the pagan gods, but must mean the “blessed” in the after-life, a sense which the word has for Christians as well as pagans. In a Christian context “water” might refer to the rivers of Paradise, or possibly the water enjoyed by Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16, 19–31).

5. The antecedent of ὧ is left somewhat unclear, though I have assumed that it is the general thought implied in the preceding lines, “water is superior to the other elements”. An epigram written by Cyrus the honorary consul in the later sixth century makes use of the same Pindaric tag, again in connection with building a pool or some other construction involving water (Anth. Pal. 9, 809):

Πίνδαρων ἵμεροεντα παρ’ ύδασι Κῦρος ἔγειρεν,

οὔνεκα φορμίζων ἐπεν: “Ἀριστον ὤδωρ.”

7. Şahin comments, “Apollinarios must have liked the city of Stratonikeia very much, since he named his daughter Stratonike.” A better explanation is that Apollinarios was πατήρ πόλεως in his native city. This is a civic office connected above all with finance and building, and is known from inscriptions and texts of the fifth and sixth centuries, and in many provinces of the eastern


4 Compounds of ῥεῖθρον: C. D. Buck and W. Petersen, A Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives (1945) 325, col. 2.
empire, including Caria. A metrical inscription from Sardis, celebrating a benefactor named Memnonios for renewing a building, calls him πάτρης γενέτης or γενετής, where again the reference is to his position as πατὴρ πόλεως. Stratonikeia has the name Στρατονική in Ptolemy, as does Mysian Stratonikeia in Eutropius, and this form of the name was convenient for hexameter poetry.

The other epigram (no. 33) is carved on a statue-base (118 h, 60 w, 56 d), and reads:

кро[κ] ἐχῶν πάντεσιν / ἕπορκεσάς, ὦ μεγάθυμε /
Μάξιμε, χρυσείης / αἰμα φέρον γενεῆς /
μουνος γὰρ κτεάνοισιν / ἕρωσα σελο τιθήνης /
ἀνέρας ἐξ ἁχέων / ἐκ τε δυσπαθής /
ούνεκα δὴ βαρύμοχθον / ὑπὲρ πάντων φόρον ἔτιλης /
ἐκ φιλοτιμίας/ ῥηίδως ὀπασ /
σει σαστήλη περιώσια / κυδάινοντες /
ζήλον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς / στῆσαμεν ἄκτεαινοι.

I translate: “With good fortune. Having wealth, you helped everyone, great-hearted Maximus, you who bear the blood of the golden race. For you alone with your wealth rescued the men of your nurse [your native city] from sorrows and misery. Since you undertook the heavily-onerous tax on behalf of all, readily giving it out of generosity, therefore, greatly honoring you with a statue, we who lack wealth have set you up, an (object of) emulation for good people.”

To take some details first, χρυσείης ... γενεῆς in 2 appears to refer to Hesiod’s “golden race” of the Works and Days (109–126). This, the first race of men created by the gods, lived in a golden age of plenty, and though now extinct “they [walk] everywhere upon the earth, givers of wealth (πλουτοδόται)”; it is presumably this last quality that shows Maximus to have their blood in his veins.

In 3–4, τιθήνης here refers to the honorand’s native city as his “nurse”. Stephanus-Dindorf s.v. τιθήνης observe, “dicitur etiam de terra aritce”, and refer to Lyco phon (Alex. 1398–1399), τιθήνον ... χόνα τού νεκροτάγου, translated in the new Budé edition as “la terre nourricière du général des défunts” (Hades). There is in fact no need to reach back so far: a Late Antique epigram from Aphrodisias refers to a local benefactor, known from other inscriptions as a scholasticus and father of the city, as ἰδιον του θεομοσιστής γλυκερό γενετήρι τιθήνης, where Roueché rightly sees the last two words as a poetic periphrasis for πατρὶ πόλεως. Several late antique

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6 SEG 36, 1099 (R. Merkelbach, J. Stauber, Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten 1 [1998] 402, 04/02/04); cf. ALA 70.
9 Thus correctly Staab, 37; in his previous translation he had taken the word to mean “mother”.

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epigrams play with a related idea, that “les biensfaits d’un citoyen envers sa patrie représentent les soins dus aux parents qui vous ont élevé, les θερέπτα ya ou θερπετήρια.”

4. δυσηπάθη is very rare, cited by the lexica only from Apollonius Rhodius (4, 1395) and the epigrammatist Julianus Aegyptius, of the sixth century. In line 7, Şahin reads σ᾿ ἐσστήλη, assuming assimilation for σ᾿ ἐν στήλῃ. But the sense requires a dative of instrument, and such an assimilation would be surprising at so late a date, whereas geminated sigma is common in all times and periods; it is better therefore to understand σὲ στήλῃ which is not “a stone monument”, but “a statute”, a sense that is often misunderstood; the same sense occurs in two other inscriptions for Maximus (nos. 2 and 3 below).

5–6. “The heavily-onerous tax” is the collatio lustralis instituted by Constantine and abolished by Anastasius. I defer discussion of this reference to a point later in this paper.

8: I have translated ἀκτέανοι as “who lack wealth”, both because the word echoes the κτεάνοισιν of line 3, and also because, as will be seen, these are not strictly “poor” but those tradespeople subject to the collatio lustralis. In no. 2 below the ἀκτέανοι join with the βουλή to honor Maximus, no doubt in connection with the same benefaction, and in no. 4, the δήμος honors him on behalf of the πένηται, who are not truly “poor” (πτωχοί) but people of the working class, πένης having the same root as πόνος.

As already mentioned, Şahin observes that two life-size headless statues were found in the same location as the two inscriptions. He hesitates whether to assume that both represent Maximus, or whether one represents Maximus and the other Apollinarios. Both show the subject holding a scroll, and Şahin asks, “Was Maximus (vel Apollonarios) pronounced a saint by the inhabitants, or was he a theologian? I leave these questions open.” The scroll is a symbol of office, appropriate for a πατὴρ πόλεως such as Apollinarios and a θαυμασιώτατος such as Maximus (see below), though at the same time it could indicate the subject’s culture.

Maximus was already known from three other inscriptions of Stratonicea, which I give as 2, 3 and 4 in their order of publication:


4 τοῦνεκα δὴ ἰ βουλή με καὶ ἀκτέανοι πολιτεία

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12 Followed by Staab, 38.


14 D. Feissel, BCH 108 (1984) 547 n. 11 (SEG 34, 1754); add Feissel, Chroniques d’Épigraphie byzantine (2006) 399, s.v. στήλη.

15 Not therefore “beggars” (Bettler), as Staab, 38.

στῆσαν κυδαλίμαις εἰκόσι λαϊνέαις
εὐαγέων Χρειστοῖο δόμων προπάροιθε θεοῖο.
ὁς ἀγαθὸν τελέθει μὴ κτεάνων ἀλέγειν.

“You look upon me, Maximus, who bestowed on the city and its inhabitants much of our toils [i.e. my wealth gained through toil]. Therefore the council and those citizens without wealth set me up with glorious stone portraits before the holy house of the God Christ. How good it is not to care for possessions.”

3. Merkelbach and Stauber understand ἡμετέρων καμάτων instrumentally “durch meine Mühen”: I take κάματοι to mean “the fruits of our labor”, that is, “my possessions”, cf. LSJ s.v. κάματος II, “the product of toil”.17

7. The same editors correctly understand the last line as an exclamation, but end line 6 with a comma.


1. The abbreviation ΞΜΓ is frequent in Christian inscriptions and papyri from the fourth century to the seventh. The resolution has been debated, and there is evidence both for Χ(ριστόν) Μ(αρία) Γ(εννήθη) and for Χ(ριστός) Μ(αρία) Γ(εννήθη); probably it was differently understood by different users. It has now been found carved on the crown of the head in a well-known statue of Oikoumenios, a governor of Caria in the late fourth or early fifth century.18

2. The abbreviation θωμ(ασιώτατος), Latin admirandissimus, is a title found between the fourth century and the seventh for functionaries below the rank of illustris, on which Roueché comments that “it seems to have been most widespread in the mid-fifth century”. An inscription from Aphrodisias which she tentatively dates to the late fifth century is not unlike the present one: Φίλιππος Ἡροδιαν(οῦ) ὁ θωμ(ασιώτατος) εὐχαριστῶν τῇ οἰκίᾳ πατρίδι τὰ β' διάχορα ἐσκέπασεν. Here too a local patriot gives some kind of construction to his native city. A civic

17 In the epigram Merkelbach–Stauber I 35, no. 01/10/02 (previously I. Keramos 66), I agree with W. D. Lebek (Epigr. Anat. 27 [1986] 154) in taking εξ ἰδίων καμάτων to mean “aus ehrenhaft erarbeiteten Geldmitteln”. So also SEG 53, 633, [ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων καμάτων] ὃν ἠγόρασε, κτλ. (Thessalonike).

18 Important discussion and bibliography, ALA 189–190. Statue of Oikoumenios: Smith (n. 12) 134–156, especially 150–151 with bibliography in n. 82.
office to which this title was attached was that of the ἐκδικοῦς or defensor civitatis, and this may have been the position of Maximus at Stratonicea and Philip at Aphrodisias.19

4. πανταρχέω and related forms seem otherwise only to appear in the second and third centuries, at Ombos and Pelusium in Egypt and at Xanthos in Lycia; the meaning must be “holding all offices”.20

7. στήλη, “statue”, as observed by Feissel, ibid.

No. 4. M. Ç. Şahin, Epig. Anat. 41 (2008) 59 no. 9. Carved within a tabula ansata on a wide block (60 h, 101 w, 40 th), thus a statue base, not a “stele”, as Şahin.

"With good fortune. Τ(itus) Maximus the benefactor, who three times paid the four-yearly χρυσάργυρον on behalf of the (working-)poor from his own resources, the people honored in return for his great (services) with this statue."

Line 1. The tau of Τ(itos) is inscribed above the mu of Μάξιμον.

Line 2. τρίτον means “thrice”, classical τρίς,21 cf. no. 3, 3 above, δεύτερον.

Line 5. I take πόνοι to mean “the fruits of his labors” (LSJ s.v. πόνος III), that is, his wealth, like κάματοι in no. 2, 4.

From a combination of these texts, it emerges that Maximus was a devout Christian. The abbreviation XMΓ in no. 2 gives a terminus post quem of the fourth century, which would in any case be obvious from the language and script. The reference to the “four-yearly χρυσάργυρον” is a precious addition to knowledge of this tax, called in Latin the collatio lustralis. First imposed by Constantine, it fell on workers in trades and industry, including prostitutes; Zosimus observes that the burden descended “even to the humblest” (μεχρὶ τῶν εὐτελεστάτων), and like other authors, and the author of this inscription, he refers to the cycle as “four-yearly” (τετραετηρικὸν). In 410 Honorius and Theodosius II enacted that “what used to be demanded at one time and on a general demand note should be paid by small, very small contributions”; presumably as a result of this measure, a papyrus dated to 426 or 441 shows the members of an Egyptian trade-guild contracting to pay a single headman 2,000,000 denarii on the 28th of each month towards the χρυσάργυρον; and in 498 Anastasius abolished the tax, making this year the approximate termi-
For this inscription (since it might have been inscribed after the abolition of the tax), Maximus, it may be supposed, acted like the Egyptian headman except that, instead of collecting the contributions from humble taxpayers, he paid the whole sum from his own funds.

Thus inscription no. 4 cannot be much later than 500: from the general style of the four texts honoring Maximus I incline to put them in the second half of the fifth century, so that they will fall early in the period of civic revival that began about the middle of that century and continued well into the sixth, while the inscription for Apollinarios might be contemporary or later. This new era of prosperity is observable at another Carian city, Aphrodisias, which saw much new construction, some of it overseen by “fathers of the city”. The contemporary Life of Isidore by Damascius refers in passing to generosity on the part of pagans in several cities: thus Theagenes at Athens, “a generous (φιλότιμος) and noble man, distinguished above all other Hellenes for his wealth, which he generally employed in the right way, remedying the misfortunes (πτωχώσεως) of some cities and helping persons in need, giving not with one hand (as the saying is) but with both”. A remarkable papyrus in Vienna, published in 2006, shows that Aphrodisias and nearby Carian cities were still functioning in the late sixth or early seventh century.

Not only were the inscriptions honoring Maximus inscribed at a time of rising prosperity, but nos. 3 and 4 seem also to make conscious reference to the texts honoring benefactors that are so typical of the second and third centuries; no doubt many of these were still to be seen in the public places of the city. This emerges from the way they use prose, and no. 3 refers in the fashion of another age to the βουλὴ and δῆμος acting in concert. It is as if Stratonicea, perhaps more thoroughly Christianized than Aphrodisias in eastern Caria, nonetheless wished to maintain continuity with its pagan past.

Özet

Yazar bu makalesinde, M. Çetin Şahin tarafından Karia’nın Stratonikeia kentinin bulularak EA 41 (2008) 66–68, no. 32 ve 33’de fazla bir yorum yapılmaksızın yayınlanan ve hemen ardından G. Staab tarafından (ZPE 170, 2009, 35–42) bir makale ile yeniden ele alınan Hristiyanlık dönemi ait iki epigram üzerinde bazı önemli düzeltmeler ve yorumlar yapmaktadır. Bu şiirlerden biri (no. 32), Stratonikeia kentinin su tesisatını yapran Apollinarius, diğeri de (no. 33) herkesin ödemekle yükümlü olduğu bir vergi (collatio lustralis) kentteki herkes adına üç kez kendi cebinden ödeyen (ve diğer üç Stratonikeia yazıtında da adı geçen) Maximus adındaki bir diğer iyiliksever için yazmıştır. Yazar göre gerek Apollinarius ve gerekse Maximus için yazılan bu şiirler muhtemelen çağdaş olup, özellikle Maximus’un onurlandırılan dört adet yazıt İ.Ş. V. yüzyılın ikinci yarısındaki refah dönemi tarihlenmelidir.